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Symbolism in Ralph Ellison's *In- visible Man*

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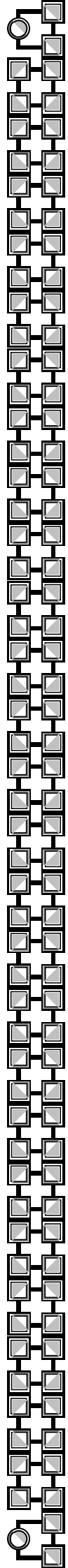
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Dedication

I dedicate this modest work to:

My dear parents

My beloved husband Naim

My helpful brothers Walid and Mahdi

My lovely sisters Karima and Aicha

My little tender nieces Mariem, Layan, and Maria

My nephews Abderahmane and Ghayth

My family, friends and teachers

HAYAT

I dedicate my dissertation to:

My parents, sisters, and brothers

My colleagues, friends, and relatives

My teachers

ELHADFA

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Abstract

Symbolism is the idea that things represent others. It is knownly considered as one of the most representative tools in a literary work since it mainly contributes a sense of significance to the central idea and it helps to create a set of emotions and meanings on one hand and to allow the author to convey something to the audience on the other hand. Significantly, this study aims to highlight symbolism in Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man*. The latter is highly symbolic novel in African American Literature in which racism is one among many themes and issues are talked. Hence, study tackles how Ellison "in a symbolic way " portrays the themes of racism, invisibility, identity and blindness that black people suffered from during the 1940s and 1950s. Thus, this topic will be analyzed by using the qualitative methodology which is most appropriate to clarify the symbolism manifested through this novel. Race Critical theory is used in analyzing the way in which blacks are oppressed by the whites in the American society and the way they protest defending their rights and identity.

Key words: Symbolism, Ralph Waldo Ellison's *Invisible Man*, racism, invisibility, identity, blindness.

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Introduction

1. Background of The Study

Literature has always been a mirror of life. It reflects cultural, political, social values of a certain community. It is described as a piece of writing produced in a particular language, country or age for a specific purpose such as information, education or entertainment to the reader which can be fictional or non-fictional in nature.

American literature is the product of diversity of people, beliefs, ideologies, philosophies and way of life. It is a fertile ground for its various works of outstanding writers. This literature has become broad in terms of themes, mode, and purpose mainly after World War Two. African American literature, as a sub category of American one, written by, about, and sometimes specially for African Americans. It began during the 18th and 19th centuries with writers such as Phillis Wheatley, reached an early high point with the Harlem Renaissance and continued today with authors like Toni Morrison, Maya Angelo, and Ralph Ellison. In their works, African American writers portray the history of African American as well as the social and cultural background. They tackle various themes and issues like slavery, racism, equality, and identity, and use different literary devices so as to convey a message and highlight black dilemma in the American society as well.

One of the literary devices that has been used from centuries ago, is symbolism; despite the fact that it first appeared as a literary trend it had a major impact on distinct literary movements as it was adapted and used as a literary device. This technique has a considerable importance in contemporary literature among numerous writers in nineteenth century. Ralph Ellison is a major figure of that era, that we have chosen to analyze his masterpiece *Invisible Man*, which was published in 1952, because it meets the requirements and the aims of this research.

Research Motivation

There are two main reasons behind conducting this study. First, our great interest in Afro-American literature stems from our love for Afro-American works. Second, We consider symbolism as an important means that inspires us in literary research, as it paves a way to our research curiosity. Because of the previous motivations, we see that this topic is worthy of research and study.

Significance of The Study

This study bears significance since it tackles one of the most prominent African American literary works. The latter is generally considered an important effective esthetic channel for portraying blacks' reality, as well as defending their identity. Undeniably, this topic is an addition to literary studies because it depicts the ingenuity and beauty of Ralph Ellison's style once passing his message through his novel *InvisibleMan*.

Aims of The Study

The aim of this research is to find out and study how Ellison symbolically portrays the African American man who quests for identity. We will endeavor to show that the African-American literature writers could deeply depict their reality. Moreover, this study aims at finding out the manner in which racism is represented in the African-American novel *Invisible Man*.

Statement of The Problem

The Afro American writers find writing a way for escaping from their reality and showing the suffering of the black Americans on one hand and to convey essential social issues especially racism, invisibility, identity and blindness on the other hand. Significantly, the focus of the study will be on the "how" those issues are symbolized in *invisible Man*. Thus, we would perhaps seek how the central themes are portrayed by Ralph Ellison in a symbolic way.

Research Questions

The questions raised in this study are:

1. What are symbolism main concerns, origins and theories in literary works?
2. What are the symbols used in *Invisible Man*? and what are they stand for?

Methodology

The study is qualitative one which stand on a descriptive analytical study. Since the researcher will focus on investigating the main themes in the novel, the thematic approach will be applied to reveal the effects of oppression and alienation on blacks' identity in general and on the nameless protagonist in *Invisible Man* in specific. Furthermore, the research will examine *Invisible Man* that written by African American writer. Thus, the appropriate theory that can be used is the Race Critical theory. This latter based on analyzing the way in which blacks are oppressed by the whites in the American society and the way they protest defending their rights and identity. Psychoanalytic approach is also used to study the behaviors of the protagonist who depicts the experiences of any African American man facing racism. It studies the effects of racism on the protagonist's psychology that makes him feel invisible and alienated, and seeks to explore consequences of his oppression.

Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into three chapters; The first one is, theoretically, devoted to present a review of literature about symbolism in which we tried to provide a definition of the concept symbolism, then the historical aspects, origins, and the reasons behind its emergence. Besides, the use of symbolism as a literary device with its main theories which are Ferdinand De Saussure, Sigmund Freud, and Northrop Frye's theories. However, in the second chapter, we are going to highlight a historical overview of the African American literature; in addition to a survey about the novel *Invisible Man* including writer's profile, the summery, and characters. Eventually, The last chapter stand for the practical part of the work in which we shall

provide a deep analysis of *Invisible man* in order to figure out how symbols are used in the novel and what they stand for.

Literature Review

For its extreme importance, many critics and scholars analysis *Invisible Man* in order to figure out the major themes tackled and the reason behind using some devices like metaphor and symbolism in the modern African American literature. One of them is Nasrullah Mambrol. In his article “ Analysis of Ralph Ellison’s invisible man”, Mambrol states that Ellison used central metaphor for the situation of the individual in Western culture in the first paragraph: “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.” As the novel develops, Ellison extends this metaphor: Just as people can be rendered invisible by the willful failure of others to acknowledge their presence, so by taking refuge in the seductive but ultimately specious security of socially acceptable roles they can fail to see themselves, fail to define their own identities. Ellison envisions the escape from this dilemma as a multifaceted quest demanding heightened social, psychological, and cultural awareness. Mambrol adds that the symbolic title *invisible man* refers to African American history.

In the same vein, Emenyi Abang and Dr Kalu Obasithere published an article that is entitled Vision Versus Illusion: A symbol of reality in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. In this article the authors examine plot and characterization and the role of these elements to dissect the American society showing the conditions and plights of Negro living among the Whites in America.

Muhammad Moustafa in his Magister study “The Quest for Identity In Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*” focused on the portrait of blackness and identity. In addition, Jack Taylor published an article entitled “ Ellison's *Invisible Man* as Literary Phenomenology.” in which he highlights how *Invisible Man* seeks to investigate black existence and consciousness as it is shaped by anti-black racism.

