CHAPTER V

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Ralph Ellison's quip at the end of *Invisible Man*, "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?" has deep resonance and the line echoes and reverberates past all people inhabiting this planet. It is not only at the lower frequencies but at all frequencies that Ralph Ellison speaks for all of us. This novel transcends all barriers of caste, race, religion and region and has a unique universal appeal. When his hero goes into one of his impassioned tirades, it is as though we are hearing our own thoughts and ideas vehemently delivered through another. The varied experiences of the invisible hero from his high school graduation, employment, conflicts and tussles with situations and people, all reflect a very particularised, yet a universal saga of man. Ellison's truth is of the artist, he insists upon the variety, ambiguity, comedy, tragedy and terrors of human life. He charges his work with life and truth. Art, according to Ellison, is a celebration of human life, it is not a wailing complaint about social wrongs. Ellison has sought to capture in fiction the love and the language, the moral values, the rites and the rituals, the joy and the laughter and the tragedy and the suffering, even the craziness and madness which characterize black life in America. His hero can clearly be identified as an Afro-American, but his experience is so human that readers all over the world sympathize and identify with him. Ellison believes that the best way to group universal values is to hold fast to particularities of time, place, culture and race. Ellison's work is about man's fate and he is very optimistic about it, though he clearly reveals the chaos we live in. His narrative technique and craft supported by exuberant inspiration makes his work, *Invisible Man* an unforgettable literary endeavour.
Ralph Ellison has time and again accepted the influence of certain great writings on him. He gives a lot of credit to T.S. Eliot whose *The Waste Land* initiated him into writing. Two novels by Andre Malraux, *Man's Fate* and *The Days of Wrath* had deep influence on him. Other influences on him have been that of Dostoevsky, Melville, Twain and Faulkner. His purpose of writing has always been above the narrow view of telling the world what it is to be a Negro. He says in an interview:

I think the function of literature, all literature that is worthy of the name, is to remind us of our common humanity and the cost of that humanity. This is the abiding theme of great literature, and all serious writers find themselves drawn to spelling it out in all its detail and multiplicity. (GT, 58)

The novel is an art form that appeals to the reader through the experiences that the reader knows of and can identify with. The novel is basically a form of communication. The magic world of communion is created between reader and writer. As Ellison says:

As with all fictive arts, the novel's medium of communication consists in a "familiar" experience occurring among a particular people, within a particular society or nation (and the novel is bound up with the notion of nationhood) and it achieves its universality, if at all, through accumulating images of reality and arranging them in patterns of universal significance. (GT, 242)

The novel is an art form that has to shoulder the responsibility of society and of morality. It has evolved with the awareness among men of all places that behind the deceptive facade of social organization, manners, customs, myths, rituals and rites and religions, there is utter chaos. This awareness is conjoined with man knowing his limitations and also the possibilities within the confined structure of society. Thus society evolves and as it rejects old customs, it frames new ones.
Society is mobile and in its mobility lies hope for the salvation of humanity. It is these ideas that form the crux of Ellison's fiction. He is, as it is, obsessed with the "personal moral responsibility for democracy" which has a new dimension for Afro-Americans and a wide sense of involvement with the rest of humanity. Ellison was hurt with the racial discrimination that the blacks were subjected to in the most proud and the largest democracy in the world. The world keeps changing and people change constantly. Thus this changing world provides the novel with a ground on which great literary pieces can be erected. The world is Ellison's arena of thought and expression and so the predicament of man and his humanity are the basic themes of Ellison.

Ellison ends his essay, "The Myth of the Flawed White Southerner" with a glowing tribute to President Johnson for having understood the predicament of man in American society:

For I must be true to the hopes, dreams, and myths of my people. So perhaps I am motivated here by an old slave worn myth of the Negroes ..... of the flawed white southerner who while true to his southern roots has confronted the injustice of the past and been redeemed. Such a man, the myth holds, will do the right thing however great the cost, whether he likes Negroes or not, and will move with tragic vulnerability towards the broader ideals of American democracy. The figure evoked by this myth is one who will grapple with complex situations that have evolved through history, and is a man who has so identified with his task that personal considerations have become secondary. Judge Watkins J Waring of South Carolina was such a man, and so one hopes, one suspects- is Lyndon Baines Johnson. If this seems optimistic, it is perhaps because I am of a hopeful people. (GT, 86-87)

What Ellison means here is that the world needs men of such stature, men who can fight all persistent and prevalent circumstances, and, try to transcend their
situation. Men such as these are the crowning glory of humanity. With such men amidst us there seems to be hope.

When asked whether his novel *Invisible Man* is a protest novel, Ellison gives a good reply, implying that there is a protest everywhere. The novel speaks of the protest against growing up, it protests against the problem of finding a society that is suitable. On one level the protest lies in Ellison trying to make a story of this incident - man's vulnerability against the larger forces of the society and the universe. Ellison says:

... If the novelist tells the truth, if he writes eloquently and depicts believable human beings and believable human situations, then he has done more than simply protest. I think that his task is to present the human, to make it eloquent, and to provide some sense of transcendence over the given, that is, to make his protest meaningful, significant and eloquent of human value. (*GT*, 63)

Thus, human value is of utmost importance to Ellison. He uses the Negro experience in America as a vehicle for man's predicament in this dark and uncertain world. Ellison is proud to be a Negro. He is proud of his heritage:

... there was never any question in my mind that Negroes were human, their experience became metaphors for the experiences of other people. I thought further if literature has any general function within any society and throughout the world, it must serve at its best as a study in comparative humanity. And the role of the writer, from that point of view is to structure fiction which will allow a universal identification, while at the same time not violating the specificity of the particular experience and the particular character. (*GT*, 56)

Ellison has really lived up to this view and his writing is full of humanity, which the world seems ready to share with him. This universality in his writing has
given Ellison a rare place in English literature. Ellison has created life-like real characters. The *Invisible Man* is a kaleidoscope of varied vividly painted characters. His characters face the ups and downs, the upheavals in their lives with energy, optimism and verve. Their dilemma and moments of indecision remind us of our own human failings and weaknesses. As they tackle their problems they fill us with enthusiasm to tackle our own. Ellison's fiction has a unique quality. His characters seem to speak from the depth of their psyche. The invisible hero's predicament is so beautifully expressed that we feel it is our own. In his being knocked about by the world, we realize the many times we are forced to do things against our wishes. When the vet advises him to play the game but not believe in it, this idea of pretension and charade appeals to us, as it offers a means of adapting to the universe and at the same time being at peace with oneself. The invisible hero is at times shown to be in the doldrums, we then sympathize with him and wish to soothe his frayed and depressed nerves. The invisible hero of *Invisible Man* speaks frankly from the bottom of his heart, it is as though he thinks aloud and lays bare his heart for us to see. All the changes that come over him, and, all the situations that cause these changes are revealed in an open, bold style that is realistic. At times however, in dream sequences and other enlightening insights, the narration becomes surreal and has a haunting quality about it.

