

## Blindness And Sight In Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man

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### Abstract

The Civil Rights era has been an era of struggle for the African American in the United States. Thus, many writers devoted their writing to reflect the racism and discrimination that many have suffered from, among them is Ralph Ellison.

Ralph Ellison is a 20th century African-American writer and scholar best known for his renowned, award-winning novel *Invisible Man*. He illustrates the powerful social and political forces that conspire to keep black Americans in their place, denying them the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness guaranteed to all Americans. *Invisible Man* is a 1952 novel that addresses many of the social and intellectual issues facing African-Americans in the twentieth century. It examines two key-concepts of the 40-50's black literature: blindness and sight in racism. Presenting the concepts of blindness and sight, Ellison introduces the reader to the complex nature of this problem and its subjacent factors. It is told in the form of a first-person narrative, *Invisible Man* traces the nameless narrator's physical and psychological journey from blind ignorance to enlightened awareness. It is the story of a young, college educated black man struggling to survive and succeed in a racially divided society that refuses to see him as a human being. Thus, this research paper begins with an introduction which gives an account of the novel and highlights in the writer's life, Ralph Ellison. The body analyzes the novel of *Invisible man*, through the blindness and sight of the characters. The conclusion sums up the findings of the research paper.

### العمى والبصيرة لرواية الرجل الخفي لـ رالف إليسون

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#### المستخلص

كانت فترة إقرار قانون الحقوق المدنية فترة صراع من أجل إثبات هوية الأمريكيين من أصل أفريقي في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. لذا كرس العديد من الكتاب الأمريكيين من أصل أفريقي معظم أعمالهم الأدبية لتعكس واقع التمييز العنصري ومن بينهم الكاتب الأمريكي رالف إليسون.

رالف إليسون كاتب أميركي من أصل أفريقي اشتهر بروايته *الرجل الخفي* والتي حصلت على العديد من الجوائز. ركز في أعماله على بيان تأثير الفوارق الاجتماعية والأنظمة السياسية التي أدت إلى تدهور أمور الأمريكيين من أصل أفريقي وتخليقهم بعدم حصولهم على فرص من أجل التقدم وحرمانهم من حقهم الطبيعي في الحرية والحياة السعيدة لتحقيق مجتمع قائم على المساواة ذو فرص مضمونة لجميع المواطنين الأمريكيين بغض النظر عن انتمائهم العرقي. *الرجل الخفي* (1952) رواية تناولت العديد من القضايا الاجتماعية والفكرية التي واجهت الأمريكيين من أصل أفريقي في القرن العشرين. إذ ركز الأدب الأفريقي الأمريكي في فترة الخمسينات والستينات من القرن الماضي على تأثير مفاهيم البصيرة والعمى على المشهد آنذاك. من خلال هذه المفاهيم يعكس إليسون للقارئ الطبيعة المعقدة للعنصرية في المجتمع. هي رحلة جسدية ونفسية من الجهل إلى الوعي. رحلة رجل مجهول، بدون اسم، حاصل على شهادة جامعية، يكافح من أجل البقاء والنجاح في مجتمع منقسم عرقياً يرفض رؤيته كإنسان. لذا يتضمن هذا البحث مقدمة تناولت الفترة التاريخية للرواية ويسلط الضوء فيها على أهم الأحداث في حياة الكاتب، رالف إليسون. والجسد هو تحليل لرواية *الرجل الخفي*، من خلال مفهوم البصيرة والعمى. الخاتمة تلخص ما توصل إليه البحث.

## Introduction

During the mid of the twentieth century, major African American literary works discuss perceptively some of the major political and aesthetic controversies woven throughout the twentieth-century, Afro-American intellectual enterprise. Amidst this flowing Afro-American literary studies and intellectual history, however, the sociological study of the black writers and intellectuals has lagged drastically.<sup>1</sup> The objective of the black writer was to recognize that his "consciousness" was attached to the people about whom he wrote.<sup>2</sup> Such recognition would enable them to construct a new way of living in the United States. Literature "encountered models for social and political discussion."<sup>3</sup> Race officially became an explicit point of contention in the academic field of Classical turns to literature,<sup>4</sup> "the human discipline," "with its "great minds"<sup>5</sup>.