Conclusion

Our dissertation will be concluded with restating the main findings of our work. It will shed light on Ellison's view of African American man identity and his resistance in world of racism, invisibility and blindness. In addition, our conclusion includes brief look of Ellison's fictions in post-modern America literature in which symbolism had been used.



CHAPTER-I. Symbolism in Literature

Introduction

Literature can be defined as a discipline that reflects the realities of the authors as well as it gives pleasure to the reader. In order to convey meanings, writers endeavor to use various literary devices such as metaphor, irony, humor, and symbolism. This latter is described as an effective stylistic device in literature has been used for centuries. It helps authors to display their aesthetic style of writing and to provide readers with works of pleasure. Hence, this chapter has been adhered to provide a review about Symbolism, the definition of both symbol and symbolism, origins, then the historical aspects, the reasons behind its emergence. Besides, the use of Symbolism as literary device with its main theories.

Definition of symbol

To deal with the term symbolism, it is worth providing the definition of symbol which has become one of the main concerns of researchers this is argued by the fact that its significance in literature. According to *Collins Dictionary*, a symbol is "An object, person, idea,.. etc, used in a literary work, film, etc, to stand for or suggest something else". That is to say the term Symbol is any object, idea, or sign that is account for representing another idea, object or relationship very different from the real one. Indeed, a subtle definition of the word is provided by the *Oxford dictionary*: "A thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract". One can understand that the term a symbol represents a word or a phrase that denotes an extent of references beyond itself. Eventually, Symbol allows the reader to go beyond what is known or seen by creating connection between the ordinary sense of reality and the specific one which is metaphorical.

Definition of symbolism

The term "symbolism" is derived from the word "symbol" which derives from the Latin *symbolum*, a symbol of faith, and *symbolus*, a sign of recognition. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Symbolism has two definitions. The first is: symbolism is the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities, especially in art

and literature. The second is: an artistic and poetic movement or style originated in France in the nineteenth century by using symbolic images and indirect allusions to express mystical ideas, emotions and states of mind. Symbolism describes the use of concrete images to convey abstract ideas (Glatch, 2022). Symbolism refers to the use of representational imagery: the writer employs an image with a deeper, non-literal meaning, for the purpose of conveying complex ideas.

Clearly speaking, Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. It is generally an object representing another to give it a totally different meaning which is more significant and much deeper. Hitherto, one can say that Symbolism is a figure of speech that is used when an author wants to create a certain mood or emotion in a work of literature. It is the use of an object, person, situation or word to represent something else, like an idea, in literature.

1.4 History of Symbolism

Symbolism is very significant devices in postmodern literature. It helps the writer to speak up his mind through use symbols and thereader to read underlines. To tackle the concept of symbolism, it is worth dealing with its emergence and origins.

1.4.1 Emergence of Symbolism

Despite the fact that the concept symbolism is often related to literary device, it is unarguable that it was a movement began in France in the 1880s. It started when artists endeavor to communicate ideas through symbols instead of bluntly depicting reality. Symbolism as a literary trend appeared as a reaction to some other movements, such as Naturalism and phenomenon. The term symbolism, however, quickly came to cover a range of arts, from painting and sculpture to theater and music, then moved to literature, and influenced the European and American literatures of the 20th century to different degrees. As this movement is often known for taking place between the years 1885–1895, the ideas, thoughts and aesthetic means of symbolism are often traced back to the middle of the nineteenth century, and many early twentieth-century artists and writers continued to believe in its ideas.

1.4.2 The Reasons Behind the Appearance of Symbolism

Symbolism was a late 19th century movement which was created as a reaction to art movements that depicted the natural world realistically, such as Impressionism, Realism, and Naturalism.

Symbolism rose at the same time as some intellectuals began to question positivism. Writers, in particular, reacted to positivist and materialism-based theories because they saw science as the key to understanding the world and, as a result, did not recognize art as a distinct form of knowledge and human activity.

The term "symbolism" was initially and principally used to refer to the literary works of French authors who rebelled against naturalism's scientific determinism and the accuracy and objectivity of realism's descriptions. With the publication of Jean Moréas' "Le Figaro" in 1886, the movement began as a French literary movement in the 1880s. Baudelaire's sonnet "Correspondances" and Edgar Allan Poe's writing were also significant antecedents.

The critic Jean Moréas coined the term "symbolist" in order to distinguish the symbolists from the associated decadent literary and artistic movement. The symbolist movement in art is connected to the gothic element of Romanticism, which is distinct from but distinct from the symbolist movement in literature. Symbolism, from Boundless. Boundless Art History, 21 July 2015; available online. obtained on March 9, 2016 from Anti-idealistic styles emerged as a response to the materialism and rationality that had come to dominate Western European society, and they aimed to exalt the commonplace and the humdrum over the ideal.

On the other hand, symbolism promoted creativity, dreams, and spirituality. These two movements proclaimed the legitimacy of purely subjective judgment and the value of an idea's presentation over an accurate portrayal of the natural world. The core tenet of the movement was this concept, which vehemently supported the notion that poetry should be used to convey reality since it contrasts nature rather than imitates it. Symbolism in Literature, Chapter 1 The symbolists, according to David Ga-

lens (2002:15), "sought to convey very personal, irrational, and dream-like states of consciousness," heavily relying on metaphorical language to approximate or symbolize an eternal essence of being that is "abstracted from the scope of the five senses," in their opinion.

The Symbolists wanted to express the transient, immediate impressions of man's inner life and experience instead of literature's descriptive functions and its organized oratory. Many symbolists took Baudelaire's idea of the correspondences between the senses, which they then merged with the Wagnerian idea of a synthesis of the arts to create a novel view of the musical aspects of poetry. A scientific description that erased all fancy, all emotions, and inconsistencies and contradictions emancipated the Symbolists' writing style and subject matter. The employment of the law of cause and effect in literature, which was one of Naturalism's tenets, was somewhat rejected by symbolism because it emerged as a reaction to several other literary movements.

It aimed to accurately describe objective reality in order to depict the outside world of nature and human culture. as a response to positivism's hegemony, which placed an emphasis on rationalism, objectivity, and the scientific method. In symbolism, the source of reality was viewed as personal experience. More specifically, the symbolists argued that truth could only be discovered via personal experience and not through scientific research into the physical universe. The symbolists, who rejected materialism, held that nature and the immediate world had no intrinsic value other from its role in illuminating the spiritual or the absolute.

The main objectives of symbolism were not to fully express or even to accurately describe any notion or aspect of visual reality, but rather to evoke, create, and suggest that idea. Because of this emphasis on suggestion, mysticism instead of science became essential models for symbolists. The absolute truths, according to symbolists, should be depicted in art and could only be vaguely stated. As a result, they painted and wrote in a very metaphorical and provocative way, imbuing specific images or things with symbolic meaning.

1.5. Symbolism as a Literary Device

Writers tend to use symbolism many years ago in order to give their works literary value and pleasure for the reader.