Individual alertness, sensitivity and experience are very important for Ellison. He has said:

The conception of the human condition varies for each and every writer just as it does for each and every individual. Each must live within the isolation of his own senses, dreams and memories, each must die his own death. For the writer the problem is to project his own conception eloquently and artistically. Like all good writers he stakes his talent against the world. *(GT, 275)*
So the writer has to react with the world, not with a limited minority group, even if the writer belongs to such a group. He has to speak so eloquently from his narrow limited platform that his words delve deep into the human heart in such a way that each human heart reverberates with the music in the heart, mind and soul of the writer. Universality has to be achieved with effort, vision, literary craft and technique. Ellison is blessed with ample of these.

Through his novel *Invisible Man*, Ellison speaks of the historical situation that man has to face anywhere on the earth. Ellison's mouthpiece is Jack, the leader of the Brotherhood. Jack's success as a leader depends on his knowledge of dry ideology and upon his ability to manipulate it to support his main motive, personal power. Political power is the real gain behind the Brotherhood's theory of history. History, according to the Brotherhood is an "Upwardly spiralling tunnel": one dwells either inside or outside the irrevocable turning chamber of history:

Not without religious overtones, Brotherhood history is also a kind of spirit that can "be born in your brain"; it is a storming moment that can choose special people for special tasks and "transform" them into servants for history's high calling. Where exactly the people figure in this formulation of history is ambiguous. In one scene the Brotherhood defends them as the righteous soul bearers of history, those who raise up new leaders as they need them, and even reach back into the past and name fallen heroes to direct new turns in history's path, in the next scene the brothers speak of people as ignoramuses who need only to be prodded, like cattle.

This history is one that Jack manipulates to his own interest. The Brotherhood is a "cynical twister" of history and mars men. It harms innocents, as the innocent old couple that the invisible hero sees being evicted in Harlem. Jack's view of the pathetic scene is merciless. He says of the old couple:

"These old ones", he said grimly. "It's sad, yes. But they're already
dead, defunct. History has passed them by. Unfortunate, but there is nothing to do about them. They are like dead limbs that must be pruned away so that the tree may bear young fruit or the storms of history will blow them down anyway. Better the storm should hit them. These people are old... so they would be cast aside. They are dead, you see, because they are incapable of rising to the necessity of the historical situation." (IM, 221)

Thus Jack's view of history is merciless and unsympathetic towards people, it just moves on. With this pseudo religious, scientific formula for history as a shield, Jack targets Harlem. Experience teaches the hero another meaning of history. He says that history is not a spiral but a boomerang that can come around and hit one in the eye. Boomerang is an instrument of war and sport. The grandfather had told the hero "Life is a war", and the head vet told him, "Life is a game". It is important that the boomerang be thrown by a human being. In *Invisible Man* history is revealed as a tale told not by God, or a computer, but by human beings.

Tod Clifton's death is an eye opener and the hero realizes that like Tod he has been used to achieve the malicious ends of the Brotherhood. The young hero has been used against himself and his people. Tod had become a cynic and committed suicide, rather than facing a world effaced of humans. The invisible hero has a brilliant insight, he realizes that all events are open to significance, interpretation and misinterpretation. Thus, history and all its actions are easily manipulable. And, everywhere on the globe are people who are adept at manipulating all that happens at their age. Jack is a character who is universal, who has been present through all past history and who shall thrive in the future. Where history ends and where it begins is again one and the same. The hero says in the Prologue "the end is in the beginning and lies far ahead". What is going to happen next is known, yet unknown.
As Claudia Tate says:

I predict that the invisible man's efforts to leave the underground, though valiant will be aborted time and again, since he has no mother to give him birth. As a result, not only is he without recognizable substance, and thus, invisible, he is, as Ellison says in the Epilogue, "a disembodied voice" without a face. He is an idea, an abstraction, a painful memory of a wasted life full of disillusionment. He is knowledge without matter, he is a child unborn, suspended between the fact of his conception and the impossibility of his birth. And he haunts us with the truth that the fate of utter and devastating disillusionment is not reserved for him alone. "Who knows", as Ellison admonishes, "But that, on the lower frequencies, (the Invisible Man) speak(s) for (us all)". 2

Invisible Man speaks for us all as its theme is a quest for identity, which is denied by society and also by oneself. The book takes us through a number of episodes from which he emerges as a new man, an individual with the god like power to create. We are reminded by Joyce:

Welcome o life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. (A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man)

Experience and reality create man, and, it is these complete, confident, conscious men who create "the uncreated conscience of (their) race". Ellison has used the pattern of man's mythic descent into the pit or womb, and his emergence with the power to prophecy. The going down or underground is symbolic death, and the emergence that follows is resurrection. The underground is also associated with the subconscious and the world outside and above with the world of time and reason. Man has to delve deep within himself to come to understand and know himself. The novel is cyclical in form. The narrator begins his story in an underground hole, comes out into the upper world and then recedes again into the underground hole,
which is not dark and cold but fantastically lit with 1,369 bulbs. These bulbs and light symbolically show the revelation, enlightenment and realization that make the invisible man wake up and be revived.³

The invisible hero of *Invisible Man* searches for self definition in terms of a sense of life and values gained from the unique black American experience. This quest ends in the conviction that his experience and the black experience is not unique. Cultural identity and the universal human condition merge into one. Ellison uses black folklore to bridge the gap between the uniqueness and universality of black experience. His novel, short stories and the second novel that had been only partially published are full of folk tales, toasts, songs, jazz and jokes. Ellison is insistent that the black experience on the deepest and profoundest level is of a whole. What Ellison does is that he removes the black experience from its historical time and place and replaces it in the long run of time, where he removes its distinctiveness and heightens its similarity to other experience. Ellison translates an expression of the way things work in a particular, manmade social order to an expression of the way they work in a larger, uncontrollable, cosmic world.⁴

The quest for identity in Ellison's work is the quest for manhood, and, this is a universal quest. Ellison's characters struggle to survive and make a mark and find their identity in a world that is adverse to his search, and, quite uncooperative. In his first two short stories, "Slick Gonna Learn" and "The Birthmark", the characters are young, immature and struggling against the law. The stories probe into the frustration, the irritation, desperation and helplessness of the black characters against the law that is all powerful. These characters could easily be anyone, anywhere. The
law is high-handed and all powerful in any society, and, it does come down sharply on any character that errs. Man anywhere feels himself helpless against the superior forces of society.

The Buster and Riley stories, "Mr. Toussan", "That I Had the Wings" and "A Coupla Scalped Indians" use folklore and explore the theme of identity more symbolically. In "Mr. Toussan" the boys get excited recounting the tale of Toussaint L'Overtures. The boys think of wings and of freedom and decide that if they had wings they would fly far away. Flying has always been a symbol for escape from bonds and a movement towards freedom, that spells joy and exhilaration. This quest for flight and freedom is universal.