African American literature raised serious questions related to essentialism; nevertheless, it opened an avenue of thought that several leading Harlem Renaissance representatives exploited. Among the themes and issues explored in this literature are the role of African Americans within the larger American society, African-American culture, racism, slavery, and equality. African-American literature has generally focused on the role of African Americans within the larger American society and what it means to be an American. It explores the issues of freedom and equality long denied to Blacks in the United States.

Ralph Ellison is best known for his novel, *Invisible Man*,<sup>6</sup> Keenly aware of the paradoxical nature of race relations in America, he earned his reputation honestly. Ellison had learned early to trust the soundness of art and to recognize the registers of blackness.

The measure of Ellison's triumph lies not so much in his work, but in the vision he imparted in it; that the sense of individual freedom must never be lost within or destroyed by the collective. Ellison's life, like his writing, was a constant negotiation, a struggle to sustain a degree of freedom in a hostile environment. The boundless inventiveness that Ellison learned to apply growing up on the profusely complex frontier, which he described as chaotic, encouraged his mind to soar and eventually found its way into his fiction. In the end, Ellison could find no better way to represent consciously and imaginatively the struggle of being American and Negro than in *Invisible Man*, the book that lays claim to an African American experience that is also uniquely American.<sup>7</sup>

Ellison believes that the pain of the Negro situation that "nothing could remove" remind him of what someone had said to him just prior to the publication of *Invisible Man*: that he had suffered too much as a Negro to allow him to "achieve that psychological and emotional distance necessary for artistic creation."<sup>8</sup> Ellison expresses how deeply the white treatment of blacks affected black life materially and psychologically.

As a novel of social exclusion, *Invisible Man* describes a culture in which the difference that separates black from white, both within society and within the mind that has internalized those symbolic pigments, is a difference of race so vast that *Invisible Man* is not merely awkward or out of place. He is invisible. Though this condition of being excluded is one that Ellison universalizes, it has its origin in race relations, and it is the initial and unproblematic meaning of the psychological reality that Ellison sought to represent blacks who had no stable, and recognized place in society.

As a representative of the Afro-American movement, *Invisible Man* made society aware of the necessity to eradicate racism through presenting the concepts of blindness and sight, by showing the reader the complex nature of this problem and its subjacent factors. His decision to relate physical sight and recognition to the mental condition of his characters displays his broader interest in black psychology as well as his recognition of the larger contemporary debate in the expanding field of psychology. Its representation of "an underground extension

of democracy,” verifies his contention regarding black American psychology.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, he highlights the state of sight and blindness, by illustrating that blindness is not only a matter of whites and invisibility a matter of blacks but blacks and whites can be mutually blind and invisible. While whites are blind because they conceive blacks as a mass rather than as individuals, blacks are blind for submitting to their inferiority and for not conceiving any white exception as an individual being.

### ***Blindness and Sight in Invisible Man***

Ellison establishes the concept of invisibility, by considering the politics of sight both in the text and in the culture that produced it. In the novel, invisibility allows Ellison to create a black male subjectivity that is fully outside of visually constructed white, heteromale hegemony.<sup>10</sup> Blindness is the state of those who refuse them as individual beings. The willful blindness of white America, Ellison implies, contributes greatly to the state of black consciousness and American psychology more broadly. Ellison did not only represent blindness and sight by the characters’ actions and thoughts, as he tried to depict them in an illustrative way. Thus, he uses metaphors, and symbols in invisible man to represent blindness and invisibility. *Invisible Man* is a story of the personal growth and development of the Narrator. The novel focuses on the life of Invisible Man as a young man and his experiences from adulthood through maturity. The narrator is older now, as he reflects on his life story backwards.<sup>11</sup>

The nameless protagonist goes on a journey that begins at the end, and from underground in a basement of an apartment in a white building outside Harlem, in new York city where it seems to him that he had found his home. None of his names is ever revealed to us, a fact that signifies his invisible state.

The prologue of the novel highlights invisibility as an existential condition. The novel begins with Invisible Man 's assertion that he is invisible and that others, when looking at him, see his "surroundings, themselves... everything and anything except [him]"<sup>12</sup> (p.3).

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. (p.3)

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 reality” (p. 3). 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 apologize. 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 blindness.<sup>13</sup> 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 blond 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.