1.5.1 The Use of Symbolism in Literature

From the very first time, literary devices have played a significant role in the history of literature. They are used by authors to convey meaning or to lend depth and richness to their writing. Symbolism is a literary tool is mostly used to convince and drive audience to actions and speeches oriented towards both logical and emotional thoughts. Writers generally use a powerful figurative language to appeal emotions drifting from guilt to anger to bliss, and to allow the reader to see the world in a new and magical way. Undeniable, One of the most distinguishing features of literature is the diversity and richness of the symbols used in literary works

A symbol represents, or stands in place of, something else. Writers use many literary devices to add layers of meaning to their writing, and they channel that meaning through the means of symbolism. Symbolism is a literary element used in literature to help readers understand a literary work. It is a literary device that contains multiple levels of meaning, generally hidden at first sight, and it represents other various aspects, concepts or traits than those that are visible in the literal translation alone.

Using a symbol means using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning. It is when writers use objects, elements, places, or colors to represent other things. In other words, a symbol has two levels of meanings, a literal and non-literal one. For instance, an "Eagle" in its literal meaning is an animal, however, in the non-literal one, it stands for a more hidden meaning which is Freedom. Another simple example "Rain" Rain is the phenomenon of water that falls in drops from clouds in the sky, nevertheless in literature, usually rain symbolizes grief or sadness. As "the snow" in literature may stand as a symbol for death the best example would be James Joyce's short story "The Dead", in which the snow dominates the tale and it is represented as a link between the living and the dead in the state of the paralysis that dominates all the characters in the story.

These symbols are usually well recognized in literature or in a specific culture, when it comes to understanding the meaning of these symbols, the reader connects their literary meaning to the story that he is reading, this may help him understand the story on a deeper level.

Symbolism as a figure of speech basically used when an author wants to create a certain mood or emotion in a literary work, This technique enhances writing and gives a certain level of intuition to the reader. Authors usually use symbolism to equalize certain things that may initially seem unimportant to more universal themes. The symbols then represent these ideas or qualities. For instance, an author may use Chapter One: Symbolism in Literature 16 a special color that is nothing on its own, more than a color, but implies at a deeper meaning.

The complexity of symbolism lies in the fact that the sense is exterior to the word whether a given image or event is literal or symbolic. This mysteriousness is further confounded by the possibility that a symbol might be a result of the writer's oblivious, consequently it is emphatically denied by that creator. As the famous expression indicates "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

Determining the importance of a symbol frequently depends on the close reading and interpretation, in this manner, the reader should pick up on the contextual signs.

1.5.2 Theories of symbolism

In the vein of symbolism, many theorists provide their contribution for the use of symbolism in several domains with their views and theories. Symbolism has been defined depending on the field it is used in, literature, art, or cinema. The several definitions provided in symbolism differ according to the theorist's views about the term symbolism. Basically, some of these theories will be highlighted such as Langer, De Saussure, Freud, and Frye's Theory.

1.5.2.1 Langer's Theory

Langer's theory is founded by the American philosopher Susanne Langer (1895-1985) who had made many studies on the concept Symbolism. As symbolism underlies human knowledge and understanding, Langer regarded symbolism as the central

concern of philosophy (Langer,1949,p.91). She implied that one can perceive the interpretations of symbols once they are conceived. She also distinguished the difference between symbol and sign. Providing that symbol and sign differ from each other, despite the use of signs in addition of symbols. The former can be used to respond in the environment while the latter allows the writer to create imagery and ideas related to the real world in an indirect way (ibid).

When it comes to the difference between a sign and a symbol one can simply say that a sign makes the reader think or act, whereas a symbol pushes the reader to think about the things symbolized. In this light, it is possible to say that the main difference between these two terms is that a symbol does not declare the meaning of the object, but rather brings this thing to mind (ibid). Whereas a sign is a hint or an element that will reveal its true nature or a bigger concept by the end of the story, for instance the "sphere that ought to be on Newton's tomb" is revealed to be the Apple, and it's the solution of the riddle that opened

the cryptic.

1.5.2.2 Frye's Theory of Symbolism

Herman Northrop Frye (1912- 1991) was a Canadian literary critic and literary theorist in 20th century. According to him the word symbol means any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention (Frye,1957, p.71). Frye in his Anatomy of criticism affirms that the reader usually focuses his attention on two directions at once. The first one is outward, in which the reader goes outside with his reading from the written words to the things meant in the text. The second direction is the inward in which the reader tries to appreciate and analyze the meaning from the word. Since in both cases readers deal with the concept of symbols, these two types of understanding take place simultaneously in all reading. However the verbal structure may be classified according to whether the final direction of meaning is outward or inward.

1.5.2.3 Ferdinand De Saussure's Theory of Symbolism

Semiotics is the scientific study of signs and symbols and their meaning. This study is found by the Swiss linguists Ferdinand De Saussure who believe that each language should encompass both signifier and signified. The signifier is the sound image in the human mind, whereas, the signified is the concept. De Saussure, in his book, *Course in General Linguistics* argues that “the signified is the intellectual concept represented by the signifier (verbal or nonverbal); the signifier is the visible form that represents the signified; the object is the observed form that is being represented by the signs” (Ibid,89). As an example, the English word dog has a particular form (a sequence of three meaningless phonemes) and also a particular meaning (a specific kind of animal). The two together make up a single linguistic sign in English. (Sandamali,2003,p.126)

1.5.2.4 Sigmund Freud's Theory

Freud suggests two fundamental theories for symbolism: the FN (Freudian Narrow position) and FB (Freudian barrowed position). In the FN theory, the application of the symbol as a term transmits close interpretations that can be agreed on by a particular group of people from the same culture. It is prevalent and sometimes inherited from the preceding generations. Petocz states that “ The first, which may be referred to as the 'Freudian Narrow' position, restricts the use of the term "symbol" to a special technical sense, in which symbols are the elements of unconscious, universal, phylogenetically inherited code”. (Ibid,24) The FB theory contextualizes the use of symbol in the literary work. It is a specific device that can change from one situation to another. Petocz explains that “The second may be referred to as 'Freudian Broad'(FB) position is a much less restricted view, in which the term "symbol" usually refers to any unconsciously produced defensive substitute, while nevertheless retaining certain specifiable conscious, non-defensive production.”(Ibid).

1.5.3 Examples of Symbols in Literature

In literature, the term symbol is often considered a figure of speech in which a person, object, or situation stands for something else, besides its literary meaning. Stan-

dard or traditional literary symbols work in much the same way, and since they have a previously agreed upon meaning, they can be used to suggest ideas more universal than the physical aspect itself. A symbol maybe used differently in a literary work to denote a number of different things. Most commonly, a symbol will present itself in the form of a word, a figure of speech, an event, the total action, or a character. Some conventional symbols are as follows:

1.5.3.1 Colors

Colors have played an important role in literature, as they hold significance for people around the world. Writers and poets mostly use colors to create concrete images of their characters, scenes and events. color symbolism in literature transmits a deeper meaning to the words which, in turn, help in transforming the written content into a more powerful instrument. Colors are used to describe nature or to help the reader develop a specific sentiment about some specific object or scene. The reader should have obviously, previous experience with colors significance in order to interpret the symbolism in a correct way. For such reason, poems and books can mean different things to different readers. Though this is the case, writers and poets use different colors in a way that may create different meanings in their literary work.

Black is a color that is often used in literature to portray something evil, depressing and scary (Belarbi,2015,p.19) . Black is also a color used in gothic literature to symbolize death, power, mystery, and fear. Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven" makes use of a black bird to symbolize death. Black is also a very powerful color that symbolizes class, elegance and wealth.(Ibid).