"That I had the Wings" continues the theme of freedom through flying, but freedom in this story means freedom from the limitations of childhood and society. Riley loves aeroplanes and wishes to fly; he cannot do so, so he tries to and fails at making the chicks fly. The message here is that one can achieve whatever he wishes to if he is conscious and aware of it right from the beginning. The obstacles to manhood in the story are not social, but universal - immaturity and earth boundedness.5

In "A Coupla Scalped Indians" the quest for manhood is specifically sexual. Buster and Riley understand the power of sex to some extent. The theme here and the definition of the struggle for manhood is not specific to the black experience. It is very general and universal. The predicament of young boys is a common experience whose parallels are felt by youth everywhere.
The short story, "Flying Home" again relies heavily upon the flying symbol. Todd, the hero is a black flyer, who takes pride in his flying and appreciation from white officers, and who detests any association with fellow blacks, who seem to him ignoramuses. There are two tales within the tale of "Flying Home" and both are told by Jefferson, the lively old black. One story is about buzzards emerging from the insides of a dead horse. The other tale is about the flying done by an old black man in heaven. In heaven also the blacks have to wear a separate harness to control their flight. Yet their flight is wild and God has to rebuke them. As Susan L. Blake says:

The buzzard is a common figure in black folklore representing sometimes the black person scrounging for survival, sometimes his predators, and, always the precariousness of life in a predatory society. ⁶

The message of "Flying Home" is that manhood is inherent. It is neither tendered nor controlled by whites. To fight for manhood, escaping blackness (or oneself) is wrong, as blackness (or what one is) is one's own self, from which one cannot escape:

As Joseph F. Trimmer has pointed out, "Flying Home" also recalls the myth of Icarus and alludes to the myth of the phoenix, the Christian doctrine of the fortunate fall, and the parable of the prodigal son. The stories of Icarus, the fall, and the prodigal son all involve man trying to transcend their condition, as Todd is trying to transcend blackness. ⁷

The story is universal in theme as transcendence and search for identity are not confined to a people, but are true for all people. The final closing image of "Flying Home" is of the buzzard glowing gold like the phoenix, seems to imply he is also dying, flying "Home" to acceptance of the universal human condition of mortality,
which is not the same as the risky, precarious and dangerous existence in a predatory society. Society is predatory, this is a universally accepted fact. Man has to struggle and survive in society, and, he must find the way of confrontation and acceptance by himself, through his journey inward into himself.

*Invisible Man* is about the universal quest for identity. The hero faces a number of routines, though at the same time, quite specific struggles in his life. He goes through education, expulsion, job hunting, and a job at Liberty Paints, where he understands the industrial sub strata of America. He leaves that and joins the Brotherhood an organization that seems very idealistic and scientific but the hero realizes that it is all a façade and the real motive behind the Brotherhood's secret, sharp activities is greed for political power. They are not concerned with Harlem or the plight of the blacks. One discovers that Jack is quite ruthless and merciless. It is after the death of Tod Clifton, a fellow black Brotherhood worker, and the unsympathetic, cold and aloof behaviour of the Brotherhood that the hero breaks away. His earlier encounter with Ras had opened his eyes to his own situation. Rinehart appears and the hero realizes that the world is chaos, there are no boundaries and limitations - there are "infinite possibilities" - if he goes the Rinehart way.

The hero faces and works with a number of characters - Bledsoe, Norton, Emerson, Lucius Brockway and Jack. They all force him to do things their way, and, the invisible narrator quietly agrees, much to his later distrust and despair. The positive influences on him in his search for identity are the grandfather, the vet, (Ras as an eye opener), Mary and brother Tarp. Mary Rambo and Brother Tarp have the potential for representing a positive interpretation of the black folk perspective.
They are anchors against the tumult of chaos. They both believe in their past and use the past as a guiding light for the future. The invisible protagonist thinks of Mary as a positive stable force and she gives him the advice:

"It's you young folk what's going to make the changes", (Mary says) "Y'all's the ones. You got to lead and you got to fight and move us all on up a little higher. And I tell you something else, it's the one's from the South that's got to do it, think what knows the fire and ar'n't forgot how it burns. Up here too many forgets. (IM, 194)

Mary advocates self knowledge and knowledge of one's past as a stepping stone to the unending struggle for identity in this cold society. This formula has a universal appeal. Any reader while reading Mary's advice will nod his head in silent assent.

Brother Tarp is another force. He gives the young invisible man a square open chain link from slavery times. The hero regards it as a: 

paternal gesture which at once joined him with his ancestors, marked a high point of his present, and promised a concreteness to his nebulous and chaotic future. (IM, 294)

Brother Tarp's words that go with the gift are:

"Even when times were best for me I remembered. Because I did not want to forget those nineteen years. I just held on to this as a keepsake and a reminder .... I'd like to pass it on to you, son, ... funny thing to give somebody, but I think its got a heap of signifying wrapped up in it and it might help you to be reminded what we are really fighting against. I don't think of it in terms of but two words, you and me; but it signifies a heap more (IM, 293)

His reminder to the world is to know one's past and make the past a constant reminder for future action.
The grandfather's death bed advice and the mad vet's advice are very different. The grandfather's advice is to deceive and cheat one's oppressors and by that means overcome them. The vet advises him to play the game but not believe it. He tells him to play the game his own way. What they teach is to be oneself and refuse to be oppressed. If it can not be done boldly and forwardly it must be done shrewdly and cunningly. One has to free oneself from oppression. Today's society is one that is all powerful and pervasive in its evil and in its suppression. Everywhere there are powerful forces that make the individual bow down before them. Outright rebellion is at times impossible. It is at these stages that the vet's and the grandfather's advice comes in handy, and seem the only positive and practical approach. This is again a universal tactic of rebuffal and refusal.

The unpublished second novel of Ellison, *And Hickman Arrives* follows up on the final, universalizing sentence of *Invisible Man*: "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?". The novel is about a light skinned foundling in a black community in the South, a child-prodigy preacher named Bliss, foster son and pupil of Reverend A. Z. Hickman. Bliss grows up to be a white racist Senator from a New England State. After years the two meet again. Bliss, now called Senator Sunraider speaks ugly things against the blacks. After years of wandering away from foster father Hickman, Bliss (Sunraider) still speaks and behaves like he had been taught when he was young. The relation between Hickman and Bliss is bizarre and is the archetypal relationship of white America to black. It is one of identity denied. Through the story Ellison highlights the relation between the black and white in America. *"And Hickman Arrives", "Juneteenth", "Cadillac Flambe", "It Always Breaks Out", "The Roof, The Steeple and the People"* are all extracts of this unpublished second novel.
"And Hickman Arrives" is a mythical and metaphorical amplification of the theme of an essay Ellison wrote for *Time* and titled "What America would be like without blacks" (6th April 1970, pp. 54-55). In this essay Ellison identifies two contributions of blacks to American culture. A cultural style and moral centre - "for not only is the black man a co-creator of the language that Mark Twain raised to the level of literary eloquence but Jim's condition as an American and Huck's commitment to freedom are the moral center of the novel". Hickman is an example of American stereotype and archetype. Ellison says in his essay that an incompletely free group of people represent both the performance and the possibilities of American democracy, in the novel he suggests that the function of black suffering is to emancipate white humanity. Ellison's manipulations of folklore in Hickman subordinates black experience to American redemption.8