Now in his 40s, the narrator begins by recalling his grandfather deathbed advise, which the narrator's parents mark as evidence that the old man had gone out of his mind, as he directs his son to:

live with his head “in the lion’s mouth” and “overcome ’em with yeses, undermine ’em with grins, agree ’em to death and destructions, let ’em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open”( P. 12 )

The narrator's regard these ideas as sensible and, as a result, he promises himself to act wisely even if he compromises himself.

The narrator recalls his high school graduation speech, in which he attracts the attention of the white school superintendent who invites him to give the same speech at a local hotel to the town’s leading white citizens. But when he arrives at the hotel, in the Battle Royal scene, the narrator is forced to participate in a brutal blindfolded boxing match the “battle royal”. The men demand that he participates in [this] battle royal before delivering his speech, in which we are confronted with the white men's treatment of the black as scapegoats . Through the battle royal episode, Ellison stated that he was interested in symbolizing lived experience. It reinforces racial divisions into the society and the idea of white racial superiority. The naïve narrator can draw no such conclusion about his position in the royal battle. He observes the men’s animalistic attitude but remains oblivious to the invisible social constructs authorizing the scene. Feelings of discomfort only arise from his sense of superiority over the other black boys taking part: he worries that associating with them may detract from his speech. We quickly perceive the narrator’s small-minded when he expresses shock at observing the prominent white men, behaving with drunken abandon. The white Southerners that exploit Invisible Man and the other black boys out of intoxication and disregard for human life, particularly when it is contained in a black body.

In Invisible Man blindness and invisibility are often represented by metaphors and symbols. This is clear when the boys are forced into the ring, “blindfolds were put on”(p.14). Therefore, when they "allow themselves to be blindfolded with broad bands of white cloth, two different kinds of blindness are found: a literal and a metaphorical one. For invisible man laments that he “was unused to darkness ,” which richly imparts the severity of his cultural blindness. It reflects how Ellison’s view of race relations between white men and black men, however, Invisible Man lacks the understanding ,the mental sight, to understand the white Southerners.

The boys are forced into the ring. They “grope about” and fight one another, “like blind, cautious crabs” (p.15). A boy named Tatlock, who is finally left in the ring with the protagonist, effectively blinds him in one eye:

A blow to my head as I danced about sent my right eye popping like a jack-in-the box and settled my dilemma. The room went red as I fell. It was a dream fall, my body languid and fastidious as to where to land, until the floor became impatient and smashed up to meet me (p.17).

The idea of vision, represented literally, underscores invisible man’s trust in men that would entangle him in a dehumanizing exhibition.

The night culminates with the physically broken narrator delivering the first of his several speeches. Invisible man faces objectification at the hands of racist Southerners, and he hopes

to overcome their mockery through restraint and his skill as an orator. At this point, the only way in which he is able to conceive his identity is from their perspective. The use of the word visualize, a highly charged word throughout the novel, highlights this conception. Whites can only "see" the narrator when he performs the roles expected of black men, as in this case when he can only give his speech after he has been dehumanized by the battle. Similarly, he can only visualize himself within the context of a black role that has already been officially recognized, thus, blindness is mutual. The battle connects these issues of visibility to the intersection of white power and male power.<sup>14</sup>

In those pre-invisible days I visualized myself as a potential Booker  
T. Washington. But the other fellows didn't care too much for me either,  
and there were nine of them. (p. 13)

Satisfied with his performance, the school superintendent gives him a leather briefcase containing a scholarship to the local Negro college. The dribble of bloody saliva he unintentionally drools onto his prize metaphorically forecasts the violence and chaos awaiting him on the path the scholarship commences, but the narrator obliviously runs home overjoyed by his good news. He looks triumphantly at his grandfather's photograph, but that evening he dreams of the enigmatic old man who directs him to open his briefcase. Inside he finds a letter that says, "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running" (p. 21). So begins his long journey to enlightenment.

At college the young man tries but fails to live by the visionary ideals of the Founder and Dr. Bledsoe, the college's president.<sup>15</sup> In the spring of the narrator's junior year, in Founders' Day celebration, Mr. Barbee delivers his memorable speech, a physically blind preacher, which is symbolic for the narrator's mantle blindness. His sermon exposes the college's willingness to transform any place into a space for spreading their political philosophy. Instead of preaching gospel, Barbee exhorts the students to idealize Bledsoe, the living symbol of the founder.