Red is often used in gothic literature to signify aggression and intensity. Because of its dangerous connotation, red has been used in novels such as Jane Eyre for dramatic effect. When Jane is locked in the red room, she faints out of fear of a ghost. It is also a warm color that raises a strong sense of passion, love energy, blood and war.(Ibid)

Green symbolizes nature, health and relaxation. It represents growth, nature, money, fertility and safety. In literature, it can also symbolize guilt. In The Lord of the Flies, green is used to represent innocence and immaturity. The children on the island are innocent, and surrounded by nature. (Ibid).

In literature, white is often related with being pure, fresh and good. The color usually illustrates a peaceful and pure winter scene.

White represents innocence and purity, as in almost all other applications of colors.(Ibid).

In literature, blue is used to draw a positive response and represents calmness and peace. It is a color that symbolizes loyalty, strength, wisdom and trust. Blue color meaning is also known to have a calming effect on the psyche. Blue is the color of the sky and the sea and is often used to represent these images. However, like in other aspects of color application, sometimes blue also may stand for depression and sadness.(Ibid).

Yellow in literature represents youth, fun, joy, sunshine and other happy feelings. It is a cheerful and energetic color. It also represents loyalty. In *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden describes himself as “yellow” when he means that he is cowardly.(Ibid).

1.5.3.2 Animals

Animals have always played an important role in written literature for thousands of year, these animals have various significance in literature.

- The dove : Signifies a peaceful nature or condition , it may be considered as a religious or spiritual sign from God or a spiritual guide. Indeed, it represents love and tenderness. It can mean an 'inner' initiation, it is also used to symbolize the end of the Flood, and represents the Holy Spirit.(Belarbi,2015,p.20).
- Eagle : Denotes self-confidence, intellectual freedom, pursuing unconventional concepts or issues . The eagle can symbolize the thymus center of the body which is related to love. It also stands for freedom with responsibility. The eagle also represents baptism and high flying is seen as Christ's ascension. It is the symbol of triumph of light over the darker forces. It represents energy, renewal, contemplation, acuity of vision, royal bearing justice.(Ibid).
- The lion : It indicates a strength of character in literature, military valor, huge energy, effortlessly masterful, and dominion. It can stand for the victory of human intellect over it's animal nature. It can also represent negative side and denote a braggart, a

roaring lion can denote anger and temper, while, the golden color of the lion can represent the good side of the individual. Being eaten by a lion represents being eaten alive by one's own bad temper. (*Ibid*).

- The dog : An overused animal in literature, the first symbol is one of loyalty, vigilance and intelligence. Dogs are said to be able to see 'ghosts' and thus it denotes the invisible dangers. A dark dog can denote negative aspects in one's life, black dog is considered to be companions to witches. 5- The fish : It simply symbolizes spiritual aspects and spiritual achievements. It was the early Christian sign or symbol which separated the hostile unbelievers from the believers. It also represented the Age of Pisces. Fishing stands for the spiritual purposes of life and man's search for the higher consciousness. It also represents fertility and the life giving principles of the maternal. In literature, to catch a fish suggests growth of the divine self. (*Ibid*).

1.6 Conclusion

In the first chapter, we endeavored to define both symbol and symbolism as a literary device and movement as well as to shed lights on the history of the concept in literature, its origin, emergence and the reasons behind its emergence. In addition, this chapter dealt also with the major theories of symbolism such as Langer and Frye's theories. And as we cannot tackle symbolism, without referring to African American literary works which is considered as a fertile ground of symbolism. *Invisible Man* is a masterpiece written by the African American writer Ralph Ellison in 1952 which reflects some symbolic contents that will be held in the second chapter.



CHAPTER-II. Symbolism in African American Literature

2.1 Introduction

African American literature refers to the body of literature produced in the United States by African writers . It traces its origins to the works of such late eighteenth century writers as Phillis Wheatley and Olaudah Equiano, reaching early high points with slave narratives and the Harlem Renaissance, and continuing today with authors such as Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Walter Mosley. Obviously, Among the themes and issues explored in African American literature are the role of African Americans within the larger American society, African-American culture, racism, slavery, and equality. African American writing has also tended to incorporate oral forms such as spirituals, sermons, gospel music, blues, and rap.

Basically, One of the most fundamental concepts which is combined with African American literature is that the latter is rich in using Symbolism as literary device in other to convey and discuss the major issues which can be tackled within the African American society. Commonly, racism, slavery, equality and so on are symbolically depicted by African American authors such as Ralph Ellison in his *Invisible Man*.

2.2 African American Literature

Once we talk about the African American literature we should spot light on The cornerstone which are the most prominent faces that wrote about its issues, and on the other hand, the most important topics that dealt with it. Clearly, this will be detailed in the following elements.

2.2.1 African American Major Authors.

Several African American literature figures have appeared in which we can mention some prominent ones :

2.2.1.1 Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison, original name Chloe Anthony Wofford. She was born February 18, 1931 and died on August 5, 2019. Toni Morrison is an American writer noted for her examination of Black experience particularly Black female experience within the Black community. She received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993.

Toni Morrison, meanwhile, helped promote Black literature and authors when she worked as an editor for Random House in the 1960s and '70s, where she edited books by such authors as Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones. Morrison herself would later emerge as one of the most important African American writers of the twentieth century. Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970. Among her most famous novels is *Beloved*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988. This story describes a slave who found freedom but killed her infant daughter to save her from a life of slavery. Another important novel is *Song of Solomon*, a tale about materialism and brotherhood. Morris on is the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. (Sudarsan Sahoo, 2005, p.32-45)

2.2.1.2 Richard Wright

He is African-American writer and poet Richard Wright was born on September 4, 1908, in Roxie, Mississippi, Richard Wrights put emphasis on the black experience, violence, hostility and color . He published *Uncle Tom's Children*, a collection of four stories, and the book proved to be a significant turning point in his career. More acclaim followed in 1940 with the publication of the novel *Native Son*, which told the story of 20-year-old African-American male Bigger Thomas. The book brought Wright fame and freedom to write. It was a regular atop the bestseller lists and became the first book by an African-American writer to be selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club. Furthermore, Wright's *The Man Who Lived Underground* represents a metaphor that blacks are invisible in the American society. It highlights the idea that both blacks and whites use lies for their own benefits . Wright was regarded by many writers as an inspiration among them, there was Chester Himes who began writing in prison. (Ibid, 52).

2.2.1.3 Maya Angelou

She was born on April 4, 1928. She attended George Washington High School. She studied dance and drama at the California Labor School. Three weeks later after completing school, at the age of 16, Angelou gave birth to her son, Clyde. Maya Angelo writes about these events and the first 17 years of her life in her first book. The book won popularity and was nominated for the National Book Award. Her poetry book, *Just Give Me A Cool Drink of Water* received a Pulitzer Prize nom-

ination. In 1973, Angelou started to write for television.

Moreover, she wrote articles, short stories, poetry and autobiographies.

The hope for freedom represent one of the major themes that appear in Angelou's work. *The Caged Bird* symbolizes this theme as it depicts a voice of a protest. Angelou's writings show the realities of racism and the ways the African Americans have resisted oppression. She depicts hopes and compassion in her books. She also focuses on the theme of motherhood and the relationships among African American women. (*Ibid*,53).