The Trueblood episode in *Invisible Man* that deals with incest, has been given a general universal colouring. Incest does happen in the world as it happens with Trueblood and, Freud gives an explanation for it. Incest is a natural instinct that is controlled by society's rules and norms:

As Freud theorizes and Trueblood's name suggests, incest, the consummation of an instinctive sexual attraction to a blood relative is being true to one's blood. Only the social taboos and laws of a community influence individuals to suppress and sublimate such basic drives and dreams. On this mythic level, then, Trueblood and Norton, despite racial and cultural differences, are sharers in the human condition.9

Kate is ready to use the axe and does use it on Trueblood and he is willing and ready to be punished for his act, which was a reenactment of a dream while he slept between wife and daughter (forced so by wretchedly poor living conditions). His
acceptance of the guilt and submission to punishment reveal that a black American's folk values are more intolerant of incest than white middle class values. The response of the white community is delighted and prurient. Trueblood and his wife's reaction are the most normal. Like Oedipus after discovering the act of incest, Trueblood leaves home. But unlike Oedipus, who blinds himself and becomes a wanderer to atone for his guilt, Trueblood turns to the blues tradition for vision and strength to put his responsibility and guilt in the right perspective:

One night, way early in the morning, I looks up and sees the stars and I starts singing. I don't mean to..... I made up my mind that I was goin' back home and face Kate; yeah, and face Matty Lou too. (IM, 51)

The acceptance for a terrible deed and this acceptance of one's being and its punishment place Trueblood in a general condition. His decision to go back and face the situation is a decision that may be universally acceptable.

T.S. Eliot's 'The Wasteland' depicts the modern man's predicament in this world. Eliot describes the arid barren land of the human spirit. Ellison gives credit for his initiation into writing to Eliot's The Wasteland. Many important scenes, characters and events in Invisible Man recall Eliot's The Wasteland. Ellison has created a dry devasted desert of the human spirit, reaching into the mythic past. The invisible hero's journey reminds one of the quester's journey in The Wasteland. Ellison's protagonist's search for the truth will bring spiritual revival. When the invisible hero sees and understands his invisibility and accepts the precepts of democracy, he has found the truth. What Eliot and Ellison write of are the spiritual nebulae in modern society; the people live in darkness and are lost, they do not see or comprehend a purpose in life. One of the most Eliotic passages in Invisible Man

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is the description of the college he attends.

The lush green fruit filled college is described with the images of decay, used by Eliot for the dying land of the impotent Fisher King. Ellison wants to say that the reason of the isolation felt by the hero is a spiritual sterility. Like the quester in *The Wasteland*, the protagonist must seek out the truths which will rest on spiritual vitality and strength to the black intellectual, social and cultural life as symbolized by the college. The college should stand for regeneration of the spirit and the intellect, but in the darkness and hollowness of his spirit, the protagonist cannot comprehend and discover it.

Homer Barbee praises the Founder of the college using the fertility myth. He says of the Founder, "Think of it not as a death, but a birth. A great seed has been planted. A seed which has continued to put forth its fruit in its season as surely as if the great creator has been resurrected." (IM, 102) Fertility is there in the college landscape, but the spiritually deformed and handicapped people who live in the immediate environment - the renal Bledsoe, the incestuous Trueblood and the scarred and maimed veterans - are proof that a spiritual rebirth or reawakening has not accompanied the transpiration of the infertile clay soil.

The chapel scene where Homer A. Barbee delivers his eulogy to the founder father establishes the need for spiritual regeneration in the founder's kingdom. As Mary Ellen Williams Walsh opines:

The Founder's chapel is dedicated to his "vast and formal ritual". What his people celebrate, however is "the black rite of Horatio Alger" (IM, 87), an economic, not a spiritual success story. Like Eliot's ruined chapel, the founder's chapel extends no hope for
the renewal of his land. The "thunder and lightning" in this chapel is uttered by white men. Their message to the young blacks parodies that of the sacred thunder in *The Wasteland*, the young people must "accept and love "the limited universe prescribed for them" and accept even if they do not love". 10

Homer Barbee narrates the life and death of the Founder drawing a parallel between the founder and Jesus Christ. Barbee also associates the Founder with Buddha. Yet the restority promise of the birth, death, and resurrection imagery which is found all pervasive in the chapel scene, ultimately gives way, under the rites actually practiced in the college. The rites practiced here are devoted to economic development and success, not to spiritual development and regeneration.

What Ellison is trying to depict is a well known universal truth. His college and the centres of learning in the contemporary world are bent towards economic success. Material gains, acquisitions of power and status are the deities to whom offerings are made. Faith, spiritual development and philosophy all take a backseat. Pseudo-spiritualism, as witnessed in Barbee's speech, is rampant. Thus the universality of this college description cannot elude us, though Ellison's depiction and narration in the scene is very subtle and keen.

Once underground the protagonist of *Invisible Man* assumes the role that the founder of the college has failed to fulfill. That role is the role of seer. What the invisible hero sees is the substance of *Invisible Man*. He sees that his individual plight-his invisibility to white Americans - must be viewed in the larger context of a spiritual failure in the American society. By withholding from black Americans the rights and privileges of humanity, American society has dehumanized itself.
Just as *The Wasteland* closes with an answer for restoration, so in the epilogue of *Invisible Man* the protagonist gets the answer to restore and revitalize his people. The answer rests in the affirmation of "the principle on which the country was built and not the men, or at least not the men who did the violence" (IM, 433) and in a recognition of both the diversity and the unity in the nation: "America is woven of many strands, I would recognize them and let it so remain... Our fate is to become one and yet many." (IM, 435). Despite this hope, the hero realizes that the sickness still persists. He warns - "there is a stench in the air, which, from the distance underground, might be the smell either of death or of spring - I hope of spring. But don't let me trick you, there is a death in the smell of spring..." (IM, 438) For Ralph Ellison and his hero what is most important is the renewal of spirit in which this country of which they are citizens was formed. The renewal of that spirit shall give blacks their identity:

In his national book award acceptance speech, Ellison remarked that he considered his attempt "to return to the mood of personal moral responsibility for democracy" to be one of the major strengths of *Invisible Man*. Ellison made this attempt because he saw his characters and their situation from a broadly human perspective. His allusions to *The Wasteland* demonstrate the perspective. The mythic tradition - the urge for spiritual renewal, the necessity, the sacrifice, the desire for rebirth - speaks as strongly to the condition of black people in America as it does to the isolated and alienated condition of any people.

The perspective of the hero is universal, and he emphatically makes it so by demanding instant identification in his last line - "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?" The concept of democracy has left groups of people deprived everywhere, then, the condition is not limited to America, but, is universal. When the hero speaks of the "Stench of death", any reader irrespective of caste,
nation, race shall understand the meaning of the phrase, and, accept it as part of this modern life. Even amidst the hope and progress we see around us, the misery, the inequality, the wretchedness, the moral decadence persists. Again, the hero's insight into acceptance and affirmation of the principle and not the men, has universal significance. It is something we can all identify and agree with. The principle is mostly stronger and greater than the men. Men who use violence and manipulate the principle are found everywhere. What we need is freedom from such men, and a deep affinity with the principles. The diversity and unity Ellison's protagonist speaks of is again a universal phenomena. The role the hero adopts and the point of view that he expresses is very universal. What we all feel is that Ellison does speak for all of us.