At the same day, Mr. Norton, a classic imperialistic explorer of the exotic, wants to make a journey to the underworld, which is symbolic as it foreshadows the narrators descent from North to South. The narrator acts as Norton's guide and driver on a sightseeing tour to the countryside. A penniless student, The narrator's boundless eagerness to please the influential patron during the trip is motivated by a hope of gifts, but, in contrast, Norton effect on the narrator is disastrous. Norton, wants to stop at what used to be a slave quarter, an old, rundown cabin in a poverty-ridden area that contrasts sharply with the idyllic campus. There, he hears a story of incest from a black farmer, Jim Trueblood, which reflects Norton's incestuous feeling for his own daughter. Ellison holds Trueblood as an example to grapple with the absurdities of African American life.<sup>16</sup> He develops a picture of the complexity of black existence. The symbolism of the farmers name ,Trueblood, he is ' true' to his 'blood' or certain about his identity, contrast with the narrators dislike for his heritage and introduces the importance of culture in Ellison's portrayal of black identity. <sup>17</sup> However, invisible man feels ashamed, disgusted, and embarrassed because, psychologically, he is still trapped in his double consciousness, as he sees Trueblood through Mr. Norton's eyes.

As I listened I had been so torn between humiliation and fascination  
that to lessen my sense of shame I had kept my attention riveted upon  
his intense face. That way I did not have to look at Mr. Norton. But  
now as the voice ended I sat looking down at Mr. Norton's feet. ( P. 40)

Norton, hearing the story, has a physical collapse. Witnessing his psychological breakdown and defeat, the frightened narrator becomes anxious about the consequence of this unexpected turn of event for himself. He drives Norton to a local bar for a drink, trying to make up for the

“damage” done at Trueblood’s cabin. He is, however, out of luck for the bar, named the Golden Day, happens to be crowded with shell-shocked African American veterans of World War I, patients of a nearby mental asylum. They treat Norton with anger and disdain, and that anger boils over into a riot. As the black southern veterans, forgotten and invisible in the eyes of the mainstream society, mercilessly attack Norton. The golden day becomes a portrayal of how a racial society works, and of the chaotic world where rules of normality do not apply. Whites impose interpretations upon Negro experience that are not only false, but effectively deny their humanity.

Norton’s self-serving vision of himself and of black–white relations thus is shaken, and the narrator is expelled from college, upbraided by the college president, Dr. Bledsoe, for being stupid enough to show a white person the reality of black experience.

Moreover, the narrator is sent north, with what he thinks are letters of recommendation from Bledsoe, seeks employment from a character named Mr. Emerson. The narrator does not meet Emerson, but at Emerson’s office he sees one of Bledsoe’s letters, which reveals that the college and its white trustees have conspired to expel him permanently, to “hope him to death, and keep him running” (p. 106), which he understands to be the message he carries as he tries to make his way in the world. At every step, being blind to realities, he is given the illusion of progress only to keep running in place, to get nowhere. He needs to break with received messages, socially ascribed roles, conventional restraints, and respectable ambitions in order to come into his own experience. Ellison in *Invisible Man* gives us an anonymous protagonist with no identity except what others are continually trying to impose on him, no strategy except his eagerness to please, in order to “reinforce a sense of alienation and hopelessness”.<sup>18</sup> In the whole spectrum of postwar fiction he is the ultimate outsider, telling his story from his underground lair. But through most of the novel he is also the man who most wanted to be an insider, to fit in and to be accepted.

He gets work at a paint factory, there he becomes under the authority of old Uncle Brockway, who represents African Americans hidden from view in actual and symbolic basements.<sup>19</sup> He is underpaid, overqualified, submissive to white, vicious to other black, especially those connected to the union. Ellison often highlights the psychological effect on the African Americans by reflecting their invisible underground authority, their ambiguous situations both in relation to those actually in powerful positions and to their low social status. When Brockway describes his own life, he speaks volumes for and about others. He speaks for African Americans who work hidden in kitchens and fields and on assembly lines and for thousands of slaves buried underground, as the society deny to see them. His description symbolizes the African American’s paradoxical insider-outsider social position.<sup>20</sup> He has been making paint for twenty-five years. His pride is partly racial. He tells *Invisible Man*:

We the machines inside the machines. . . . I know more about this basement than anybody. . . . I know the location of each and every pipe and switch and cable and wire and everything else —both in the floors and in the walls and out in the yard. Yes sir! And what’s more, I got it in my head so good I can trace it out on paper down to the last nut and bolt.” ( p. 118)

After an explosion in the factory basement, the narrator enters the hospital, a surgical white world and is subjected to several experiments by men trying to probe him of his identity, opening him up to a new sense of identity. His going to the hospital and recovery symbolizes his psychological death and rebirth. He tries to recover some of his sight and see their real status in social life as he becomes intensely concerned about his identity.

After that, the narrator experiences the Northern life, in Harlem. Harlem is a black place. It is indisputably the section of New York City reserved for African Americans, so the reference

to it as a “jungle” carries racist connotations.<sup>21</sup> Harlem is read here as a barbaric wilderness, an untamed expanse that is far too frightening and free to be conquered.

One day in Harlem, he stumbles upon the eviction of an old black couple from their Harlem apartment by a white marshal and two other men. Something has changed invisible man since his fight with Lucius Brockway. He feels immediate empathy toward the old couple when he sees their belongings thrown on the sidewalk:

And in a basket I saw... a card with silvery letters against a background of dark red velvet, reading ‘God Bless Our Home’ . . . an ornate greeting card with the message ‘Grandma, I love you’ in a childish scrawl, . . . In my hand I held three lapsed life insurance policies with perforated seals stamped ‘Void’; a yellowing newspaper portrait of a huge black man with the caption: Marcus Garvey deported. ( p. 148)

Invisible man as an observer feels deeply moved by the old woman’s sobbing, he stands in for a younger generation. Their belongings thrown in the street represent the African American, whose coveted keepsakes, ironically show the discrepancies between their cherished ideals and brutal reality. Between things, invisible man finds a relic in which there is written:

free papers. Be it known to all men that my negro, Primus Provo, has been freed by me this sixth day of August, 1859. Signed: John Samuels. Macon.” ( p. 148)

With an evidence in his hands, which is a direct link to slavery, invisible man experience a shock of recognition and he trembles as he finally sees the very root of African American existence in the united states. It forces him to reflect the links between present and past, freedom and slavery. His own life is reconstructed through the jumble of objects in front of him. He is moved to speak to the gathering crowd of black onlookers, to stoke their anger.

Look at his old blues records and her pots of plants, they're down-home folks, and everything tossed out like junk whirled eighty-seven years in a cyclone. Look at them, they look like my mama and my papa and my grandma and grandpa, and I look like you and you look like me.” (p. 151)

Yet he does not until now understand the source of his own anger, but he starts to remember the words and situations from his past and tries to link them together.

His self-searching eventually leads him to the Brotherhood, a communistic organization run by Brother Jack, a one-eyed white leader, metaphorically refers to the narrators psychological blindness. The narrator’s growth of awareness, his willingness to go with the urban flow reinforces the image of blindness and sight. In the Brotherhood the young man learns to see beyond race, but he is mocked when what he sees does not fit the current line. The brotherhood liberates him at first, introducing him to a wider world, giving him work and fully developed ideas and hope. But finally, like every other institution, tries to impose its outlook on him. It pretends to a scientific grasp of history, it claims to know what Harlem's needs better than Harlem itself. But this is ultimately exposed as another example of whites patronizing blacks and of the inflexible organization stifling spontaneity and individuality.

Ellison gives us a black version of the 1950s, the social critique of the lonely crowd and the organization man. Because he is black, no one really sees him. The brotherhood does not want him to do a thing. As they instruct him that he " mustn't waste your emotion on individuals, they do not count..... history has passed them by" ( p. 158). They object if he makes any

appeal to color, thus he wonders whether he is being used because he is black. He is simply playing another assigned role keeping the dissenting parts of himself pressed down

His friend, Tod Clifton, the poster boy for the Harlem brotherhood, has turned his back on the organization and disappeared. Clifton reappears in midtown, selling Samba dolls, whose fine strings symbolize how he himself felt manipulated. The peddling of dolls represents a spiritual or psychological death with self-destructive overtones.<sup>22</sup> When a policeman repeatedly pushes Clifton while arresting him for illegal peddling, Clifton punches the policeman and is gunned down.