2.2.2 African American Literature Main Themes

Themes in African American literature include the following:

2.2.2.1 Slavery

The trauma of slavery deeply impacted African American culture. As such, it is a theme that finds its way into the literature. Writing about slavery allows African American authors to own their history rather than let an oppressive culture construct the narrative. (*Kuna, Maja,2019,p.19-25*)

2.2.2.2 Africa

Africa features prominently in African American literature, beginning with the memories of enslaved people that became a part of slave narratives. Folktales and traditions that survived the Middle Passage and made their way into African American culture add layers of meaning. Some texts feature a return to the ancestral homeland. (*Ibid*,30).

2.2.2.3 Alienation

African Americans have endured generations of oppression, and public policies, such as segregation, left them feeling like they are not a part of American society. African Americans who have tried to blend into white society have also found themselves abandoned by their culture. African American literature is a place to explore the boundaries of the color line(*Ibid*,31).

2.2.2.4 The Freedom Struggle

African American authors have added their voices and often their bodies to the struggle for freedom and racial justice. Poet Kevin Young observes that “for African Americans, the very act of composing poetry proved a form of protest.” What forms and voices does Black protest poetry take on? How does it enrich and complicate our understanding of American ideals of freedom and self-determination? (Ibid).

2.2.2.5 Black Identities

African American writers have asserted their blackness with joy, with defiance, occasionally with bitterness at the pressure to downplay Black identity or hide it behind a protective mask. How do the voices and personae in African American poetry express the richness, depth, and variety of African American identity? What sorts of expressive and subversive freedoms do authors personae and masks make possible? (Ibid,35).

2.2.2.6 Black Experience in History and Memory

The past has been both a subject and a muse for African American poets, who have lamented the foundational trauma of slavery and its legacy even as they’ve celebrated the spirit of endurance, resistance, and grace that has become central to American identity. How do African American poets make use of Black history and experience, including its heroes and its martyrs? Is African American history a source of symbolic power or a limitation for a poet? Does artistic freedom involve engagement or liberation from the past? (Ibid,37).

2.2.2.7 Black Language & Music

Black writing has deep kinship with performance: music, Black preaching, and “code switching” between forms of language and speech. What makes an African American poem African American? How do different poets make use of the links to music (spirituals, blues, jazz, hip-hop), to African cultures, and vernacular language, and to what effects? (Ibid).

2.2.2.8 Family & Community

Ties of family and community are a perennial subject for poetry. How have they been manifested in the African American poetic tradition? In what ways have African American poets depicted Black communities and their rituals? What is universal in these poems, and what is expressive of the uniqueness of the African American experience?(Ibid,42).

2.2.3 Symbolism in African American literature

The use of symbolism in each literature, in which this literary device is employed by the author to convey their agency of resistance against the white domination. Each writer has their own distinct take on symbolism in response towards the different socio-cultural circumstances of their background. The symbolism in Hispanic literature, as seen in *Los Vendidos* satirizing the stereotypical depiction of people of Mexican descent of being drug dealers, criminal and violent thug. Differently, African-American literature, based on the reading of Florence captures the zeitgeist of the Civil Rights Movements by emphasizing passive resistance in line of the racial segregation. Lastly, the present study argues that symbolism in *M. Butterfly* subvert the binary opposition between the East and the West that designate the East as exotic, feminine and submissive by instead places the Asian character in the dominant gender role.

Similar with Chicano movement, African-American ethnic movement employs theatrical performance to speak and voice their concern. Black Theatre movements flourished by several dramatists like Baraka with his *Dutchman*.

Black Theatre movement focuses on the mimetic, realistically representing the oppression and marginalization they faced in their daily life into theatrical performance. *Dutchman* explores unapologetic denunciation of racism and its articulation of African American anger, in the subway confrontation between a seductive white woman, Lula, and her victim, a middle-class black man, Baraka's plays exemplify how black are still being racially abused while actually the law prohibit any form of harassment(Sandamali,2003,p.150)

The racial segregation and demarcation between the whites and the blacks also becomes a pivotal theme in one play by Alice Childress, *Florence*. She is one of the pioneers of the Black Theatre Movement. Moreover, Childress holds the acclaim of being the first black female playwright to have a play professionally produced on the New York stage entitled *Just a Little Simple* (1950). She also holds the often-ignored distinction of being the only black woman whose plays have been produced professionally in America over four decades. Her writing is praised for its universality, uncompromising lack of sentimentality, powerful theatricality, realistic dialogue, and strong characters. Childress's first play, *Florence* (1949), is a one-act that depicts a conversation between a white woman and a black woman at a segregated bus station. Written during the ongoing racial demarcation between the whites and the whites, symbolism in *Florence* lies in the characters' action and how it reflects the zeitgeist of passive resistance by Martin Luther King Jr. King developed a philosophy of nonviolent civil disobedience based on the teachings of Indian pacifist Mohandas Gandhi and the American transcendentalist writer Henry David, in his view, "If we are arrested every day don't ever let anyone pull you so low as to hate them. We must use the weapon of love." The act of nonviolence is rejected by the "black power" the slogan of militant blacks who rejected the nonviolence of Martin Luther King, Jr and the moderate goals. (Ibid).

2.3 *Invisible Man* Review

2.3.1 *Ralph Ellison's* profile

Ralph Ellison Born in 1914 in Oklahoma City, the grandson of slaves, Ralph Waldo Ellison and his younger brother were raised by their mother, whose husband died when Ralph was 3 years old. His mother supported her young family by working as a nursemaid, a janitor and a domestic. From an early age Ellison loved music and expected to be a musician and a composer. He played his first instrument - a cornet - at age 8. By 19, he had enrolled at Tuskegee Institute as a music major, playing the trumpet. Although drawn to jazz and jazz musicians, Ellison studied classical music and the symphonic form because he was looking

forward to a career as a composer and performer of classical music.(Sudarsan Sahoo,2005,p.32-45)

In the summer of 1936, Ellison went to New York City to earn expenses for his senior year at Tuskegee. It was a fateful decision: He never returned to his studies at Tuskegee and never became a professional musician. While in New York, Ellison met the writer Richard Wright. When they first became acquainted, Ellison had every intention of returning to Tuskegee. But the Great Depression prevented him from earning the needed funds. Eventually he got a job doing research and writing for the New York Federal Writers Program, an offshoot of the Works Progress Administration. He also began writing essays and short stories for the "New Masses," "The Negro Quarterly," "The New Republic," "Saturday Review" and other publications.

With the outbreak of World War II, Ellison joined the U.S. Merchant Marine as a cook, saw action in the North Atlantic and began to think of writing a major novel. However, not until after the war did he begin writing what was to become "*Invisible Man*." From the time *Invisible Man* first appeared in 1952, it was a popular and critical success. On the best-seller list for 16 weeks, in 1953 the novel won the National Book Award. And more than 40 years later, Nobel Prize winner *Saul Bellow* declared, "This book holds its own among the best novels of the century. "*Invisible Man*" established Ellison as a serious and important literary figure, and he spent the next two years (1955-57) in Rome as a Fellow of the American Academy. (Ibid).