Universally again, the Emersonian view is the view of the intellectual world. Ellison tries to keep the Emerson scholar before him as his character develops and evolves. Ellison blames the hero for his fate, ignoring his plea of innocence, "The hero's invisibility," as Ellison once explained, "is not a matter of being seen, but a refusal to run the risk of his own humanity......." However harsh the indictment of society for its refusal to acknowledge blacks, there is the equally important issue of the narrator's own failure to discover who he might be and insist upon it.

The mad vet gives the hero advice that is Emersonian in theme: "Be your own father ... and remember the world is possibility if only you will discover it." The hero's problem is that he is not yet ready to undertake the challenge of self discovery. Emerson's scholar is the individual who shapes from experiences an increasingly accurate account of himself in accord with the natural law called "Polarity". The invisible hero lives other's "absurdity" and is even told in pessimistic tone,"who has
any identity any more, any way?" (IM, 142)

His realization that "when I discover who I am, I will be free" is a step in the Emerson direction. Later, when he speaks boldly at the eviction scene we know he is coming the Emersonian way. It is the Emersonian influence which makes him understand why Tod Clifton demeaned himself by selling sambo dolls. He recognizes the courage and compelling honesty with which Clifton has shaped defeat into a declaration of who he is. He finds in Clifton's example the motivation to struggle against his own self imposed bondage. The enigmatic grandfather's advice, "overcome them with yeses" and the vet's "the world is possibility" both actually urge Emersonian self reliance. His plunge downward into the "great dark hole" or still unexplained regions of his own being, is a step towards his freedom or emancipation. It is here, underground that he confronts the question of who he actually is. The narrator realizes in the Emersonian way that he is responsible to himself for conduct that earns his own respect (whether or not any one else recognizes it) and that makes him visible and active. The hero says that "without the possibility of action, all knowledge comes to one labelled, 'file and forget'. Action, self knowledge, self reliance make up a successful concoction. The universal appeal of Emerson's philosophy as absorbed in Invisible Man cannot be denied. Emerson spoke of men and women gaining moral strength and stature and doing their duties and shouldering their responsibility:

Again if as Emerson has said that the right use of books and heroes is to move the individual to his or her own effort, what happens next depends on the leader. ... the well being of society is in the readers hand, "who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you? ". In an effort to launch the reform that he envisions, Emerson concludes The American Scholar with a resounding affirmation that his call to self reliance will be met, making this a nation of individuals at last and so realizing the true
promise of democracy. Ellison reminds twentieth century America that blacks and white both must join the narrator in sustaining that momentum or forfeit any such hope.  

Ellison echoes Emerson's values through his novel and makes a universal statement.

In Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the group of black mental patients at the Golden Day sum up and foreshadow all the hero experiences. The nameless invisible protagonist is trapped in the double bind situation, a mine of contradictory demands, which make him a misfit in society, an alien. The paradox of the situation is that due to the dark skin colour, he is visible, yet invisible. R.D. Laing's concept of ontological insecurity explains the weird situation the invisible man finds himself in. Laing's theory gives us a psychological explanation for the behaviour of our hero. The novel, the escapades and experiences of the invisible hero are understood very well when Laing's theory of ontological insecurity is understood. Laing makes us go into the psyche of the invisible hero. The novel becomes a better read after learning of Laing. Apart from that, the psychological insight into Ellison's characters make his character a universal one. The psyche of men does not change, even if change occurs they are only minor and regional. Basically man is the same everywhere.

Some of the themes of the Laingian theory are mentioned here. Laing says that schizophrenia is the absence of a secure sense of personal existence. Every human being requires significance, a place in another person's world. An example of "Primary ontological insecurity" is that the person takes many measures to reassure himself of his own existence. Reality seems threatening and other people so powerful that they can, if so desired, blot out his very existence. The psychiatric patient
describes these threats as a feeling of engulfment, petrification and implosion. He fears relationships because then others can destroy him.

Ontologically insecure individuals feel torn between mind and body. The mind feels a detached observer. Such an individual may for years confirm to an image or a role which appears normal and good, but which he never feels expresses his true self. This false system he adopts is doomed to failure. Laing relies on and confirms Bateson's "double bind hypothesis" for the etiology of schizophrenia. Laing's summary is as follows:

... the experience and behaviour that gets labelled schizophrenic is a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation.... he is in an untenable position.... he can not make a move, or make no move, without being besot by contradictory and parodoxial pressures and demands, pushes and pulls, both internally from himself and externally from those around him. He is, as it were, in a position of checkmate.15

The patient cannot recognize or comment on the impossibility of his situation. This "double bind" refers to the presence of repeated, mutually contradictory inflections throughout the victim's life. He feels divided and pulled apart and mobbed by indecision and anxiety about who he should be and how and for whom. His being is fractured. He relates to others through various facades which are divorced from his true self. When a man's true self as he perceives it is never recognized, experienced and confirmed by others; when others perception of him never squares with his self concept, he can justly doubt his existence. He becomes invisible.

The similarity between the patients of Laing and Ellison's invisible hero is obvious. The invisible man, the narrator has no identity so he is used by others, constantly for their own selected functions. The double bind situation is first seen in
the Trueblood episode, which is the microcosm of future successive episodes. Damned no matter what he does, Trueblood can make no move "without sinning".
The invisible man feels he is never an actor but always acted upon. He is a tool. He feels isolated in the rigidity of an industrial society and this isolation is partly self imposed. He assumes different roles hoping for a better situation. He is driven underground in a social and mental breakdown. He is optimistic that the true self will now emerge, that does not happen, but he is in a position to relate his story.

*Invisible Man* is not a psychoanalytic novel, but, it tries to understand the individual not only in terms of past relations with the nuclear family, but in his total social contact. The invisible hero feels that wherever he turned people were ready to tell him what to do, who to be and where to go. He realizes that he accepted their contradictory views. He is always manipulated like a machine and this is his real suffering. Machine imagery is dominant in the novel. Brockway says: "We are the machines within the machines." Norton says "one individual, one defective cog". The students look out through "eyes blind." The mad veteran's comment is, "behold a walking zombie ...... a walking personification of the negative..... the mechanical man," The hospital scene also shows the hero inside a machine, feeling absolutely trapped.

Laing's patients not only feel manipulated but also that people are looking right through them. He feels people can see through his mind and soul, to the core of their very being. This is an uncanny, eerie feeling. The black industrial worker in Ellison's work is of this category. His visibility is his vulnerability. He has studied so he can be manipulated. Inspite of this, he is never really seen. That is the most frightening part of it.
There is the image of stifling immobilization which the narrator feels. It causes a sense of defeat. He identifies with Trueblood's description of a jaybird "that the yellow-jackets done stung 'til he's paralyzed - but still alive in his eyes and is watching 'em sting his body to death". (IM, 61) This image reveals the black man's flight, tortured, unable to move and yet sharply aware of his own suffering. The invisible hero calls himself a "burnt out meteorite".