Invisible man's meditation on his personal life and the history of African Americans awakes, he recovers his mental vision. As he leaves the scene of Clifton killing, he observes several black boys standing on a Harlem subway platform. He looks at their clothes and listens to them as they try to imitate the language and the wearing of down town. They speak transitional language full of country glamour. He experiences a shock of recognition. He feels "painfully aware of them", as he is unable to see them for he is blind to realities.

They'd been there all along, but somehow I'd missed them. . . . They were outside the groove of history, and it was my job to get them in, all of them. . . . I moved with the crowd, . . . listening to the growing sound of a record shop loudspeaker blaring a languid blues. . . . Was this the only true history of the times, a mood blared by trumpets, trombones, saxophones and drums, a song with turgid inadequate words?" ( p. 239)

Invisible man searches for language to express the moment as he yearns for a more permanent historical record, one that would make their lives visible apart from their trying to imitate the down town whites. Ellison here explores the sophisticated doubleness of the lives of African Americans. While testifying to the "longing" of the African American to overcome the social and psychical divisions imposed by American society, to "merge his double self into a better and truer self," But the truer self is one in which the "doubleness"<sup>23</sup> of African and American elements would continue to coexist:

In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost.

He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul

In a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. (p.215)

Invisible man organizes a public funeral for Clifton which precipitates riots in Harlem. He encounters a fight with Ras the Exhorter, a representative of militant black nationalism. Ras calls the Harlemites to quite" the stupid looting". He urges them to join him and " burst in the army and get guns and ammunition". He and his supporters see invisible man as a traitor to the black because he has given up his connection to the Brotherhood. They intend to kill him. Ras stalks him through the streets of Harlem as a rival speaker, accusing the narrator of faithlessness to the black man, seeking to align him from the Africans.<sup>24</sup> The narrator's vision of the organization becomes clearer which widens his perception of the community.

I could see it now, see it clearly and in growing magnitude. It was not suicide, but murder. The committee had planned it. And I had helped and been a tool'. ( p. 299)

However, although he perceive the brotherhood's misunderstanding of Clifton, he remains blind to the real implications of their blindness and his own. The complexity of Harlem's consciousness escaped him.<sup>25</sup>



Escaping from the scene, he falls into uncovered manhole. The manhole has been replaced by the policemen. There he finds himself lighting the content of his briefcase, his high school diploma, Tod Cliften's dancing doll, the slip of paper spelling out his brotherhood name. The narrator is finally free. He is psychologically free, having found his life by losing it. His failure to see through the realities of the society results in his exclusion from society.

The narrator ends his story with the epilogue, a closing framing device. He confesses that his reflections constitute a lesson of his own life and notes that he has been trying to be honest in recounting his experiences. Invisible man finally has a dream that the bridge rises from its position: " If you'll look, you'll see.. it is not invisible... there hang not only my generations wasting upon the water". ( p. 308)

The bridge metaphorically connects the present to the past and the future, a necessary connection for the accurate perception of American identity. The forces he sought to determine his identity has freed him from any racially defined ideology. Consequently, he rejects the roles of traditional power brokers in preference for the broader, more expansive and morally honest role of the artist. He vows to make his discovery visible through the power of his pen.

### Notes

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### Conclusion

Ellison believed in the philosophy of the ability of individuals in creating their own reality and that reality is essentially psychological or spiritual in nature. This accounts for much of his fascination with vision and sight, the ability to see the realities of the people and things as they really are. His dedication to this concept is evident in his writings, which focus on the struggles of black Americans striving to be accepted as simply Americans.

In placing much value and meaning on what people think of him, rather than on what he thinks of himself, invisible man remains un seen; and feelings of insignificance result in symbolic invisibility. He remains un seen in spite of his struggle for recognition, which should be granted in social life, highlighting the fact that one can become invisible or simply an object, living in isolation and dehumanized condition. Invisible Man appears to struggle with two ideas: one that portrays a solid social world in which he wishes to play a part, and one that renders the depth of that social world as mere surface, in which no action seems possible. His failure to see the true reality of their existence results in his exclusion from the society.

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