He returned to the United States to teach at a variety of colleges and universities including Bard College, the University of Chicago, Rutgers, Yale and New York University, among others. He always maintained his wide range of interests - from music, both classical and jazz, to sports, theater and photography - and in 1964 he published "*Shadow and Act*," a collection of essays on these and other subjects. Ellison has described the volume as an attempt "to relate myself to American life through literature."*Going to the Territory*," a subsequent collection of essays, lectures and criticism, appeared in 1986. For many years, Ellison

worked on a second, long piece of fiction, which he never completed; it finally appeared after his death in 1994.(Ibid).

2.3.2 Plot Summary

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison, is the story of the Narrator, the book's anonymous protagonist and his struggles with race and self-identity as a Black man. The author uses the contrasting settings of the American South and New York City, symbolism, and the themes of race, power, and identity to depict the struggle of African Americans through the eyes of the Narrator. The story begins with the Narrator explaining his current circumstances and then reminiscing about his youth and his experiences of racism and conflict, especially with people in positions of power. The Narrator is sent away from college and thrust into the unfamiliar society of New York City, where he hopes people will see his value as a man. At the end of the book, the Narrator is in the midst of riots in Harlem and running for his life. He returns from his reminiscences to the present, twenty years later, and realizes that he is still hiding underground but that it is time to rejoin society. This book was written in the 1940s and published in 1952 at the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement. It is the only novel Ralph Ellison published in his lifetime, and its legacy continues as one of the most influential African American novels ever written. *Invisible Man* won the 1953 National Book Award for Fiction and was on the *New York Times'* best-seller list for sixteen weeks.(Ralph Ellison, 1952)

2.3.3 Setting

The novel, *Invisible Man*, was written in 1947 by Ralph Ellison. It is a time in America when Jim Crow and segregation was alive and heavily enforced. Racism and discrimination was rapid and blatant in society. This is the setting of the book. The time in history represents the experiences of both the author and the main character. The book takes place throughout the 1920 and 30's. The first chapters of the book the protagonist is in the South. He faces heavy oppression by White society. He attends an exclusive Black college. However the college is led and directed by Dr. Bledsoe who does not culturally empower the student body and Mr. Norton a White and wealthy board member. Later, the setting of the

book shifts. In the North the protagonist lives in Harlem. Harlem is a New York burrow famous for Jazz and Black culture. In the city he comes in contact with an organization. All the while, he grows into his manhood that is expressed through pride and self-identity found in New York. Harlem is the setting of the book and also a point of transformation. He finds identity and self-discovery working with the Brotherhood, finding individuality and understanding.(Ibid).

2.3.4 Characters

-The Narrator: The Narrator is the book's protagonist. He remains anonymous and voices his observations, thoughts, feelings, and experiences as if he is viewing his life from the sidelines.

- Dr. Bledsoe: The Narrator goes to an all-Black college of which Dr. Bledsoe is the president. Dr. Bledsoe is more interested in power than education and manipulates the white benefactors of the college.

-Mr. Norton: Mr. Norton is a white administrator of and financial donor to the college and is from Boston. He thinks donating money to the college makes it his fate to carry the responsibility of the futures of young Black men.

-Mary Rambo: Mary nurtures the Narrator by sheltering and feeding him. She also encourages him to be an asset to Black people.

-Brother Jack: Brother Jack is the Brotherhood's leader. He uses his knowledge and position of authority to seek personal power.

-Tod Clifton: Tod is a member of the Brotherhood and one of its primary defenders against Ras' endless attacks.

-Ras the Exhorter: Ras is a Black nationalist from the West Indies. He disagrees with the Brotherhood's admittance of all races.

-Rinehart: The Narrator is mistaken for a man named Rinehart after he puts on dark glasses; Rinehart is a gambler, preacher, and pimp.(Ibid).

2.3.5 Main themes in Invisible Man

Here the most prominent themes which the novel has talked:

2.3.5.1 Invisibility

The most obvious theme in this novel is invisibility. It is clearly observed in lack of identity, hospitalization, and being ignored by the rest of society. The protagonist's feelings are ignored by the Brotherhood when he gave a speech and memorial to honor a murdered friend. Credibly, Ellison's narrator explains that the outcome of this is a phenomenon he calls "invisibility" the idea that he is simply "not seen" by his oppressors. Ellison implies that if racists really saw their victims, they would not act the way they do. The narrator recognizes his invisibility slowly in moments like the hospital machine, when he realizes he is being asked to respond to the question of who he is in terms of his blackness. Ultimately, the narrator is forced to retreat to his hole, siphoning off the light from the white-owned power company, itself a symbol of an underground resistance that may go unacknowledged for a long time.

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. This is true for the narrator both at the unnamed black university and at Liberty Paints. However, it is the Brotherhood, a thinly veiled take on the Communist Party, that proves to be most disillusioning for the narrator. The Brotherhood provides a systematic way of thinking about the world that claims to be the solution to racism and inequality. (Ibid).

2.3.5.2 Blindness

Blindness constitutes a major motive in Invisible Man, whether as a literal handicap or as figurative inability to see others. Literal blindness is seen throughout the book. During the battle royal at the start of the novel, the protagonist and the other boys are blindfolded during the fight. This way, the boys cannot see each other and the White audience who set up the fight and watching it for sport. However, blindness is also seen in the Brotherhood. Brother Jack is the leader of the Brotherhood. When Brother Jack and the protagonist get into an argument about the Brotherhood and the Black community, Brother Jack's eye falls out. The false eye is a

literal example of blindness in the story. Jack is blind to the needs of the Black people. Jack can only see through the eyes of the organization. Blindness is also figurative. In his first official speech with the Brotherhood, it discusses the figurative blindness of society. *"They think we're blind – uncommonly blind... they've dispossessed us each of one eye from the day we're born. So now we can only see in straight white lines"*, (Ellison, 346). Blindness is used as an expression to describe those who are naive to themselves and society. *"I was blind to understand that he was just a tool used by the Brotherhood and the rest of the world"*.(Ibid).

2.3.5.3 Identity

Identity and self-discovery is another theme. It is emphasized in the beginning and end that the protagonist of the book is also its creator, and that the writer of the book is itself part of the experience and the discovery of an identity. The aim of the book is identity. Identity is more than a culture, a gender, or age. Identity reflects a person's individuality, a person's values and beliefs. Through attending in all Black college and participated in a Black organization. Through these experiences the protagonist was able to find his identity. This includes his identity as an invisible man, as a Black male, and as an individual who struggled to find his identity even while in the Brotherhood.(Ibid).

2.3.5.4 Racism

Racial oppression is one theme that is obvious. The protagonist is invisible because of his culture. A Black man faces many obstacles. He is admitted and expelled from college because of his race. He is used as a science experiment when he gets hurt at the paint factory because he is Black and invisible.(Ibid).

2.3.5.5 Stereotype

Stereotype is also a theme in the novel. While working at the paint factory and for the Brotherhood, there are many stereotypes. The paint factory bragged to make the most perfect white paint. The irony is that the ingredient for white paint is to add black paint. In addition, although the factory makes the purist white color, the person who makes it is Black. Stereotypes like this are also seen in the Brotherhood because the Black organization is managed by Brother Jack a White man. Lastly there are

stereotypes of women. Another female character Mary is also stereotyped throughout the book. She is considered a typical mammy figure. "Because of her deep impact on the protagonist and her deeper impact on the narrative, Mary demonstrates that Ellison's female characters may reach beyond their own seemingly superficial mold".(Ibid).