The next terrible and bizarre aspect of a schizoid's experience is that to him the boundaries between self and others are ambiguous, even his genuine self feels divorced and detached from his body. The invisible hero's experience speaks of the above aspect:

I wanted to knock on the glass to attract attention, but I could not move. The slightest effort, hardly more than desire, tired me. I lay experiencing the vague processes of my body. I seemed to have lost all sense of proportion. Where did my body end and the crystal and white world begin? (IM, 181)

The threat of living in a void, placeless, faceless, everything, yet nothing, is present always. This is a hideous nebulosity from which he wants to escape. Yet, sadly he grasps a series of hollow images, that promise relief and release, but provide none. His new identities can be called self deceiving as they are only facile. These are not original. They do not define him.

The narrator suffers from a sense of guilt even when he did something right:

When I was praised for my conduct I felt a guilt that in some way I was doing something that was really against the wishes of the white folks. (IM, 14)

He is guilty and nervous. A schizoid according to Laing's analysis, is guilty at not
being what others want him to be, and also he is guilty towards himself for not being what he actually is. The psychological colouring of the novel's main character makes him a universally interesting study.

The grandfather's advice of passive compliance is a shock to his family, but is common to the psychoanalyst. The vet's advice too is one that the narrator should follow. The indecisiveness and hesitation is a flaw in the hero's character. It is insightful of Ellison to have seen the double bind situation as the root of the character's diversion and precarious sanity. The guilt he suffers of violating self and others is very relative in the psychoanalyst's world. The world is one of illusion, one set out to drive people mad. The narrator's admitting that at least half his sickness lay within himself is very apt. The closing optimism felt by the narrator is justified as he is able to escape the double bind situation and forge out his own identity. Man's spirit is such that it sees a golden lining to even the darkest cloud.

The novel *Invisible Man* and Laing's theory confirms the frightening suspicion that in these modern times, the normal and the pathological are moving closer together. Modern man always feels a disparity between the inner self and the social role he plays. It is therefore proper to suggest that the mad veteran is the centre of value of *Invisible Man*. As E.M. Kist says:

Ellison stands in the vanguard of those who perceived the crippling pressures that American industrial society places upon its black proletariat. He anatomizes the crushing, annihilating forces which turn a man into a "normal" citizen and thereby deprive him of his wholeness, indeed his very certainty of being.  

Thus the social madness that Ellison paints and captures in his novel is a universal picture of modern man's life. The psychological insight with which Ellison drew his
characters is incredible. The predicament of man in today's world has been very scientifically and realistically explained by modern psychology. The point of view of the psychoanalyst at times becomes so exact and vivid that it provides the new material for so creative and sensitive a work as Ellison's *Invisible Man*.

What is a man? What is life? What is the existence? Man faces these questions with hesitation. Philosophy can supply the answer. One is afraid of the answer which in all possibilities is going to say that man is an abstraction. *Invisible Man* tackles this problem. The invisible hero is very keenly interested in the question of life and man. Man can give himself "no rank or any limit" *(IM, 498)* and "men are different and .... all life is divided" *(IM, 499).* The world (itself) has become one of infinite possibilities *(IM, 498).* So with man because he is the sum total of varied and "separate experiences". "They were me" the invisible protagonist tells us, "they defined me. I was my experiences and my experiences were me." *(IM, 439).*

The philosophy that as long as man exists, so long as he experiences, he cannot be, he may become. But he is "possibility", he is in a state of "becoming". The invisible man says, "To know who I am, I must know where I am. Perhaps to lose a sense of where you are implies the danger of losing a sense of who you are .... to lose your direction is to lose your face".... *(IM, 436).* Why then is he invisible? . Because "recognition is a form of agreement" *(IM, 11).* Any other and he cannot agree on what his experiences amount to, nor on their validity, where he is. Towards the end of the novel, the protagonist says, "Well, I was and yet I was invisible, that was the fundamental contradiction. I was and yet I was unseen" *(IM, 383).* In spite of the concluding phase, he said, "but live you must .... and go on to the next conflicting phase" *(IM, 435)* though one does not know the next phase. Why? The hero says in going underground,
I whipped it all except the mind, the mind. And the mind that has conceives a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived ... Thus, having tried to give a pattern to the chaos which lives within the pattern of your certainties, I must come out, I must emerge. (IM, 438)

One must again travel on to the next experience because "there is a possibility that even an invisible (undefinable) man has a socially responsible role to play." (IM, 439) The result of the deliberation is that the problem of identity is a personal thing, it is all in the mind. The ultimate answer for man is: "I am nobody but myself." Ellison has rightly given this answer. He does not try to define man because man is always changing, experiencing and becoming. One cannot define this as then it would be to cut off all possibilities, and confine man within the limits of the definition. It would be like giving an existence but denying experience. It is for these reasons that Ellison neither gives a name to the hero nor defines him. He leaves man free to experience, develop and change, without any inhibition of a limited definition.

Man has to escape his situation and his exploitations to save himself from the powers of the master; the victimised man employs various formulae of cunning to defeat the purpose of his masters. In all the old African tales, Brer Rabbit is known for his cunning. He represents the ordinary man faced with more powerful beings, but often winning by his cleverness. The other figure of universal human literature is Odysseus, a hero who befriends and protects the underdog. Odysseus, the picaro, the Negro hero of Spanish tales and Brer Rabbit are all champions for the wretched class of people, the underdog. They are the little man's hero under any and every unjust regime in history. It is the order of the world that the powerful oppress the weak, and the weak discover clever ways of cunning and deceit, of flattering and fawning, of mask, to protect and save themselves.
The invisible hero when caught in the machine where he was to be lobotomized, comes up with his old ancient name and identity. The machine is a psychological equivalent of the enclosure of white society within which he struggles and survives.  

Somehow I was Buckeye, the Rabbit. It was annoying that he had hit upon an old identity....... "Buckeye" when you were very young and hid yourself behind wide innocent eyes, "Brer" when you were older. (IM, 184)

The Rabbit is the hero's hidden radical, the subversive figure, from the past, and the first personification of the figure of cunning deceit is the grandfather. On his death bed he reveals the truth to his family that he had been a traitor all his life. He had deceived and fooled the whites. He had been a spy This is the theme of the invisible black thread of dignity that runs through the book and through black life, or for that matter in the life of any alienated and oppressed group. The thread rises out of the dark past where death was the punishment for defiance, and where intelligent pride wore the disguise of compliance that secretly scorned, and so tricked the power that oppressed it. The grandfather's advice epitomizes a universal method of escape from oppressors in this world.

The mad vet is another figure whose words are laced with practical wisdom and who echoes the words of the grandfather, although in a different strain. Disguise is the modus operandi suggested by the vet. He advocates doing your own thing, in your own way, at the same time, showing that the game the oppressors want is being played. The vet says:

Play the game, but don't believe in it - that much you owe yourself. Even if it lands you in a straitjacket or a padded cell. Play the game but play it your own way - part of the time atleast. Play the game,
but raise the ante, my boy .... you are hidden right out in the open - that is, you would be if you only realize it. (IM, 118)

The vet continues:

Sure, I am a compulsive talker of a kind, but I am really more clown than fool ..... there is always the element of crime in freedom. (IM, 120)

As contrasted to the vet, we have Rinehart who is not mad but knows the world is chaos and has adapted to it. Rinehart exemplifies another universal means of escape from one's situation. Rinehart is the confidence man, who is a heartless conman who succeeds because of his pure negativity; he exists only in not being what others think he is; he drains off the other man's sincerity. There is fluid exchange in his mask and the man he is; he makes identity a momentary posture and the whim of expediency. This is another method that modern man adopts to adapt in this chaotic world:

The world in which he lived ... without boundaries ... hot world of fluidity and Rine the rascal was at home. Perhaps only Rine the rascal was at home in it. (IM, 376)

Thus through his novel, Ellison depicts the various means of escape adopted by man so that he exists. Man has to be true to himself and this is increasingly difficult and challenging in a world which denies man his humanity. The thread of identity in each man runs from his past, through his present into his future. Man does not leave it even for a moment. Yet the world is so that it always denies man his identity, which man with increasing fervour tries to retain, employing all types of devious means. Ellison speaks of the rabbit:

... The rabbit who becomes the modern existent man, who learns to hide his freedom in whatever disarming mask the moment demands, to stay spiritually alive and on the move, physically intact and in touch, and to fear, with a truly mental fear, not chaos but the dead seriousness of his own human kind. 19

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The dilemma of modern man, the calamity that has befallen him, the processes of survival are all universal. These are the problems posed and answered by Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man*. The novel's title, the two words - "invisible" and "man" are both important. It is Ellison's mode of expression that he can make his novel a kaleidoscope of the modern world and its predicament.

The dominant image in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is that of vision. The title implies the inability of people to see the hero. This invisibility or lack of sight on the part of others is a common theme. The way of the world is that the fortunate refuse to see the less fortunate. Eugene O'Neill in *The Hairy Ape* reveals the blindness of the wealthy. Ellison emphasises the failure of people to see his hero in the introductory monologue:

That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. (*IM*, 3)

This lack of sight is a modern problem. Ellison deals with the invisibility metaphor in context of the blacks and whites, but his theme grows out from the specific to the universal. Sight works both ways. One must not only be seen but also be able to see. One should be able to see his own self and his own predicament clearly. After the hero is hurt in the explosion at the factory, he undergoes an operation which provides him with new vision, new insight. He had till now accepted the world blindly but now he can see his foolishness in accepting the society and the world's governance of him. The error the hero makes now is to accept other's sight for his own vision. He accepts Jack's view without using real vision. The hero's eyes open partly after Tod's death and after his encounters with Ras and Rinehart and the
terrible riots. When he falls into an underground pit, he gets true vision.

What Ellison wants to preach here is that sight or vision is very important for man. He must first see himself and then only will others see him. In the hustle and bustle of modern life, men have become robots and machines. They hardly see the world, or what they are living through. One should be conscious of himself. Ellison by revealing the trauma and torment of people who do not see, teaches us to use sight as a blessing to humanity. Ellison's message for the individual is to see himself and improve himself. Man should also develop sympathy and kindness and see other humans.

In American literature, the Running Man is a tradition and a metaphor that reveals a facet of the national character. This metaphor has been used by Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, Twain, Wright, Fitzgerald, Baldwin and Ellison. The running man is the protagonist who rejects the values of the culture or society in which he finds himself by birth, circumstances or compulsion, and literally takes to flight. Earlier man ran from something to something - slavery to freedom, settlement to the frontier. Running in the twentieth century is very complex and ambiguous. Running has now metaphorically become an escape from society and identity, an inward journey or exploration of the self, a search for meaningful social identity, and a criminal activity on the conman level. In other writers the running men run due to their own wish and choice. This does not happen in Ellison. In the novel the invisible hero keeps making blunders and is pushed into various escapades. Ellison's protagonist is essentially a runner by coercion, precipitated into flight by some unwitting but irrevocable blunder. His faux pas are self initiated but they are governed by some forces of outside power: The southern white power, the black
college, the factory system, the unionism and the Brotherhood. Each is an experience to the invisible hero, and, from each after a blunder he runs into the next. Only when he physically stops running, in the underground hole, does he understand the crux of his problem and manages to find a solution. Now he does not run. The Prologue and the Epilogue are the only parts of the novel where the hero is static; the part of the novel between is full of movement and running.

Modern man is also always on the run. Even he at times, runs out of his own decision, and, at others, due to his blunders. There is no martyr complex in Ellison's hero. He does not want to sacrifice himself. He is the unheroic modern man, fleeing from chaos towards a world with some sense of order, which if he cannot find in the world, he can at least see exist in his own mind. The protagonist divests himself of all past identities. Yet, he knows his underground life is not permanent:

I must come out, I must emerge. (IM, 438)

His liberalization will be over and he is braced by possibility and by the responsibility to come above the ground. Ellison is the only writer who shows both the positive and the negative aspects of running. His hero speaks of both the black and the white man of the 20th century. As Phyllis R. Klotman says:

For running man is twentieth century man, his flight is away from invisibility (non identity) towards a visibility (identity) which he has at least some role in shaping. Invisibility, in Ellison's novel is not due only to colour, or its absence, but to the fact that such is the human condition, the fate of man impotent in the face of powerful dehumanizing forces of contemporary society. Ellison's sense of the total community is implicit throughout the book and explicit in the Epilogue. In trying as he does continually, to solve the conundrum of his grandfather's death bed advice, the narrator comes close to a comprehension of the responsibilities of the Negro as a "center of knowing". 21
Ellison's running man not only comes from the tradition of the fugitive slave running for his life, but from the longer literary tradition that saw the Negro as a symbol of humanity. The Negro's contribution after all the running is a lot:

Was it that we of all, we most of all, have to affirm the principle, the plan in whose name we had been brutalized and sacrificed - not because we would always be weak not because we were afraid nor opportunistic, but because we were older than they, in the sense of what it took to live in a world with others and because they exhausted in us, some - not much, but some - of the human greed and smallness, yes, and the fear and superstition that had kept them running. (Oh, yes, they are running too, running all over themselves.) (IM, 433-34)

Thus in the modern world it is not only to save one's life, or to escape from an unbearable situation that one runs, but also from human greed, for materialistic gains, for power and money and status that man is always running. Modern man's fears and superstitions and prejudices also keep him running. In today's modern world it is not only the underdog that suffers from an identity crisis but also the others who outwardly appear confident. In Invisible Man, the hero fights and runs for his identity. Dr. Bledsoe of the black college runs cunningly and cleverly to keep his position as he is nervous at the thought of losing what he has gained; he is shrewdly manipulative and a running man who runs to keep himself and his ego untouched. Mr. Norton, the white benefactor of the black college runs to keep up his pseudo-philanthropy, his incestuous feelings for his daughter provide him the spur to run, and, gain a name in the outside world as a large hearted benefactor. Jack, of the Brotherhood runs after personal power, his organization is pseudo-social; it is actually a political organization and Jack aims ruthlessly for political power. One of his brother's Tod Clifton dies, and he does not even wince, instead he is annoyed at the protagonist's funeral oration for Tod. This is pseudo-brotherhood indeed. Lucius
Brockway of the Liberty Paints factory is also running. He runs to maintain his position and imagined monopoly at the factory. He believes in the identity the whites have given him and is fiercely protective about it. He believes that the whites depend upon him, and, runs to keep this illusion alive. Trueblood, the incestuous black farmer runs from his sin, but runs back to his duties as a man of the house, and runs back to whatever punishment and penitence he might be required to do to wash away his sin. The grandfather and mad vet are also running and on the move. They run to keep their pride and self respect alive, by using cunning, deceit and shrewd pseudo-affirmation to the demands of the whites. They run to keep the true traditions of black culture and identity alive. The advice that the grandfather gives at his death bed haunts the young protagonist and keeps him running.