2.4 Conclusion

As it has been exposed, there are a various African American literature themes. In this chapter, we have briefly taken a glimpse about the most famous African American literature figures. Likewise, symbolism seemed to take a large space in African American literary works language and many writers preferred to use this tool in their works. Practically, Ralph Ellison' Invisible Man is introduced as one of the most good example that clearly use symbolism. Undeniably, this would be clarified in the practical chapter.



CHAPTER-III. Symbolism in Invisible Man

3.1 Introduction

Symbolism is an outstanding literary device used in African American literature. Ralph Ellison is one of the famous African American writers who depend on this device in order to convey messages on the one hand, and to protest for blacks rights on the other hand. Eventually, we used to choose *Invisible Man* novel so as to investigate Ellison's abundant use of Symbols to convey his major themes.

As it has been mentioned previously, *Invisible Man* has a great deal with symbolism. Thus, it would be hard to work on all the symbols to be presented in our work. Consequently, this chapter is adhered to tackle with three predominant symbols which are objects, colors and numbers, how they used in the novel, and what they stand for.

3.2 Object Symbolism

Object symbolism is seems to be the most expressive tool from which Ellison draws many of his symbols and images. The following elements are especially significant throughout the novel:

3.2.1 The Sambo doll

The Sambo doll is made in the image of the Sambo slave, who, according to white stereotype, acts lazy yet obsequious. Moreover, as a dancing doll, it represents the negative stereotype of the black entertainer who laughs and sings for whites. While the coin bank illustrates the power of stereotype to follow a person in his or her every movement, the Sambo doll illustrates stereotype's power to control a person's movements altogether. Stereotype and prejudice, like the invisible strings by which the doll is made to move, often determine and manipulate the range of action of which a person is capable. (G.M,2020,p.62-65)

3.2.2 The Coin Bank

The coin bank in the shape of the grinning black man (Chapter 15) and Tod Clifton's dancing Sambo doll (Chapter 20) serve similar purposes in the novel, each representing degrading black stereotypes and the damaging power of prejudice. The coin bank, which portrays a grinning slave who eats coins, embodies the idea of the good slave who fawns over white men for trivial rewards. This stereotype literally

follows the narrator, for even after he has smashed the bank and attempted to discard the pieces, various characters return to him the paper in which the pieces are wrapped. Additionally, the statue's hasty swallowing of coins mirrors the behavior of the black youths in the "battle royal" of Chapter 1, as they scramble to collect the coins on the electrified carpet, reinforcing the white stereotype of blacks as servile and humble.(Ibid).

3.2.3 The Dark Lenses Glasses

When the narrator puts on the dark-lensed glasses, the citizens of Harlem immediately begin to mistake him for a man named Rinehart. The glasses are a sign of the unexpected fluidity of identity. For instance, after a few moments of wearing the glasses, the narrator finds himself acting differently, beginning the play the role of the man for whom he has been mistaken. The narrator finds it easier than he expected to inhabit a new role, a sign of the many unexplored possibilities that belong to every person. However, the glasses have their limits, as the narrator finds them crushed later during the Harlem riot.(Ibid).

3.3 Symbolism in Colors

Colors were amongst the strong symbols used to convey the meaning in *Invisible Man* which created a profound impression on the reader. Regularly, the author used five colors which are: red, green, black, white, and blue. The diversifies references of these colors show the narrator's emotions and his progress throughout the narrative.

3.3.1 Red

Red is a color of love, power, and fire. It is used in literature to symbolize roses, fire, and blood, faces turns red when they show shame, humiliation, and anger.(Ferber,1965,p.169). Using red color in literature is interpreted accordingly. Clearly speaking, in western culture, red is a symbol of love and passion. However, it is a color of death and grief in the African culture. In the novel *InvisibleMan*, Ellison tended to use both African and western red color symbolism. In chapter thirteen, Ellison used red color to represent danger which is lead back to Brother Jack's red hair. The later has been sitting with the narrator who stated that he had predicted some-

thing bad will happen. In chapter nineteen, Ellison used red color again to symbolize love and passion when the narrator has a date with a woman dressed in red. Furthermore, it represents shame and anger, the narrator states:” *I looked at the floor, a red mist of anguish before my eyes.*” (Ellison,1952,p.58).

Additionally, red color appears constantly throughout the novel. Ellison refers to this color many times by using the word blood. The later symbolize the violence and pain that blacks suffer in America. After the Battle Royal the narrator says” *It’s my blood, my face is bleedin. I stand there holdin’ my face and tryin’to keep the blood from flowin .The blood was runin’ all over my clothes...*” (Ibid,65) He also refers to blood in Tod Clifton’s funeral “*...and this blood spilled out like any blood; red as any blood, wet as any blood and reflecting the sky...*” (Ibid,456).

3.3.2 Green

Generally, green is associated with springtime. In literature it can be interpreted according to western or African cultures. In the former, green symbolizes prosperity and jealousy and sometimes wealth since it is the color of the dollar. In the later, green refers to corruption (Stewart). Ellison used this color in chapter twenty three when the narrator disguises himself by pair of green dark glasses. When Harlem citizens do not realize him, he appreciates his experience and learns how it is important to be invisible. The narrator states “*They were of green glass so dark that it appeared black, and I put them on immediately...it was almost dark now, and the streets swarmed in green vagueness*” (Ellison,1952,p.482-483). Moreover, green color is used also when Washington claims that green is also the color of lush campus verdure and money that are the narrator’s main motivator.

3.3.3 Black/ white

It is common that the color white is associated with purity and peace while black is linked to evil, sadness, and vagueness. However, in the novel Invisible Man white is the color of revulsion. Ellison used to choose African culture to employ black and white colors as he wants deliberately to foster the narrator’s own perspective. African people use white color to symbolize the spirit world while black implies wisdom and age (bethuhnay)

In *Invisible Man*, black is used to expose everything good and positive. For example, black power house “*paralleling the black powerhouse with its engines droning earth-shaking rhythms in the dark*” (Ellison,1952,p.34). Whereas white is linked to negative things. For instance, the white blindfolds, the white fog, the optic white produced by the Liberty Paint Factory and Brother Jack’s buttermilk and white glass eye. (Washington,1960,p.100).

3.3.4 Blue

The color blue is interpreted accordingly. That means it may represent good or bad things according to the situation. In literature, blue may symbolize trust, calmness, and serenity or it symbolizes illness, depression, and loneliness.

In *InvisibleMan*, Ellison uses the color blue to refer to the blues, a sort of African American folk music or a tragic song, which is typified by verses that explores the misery and the sadness pain of lost love (Washington,1960,p.99). This color is mentioned first in Louis Armstrong’s song “*What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue?*” (Ellison,1952,p.3). Intentionally, Ellison refer to this song in order to expose the narrator’s endeavor to define himself and to fight all the hardships, misery, and difficulties that prevent him from being a black in a white dominated society. In one of the scenes, the narrator compares himself to Louis Armstrong. Both of them suffer from invisibility. They are powerless, oppressed and mistreated. “*Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you’re never quite on the beat. Sometimes you’re ahead and sometimes behind...That’s what you here vaguely in Louis’ music*” (Ibid,8). At last, The Blues symbolize the bitterness of life that Black men and women overcome due to their religious faith and hope of better future.

3.4 Number Symbolism

Number symbolism is common in mythology and the Bible, from which Ellison draws many of his symbols and images. The following numbers are especially significant throughout the novel:

3.4.1 Three

Three is widely regarded as a divine number. Many myths and religions have triads of hero-gods: the ancient African deities Ogun, Obatala, and Sango; the Greek gods Zeus, Hera, and Poseidon; and the Christian Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The universe moves through three cycles (growth, dissolution, and redemption) which mirror the three phases of the life cycle (birth, life, and death). In Greek and Roman mythology, the heroic quest consists of three stages (departure, initiation, and return). In the European worldview, time is divided into three parts: past, present, and future, but according to the African worldview, reality consists of three worlds: the worlds of the ancestors, the living, and the unborn. In the novel, the number three occurs at several key incidents: Waiting to give his speech on "Dispossession" at the sports arena, the narrator sees three white mounted policemen on three black horses. He notices three brass rings among Brother and Sister Provo's possessions. Trying to escape from Ras's men, he sees "three men in natty cream-colored summer suits . . . wearing dark glasses." (*G.M, 2020, p. 65*)

3.4.2 Seven

Seven signifies completeness and perfection: seven wonders of the ancient world, seven seas, and seven ages of man. According to the Bible, God created the world in seven days. Biblical scholars also refer to the seven last words of Christ, meaning the seven last sentences Christ allegedly uttered, compiled from all the Gospels. According to the Jewish religion, there are seven heavens, of which the seventh is the place of God. In his classic book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois refers to "the Negro" as "the seventh son." In the novel, Dr. Bledsoe gives the narrator seven letters addressed to seven prospective employers. By focusing on the number seven, Ellison underscores Du Bois' statement, highlighting the narrator's experiences as symbolizing the experiences of black men in white America. (*Ibid*).

3.4.3 Twelve

Twelve, like seven, symbolizes completeness and perfection. But in African American folklore, the number twelve also refers to playing the dozens - a wordplay ritual that often involves insulting one's mother. Animal Symbolism Animal symbolism pervades the novel. Men, referred to as snakes, dogs, horses, and oxen, mirror the violent, chaotic world of the twentieth century, in which humans (primarily men)

often behave like animals. The animal symbolism in the Northern scenes also underscores the images of life as a circus and New York as a zoo.(Ibid).

3.5. Conclusion

African American writers depend on symbolism to protest for blacks rights in America in general and in the south in specific. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is one of the African American works that is full of symbols which enable the writer to convey his themes of racism, identity, invisibility, and blindness. Through symbolism, he was able to portray black's community in the south and the hardships and confusion that blacks suffer in the 1940s and 1950s.



General Conclusion

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is written and published in a period of an extreme racial confusion in America when blacks start to protest for their rights and stand against racism that whites practise on them many years ago. The novel tells the story of nameless black man who suffer from inequality, pain, segregation, isolation, loneliness, and alienation throughout his journey. Despite the fact that the protagonist is not physically invisible, most of the characters refuse to see him. Thus, he feels alienated and decided to stay away from society.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* sheds light on number of social and psychological problems facing African Americans in the twentieth century through an effective, powerful, and outspoken narrative created by the writer.

In fact, African American writing gone through a great deal of periods by protesting for blacks rights using different literary devices the most important one is Symbolism. So among numerous African American writers in twentieth century, Ralph Ellison is a major figure of that era, whose works are outstandingly full of Symbols and imagery. Especially his masterpiece *Invisible Man* in which he used variety of symbols in order to portray the community of blacks in America and to represent his characters, in particular his protagonist, the nameless black man as alienated and invisible man because of his skin color. Thus, Ralph Ellison overlords his novel with symbols to give the prominence toward the issue of blacks in America. As well as giving importance to his characters , the author used many symbols to give more depth for his themes, since they are considered the messages that he want to convey to his readers, additionally, Ellison 's symbolism is an important technique in addressing topics indirectly and in expressing his opinion toward racism in America in the twentieth century.

In a nutshell, the symbols used by Ralph Ellison in his novel *Invisible Man*, have far deeper significance , and this work has focused more on the major ones trying to explain their meanings in order to add an extra meaning to the novel.

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Abstract

Symbolism is the idea that things represent other things. It is knownly considered as one of the most representative tool in a literary work since it mainly contributes a sense of significance to the central idea and it helps to create a set of emotions and meanings on one hand and to allow the author conveys something to the audience on the other hand. Significantly, this study aims to highlight symbolism in Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man*. The latter is highly symbolic novel in African American Literature in which racism is one among many themes and issues are talked. Hence, study tackles how Ellison "in a symbolic way " portrays the themes of racism, invisibility, identity and blindness that black people suffered from during the 1940s and 1950s. Thus, This topic will be analyzed by using the qualitative methodology which is most appropriate to clarify the symbolism manifested through this novel.

Key words: Symbolism, Ralph Waldo Ellison's *Invisible Man*, racism, invisibility, identity, blindness.

الخلاصة

الرمزية هي الإشارة والتلميح والإيحاء، أي التعبير غير المباشر عن أشياء أخرى. من المعروف أنها تعتبر واحدة من أكثر الأدوات تمثيلاً في العمل الأدبي حيث أنها بشكل أساسي لها معنى مهم للفكرة العامة وتساعد على إنشاء مجموعة من المشاعر والمعاني من ناحية و من ناحية أخرى تسمح المؤلف بنقل شيئاً للقارئ. تهدف هذه الدراسة بشكل كبير إلى تسليط الضوء على الرمزية في رواية *Invisible Man* لـ رالف إليسون. هذه الأخيرة هي رواية رمزية للغاية في الأدب الأفريقي الأمريكي حيث العنصرية هي واحدة من بين العديد من الموضوعات والقضايا التي يتم الحديث عنها. ومن ثم ، تتناول الدراسة كيف يصور إليسون - بطريقة رمزية - موضوعات العنصرية والإخفاء والهوية والعمى التي عانى منها السود خلال أربعينيات وخمسينيات القرن الماضي. وبالتالي ، سيتم تحليل هذا الموضوع باستخدام المنهجية الكيفية الأنسب لتوضيح الرمزية التي تتجلى في هذه الرواية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الرمزية ، *Invisible Man* لـ رالف والدو إليسون ، العنصرية ، الاختفاء ، الهوية ، العمى.

Résumé

Le symbolisme est l'idée que les choses représentent d'autres choses. Il est reconnu comme l'un des outils les plus représentatifs d'une œuvre littéraire puisqu'il apporte principalement un sens à l'idée centrale et qu'il aide à créer un ensemble d'émotions et de significations d'une part et à permettre l'auteur transmet quelque chose au public d'autre part. De manière significative, cette étude vise à mettre en évidence le symbolisme dans le roman *Invisible Man* de Ralph Ellison. Ce dernier est un roman hautement symbolique de la littérature afro-américaine dans lequel le racisme est l'un des nombreux thèmes et problèmes abordés. Ainsi, l'étude aborde la façon dont Ellison "de manière symbolique" dépeint les thèmes du racisme, de l'invisibilité, de l'identité et de la cécité dont les Noirs ont souffert au cours des années 1940 et 1950. Ainsi, ce sujet sera analysé en utilisant la méthodologie qualitative qui est la plus appropriée pour clarifier le symbolisme manifesté à travers ce roman.

Motsclés : Symbolisme, *Invisible Man* de Ralph Waldo Ellison, racisme, invisibilité, identité, cécité.