Thus, *Invisible Man* gives the metaphor of the Running Man wide meaning. Ellison's clever use of this metaphor shows the universality of his concept. He paints a very true picture of this modern world. Each and every character of the novel seems to be running towards something, that evades his grasp and is elusive. This is truly twentieth century man. Ellison's view of the complexities, challenges and psychological problems of today, shows that peace and tranquility have been stolen from man, and this has been replaced by constant tension. Each reader when he realizes the running man metaphor shall be shaken awake to his own running. But, even if he wishes, he cannot now stop running. The inner compulsion shall always keep him running.

The closing chapter or Epilogue of *Invisible Man* is the crowning feature to the theme of universality, chased through the novel by Ellison. Each and every word of the Epilogue sinks in so deep into one's psyche that the line, the demarcation
between the protagonist and the reader disappears—they merge into one! This is dramatic—the points of view of Ellison, his narrator and the reader become one. One just cannot contradict, one feels so much a part of it. It is as though one is thinking aloud or reading typed material that has just come off the computer of one's brain.

Ellison deals with today's moral dilemmas, that mainly arise out of, emerge from the invisibility modern man experiences in an impersonal, selfish and ruthless world. The sense of ethics gets distorted due to one's silent suffering of one's invisibility, non-entity and non-identity:

When one is invisible he finds such problems as good and evil, honesty and dishonesty of such shifting shades that he confuses one with the other, depending upon who happens to be looking through him at the time. (IM, 432)

In this world of changing values, the need to please others and that "others" including again many others, one gets into an unsolvable moral dilemma. Many times people do so much to please others that they make themselves feel wretched:

So I became ill of affirmation, of saying "yes" against the nay saying of my stomach - not to mention my brain. (IM, 433)

and again, the hero says, echoing many men of this age:

As I was pulled this way and that for longer than I can remember. And my problem was that I always tried to go in every one's way but my own. (IM, 433)

Introspection can solve half the problem. As the introspection takes one to the root cause of the problem, the sickness:

The fact is that you carry part of the sickness within you, at least I do as an invisible man. I carried my sickness and though for a long time I tried to place it in the outside world, the attempt to write it down shows me that at least half of it lay within me..... But live you
must, and you can either make passive love to your sickness or burn it out and go on to the next conflicting phase. (IM, 434 - 35)

Ellison accepts the world in all its bitterness and sweetness and preaches that we do the same. He is ready to accept the mistakes he made in understanding the world, in trying to confine it. He expects the same of us. Through the protagonist he tells us:

No indeed the world is just as concrete, ornery, vile and sublimely beautiful as before, only now I better understand my relation to it and it to me... I lead a public life and attempted to function under the assumption that the world was solid and all the relationships there in. Now I know men are different, that all life is divided and that only in division is there true health... Whence all this passion towards conformity anyway ? - diversity is the word, let man keep his many parts and you'll have no tyrant states ...... life is to be lived, not controlled, and humanity is won by continuing to play in face of certain defeat. Our fate is to become one and yet many. (IM, 435)

So, the antidote Ellison prescribes for the world's ills is complete freedom and lack of control. He advocates large heartedness and tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Within this diversity, man has to maintain and enjoy his own separate self. So man in his time is one and yet many.

Expression, an outlet, a vent for one's feelings and thoughts is necessary for mental health. The world will be a happier place if the people within it are happy. For true happiness, a bottled down, suffocating feeling is very undesirable. It is for this reason that Ellison's hero decides to pen down all his thoughts, values and experiences. This expression, according to him, fulfills a social role, as it teaches others a way to deal with and come to terms with the complexities of their life.
Expression brings out the clarity of one's perspective:

So why do I write, torturing myself to put it down? Because inspite of myself I have learned something. Without the possibility of action all knowledge comes to one "file and forget", and I can neither file nor forget. Nor will certain ideas forget me, they keep filing away at my lethargy, my complacency. (IM, 437)

Ellison's hero speaks for us all when he expresses the pain he has suffered. Yet, like all of us, he forgives the pain and is ready to accept the world through a mixed device of hate and love. One has to adjust and adapt to the world - we have no other option. We all love and hate this world. We know it is not perfect, and, we know neither are we. We criticise this world and everything around us, but, this is our world and we love it with both its positives and its negatives. We need the freedom of expression to speak freely about all that we feel and undergo in this world. Ellison's protagonist expresses in all its wonder and confusion the mixed feelings that we have for this world:

The very act of trying to put it all down has confused me and negated some of the anger and some of the bitterness. So it is that now I denounce and defend or feel prepared to defend. I condemn and affirm, say no and say yes, say yes and say no. I denounce because though implicated and partially responsible, I have been hurt to the point of abysmal pain, hurt to the point of invisibility. And I defend because inspite of all I find that I love. In order to get some of it down I have to learn. I sell you no phony forgiveness, I am a desperate man-but too much of your time will be lost, its meaning lost, unless you approach it as much through love as through hate. So I approach it through division. So I denounce and I defend and I hate and I love (IM, 437)

The hero feels at peace after having put it all down, and he sighs with relief. It is time for Ellison's protagonist to come up, out into the open. He has been hibernating long; going underground is again a symbolic going within. As the hero gets ready to
emerge, he gets a stench; he says that it could be of death or of spring. He warns us, and he is aware of the ugliness and mortality that limits our life:

Don't let me trick you, there is a death in the smell of spring and in the smell of thee as in the smell of me. (IM, 438)

He goes on to speak of the all powerful mind:

And the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived. That goes for societies as well as for individuals. Thus having tried to give pattern to the chaos which lives within the pattern of your certainties, I must come out, I must emerge... there is a possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play. (IM, 438-39)

Thus the hero sums up his endeavour, outlining our certainties. Through the hero, Ellison speaks for all of us. And fittingly ends the novel:

Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice as it were, what else could I do? What else but try to tell you what was really happening when your eyes were looking through? And it is this which frightens me: "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?" (IM, 439)

The novel, Invisible Man and Ellison's other writings all express the predicament of man in all its absurdities, complexities, pains, joys and sorrows. Ellison's characters, thus, represent all mankind.
CHAPTER - V : REFERENCES


5. Ibid, 124.


7. Ibid, 125.

8. Ibid, 133.


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15. Ibid, 19.
18. Ibid, 245.

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