

**The Theme of Escape in Twain's Huckleberry
Finn and Ellison's Invisible Man**

Inst. Inas Abdul-Munem Qadoos Mahmood, PhD
Al-Iraqia University/ College of Arts/ Translation

Department

inasqaddus@gmail.com

**موضوعة الهرب في هكليري فين لتوين
والرجل الخفي لأليسون**

□ م.د. إيناس عبد المنعم قدوس محمود

□ الجامعة العراقية/ كلية الآداب/ قسم الترجمة

The paper presents a comparative study to the theme of escape in two novels namely Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). Each text reflects its own period and circumstances. Consequently, the theme of escape undergoes a different meaning, and reading as a result of the political, social, and moral changes. The paper is divided into four sections: Section One presents an introduction to the significance of the theme of escape for the two novelists, and their novels; Section Two tackles the escape journey of a boy named Huckleberry or Huck from the false civilization of the town to freedom in Mississippi River with the slave Jim Turner, and analyses the implication of escape in the novel. There are two runaways—one from an abusive father, and the other from slavery—went straight to the heart of the question: what does it mean to be free? Section Three studies the escape journey of the nameless invisible young man who suffered racial discrimination, and deception towards self-assertion, and the discovery of the self. He undertakes a journey of searching for his personality when he becomes aware of his invisibility before himself firstly, then before society. Section Four presents the conclusion which brings the important points of the study to light.

المستخلص

يقدم البحث دراسة مقارنة عن موضوع الهرب في روايتين أمريكيتين تحديدا مغامرات هكلبيرري فين (١٨٨٤) لمارك توين والرجل الخفي (١٩٥٢) لراليف أليسون. يعكس كل نص فترته وظروفه وبالنتيجة لاقى موضوع الهرب معانٍ وقراءاتٍ مختلفة طبقاً للإطار السياسي والاجتماعي والأخلاقي. يقسم البحث الى أربعة أجزاء: يعرض الجزء الأول مقدمة عن أهمية موضوع الهرب للروائيين وفي الروايتين؛ يعالج الجزء الثاني رحلة الهرب لفتى يدعى هكلبيرري من الحضارة المزيفة في البلدة إلى الحرية على نهر مسيسيبي مع العبد جيم تيرنر ويبحث في مضمون الهرب في الرواية. يوجد هاربان، الأول من أب مؤذ جسدياً والآخر من العبودية، ولجا في صلب القضية: ما معنى أن أكون حراً؟ يدرس الجزء الثالث رحلة الهرب لشابٍ خفي مجهول الاسم، بعد أن قاسى من التمييز العنصري والخديعة، الى تأكيد ذاته واكتشاف نفسه. بدأ البطل برحلة بحث عن شخصيته عندما تجلت امام ناظريه لامرئيته امام نفسه أولاً ثم أمام المجتمع. يقدم الجزء الرابع الاستنتاج الذي يسلط الضوء على النقاط المهمة في الدراسة.

Stephen's problem, like ours, was not actually one of creating the uncreated conscience of his race, but of creating the uncreated features of his face. Our task is that of making ourselves individuals. The conscience of a race is the gift of its individuals who see, evaluate, record . . . We create the race by creating ourselves and then to our great astonishment we will have created something far more important: We will have created a culture. Why waste time creating a conscience for something that doesn't exist? For, you see, blood and skin do not think!" Professor Woodridge on James Joyce in Ellison's *Invisible Man*

Section One: Introduction

The theme of escape is a recurrent one in the American fiction, and has been treated by many novelists like Kate Chopin, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Harold Frederic, Edith Wharton, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Carson McCullers, and Richard Wright. In this study, Mark Twain (1835-1910), and Ralph Ellison (1913-1994) in their novels successively, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), and *Invisible Man* (1952) portray heroes escaping violence, or realities that contradicted their moral or philosophical convictions, or escape to search for truths of life and existence. Each novel adapts the theme on account of its cultural, social, and political environmental settings because, certainly, the idea, of escape has developed from the late nineteenth century to the postwar period. Moreover, both novels agree on issues as identity, race, and violence.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens—under nom de plume of Mark Twain—is a nihilist with antimoral precepts, and his novel presents a vision of the absurdity of life.¹ Although Twain's book was banned from publishing for its narrative which delved into the heart of racism in USA, it became one of the influential novels in the American fiction. The reader observes the repetition of the term “nigger” of about 200 times, and “injun,” in addition to Huck's feelings that Jim had no right to think of freeing his wife, and son from slavery. The rules of the society conscience, and morality decide that negroes are playthings who cannot live on equal terms with their masters, the whites. Contrarily, Twain, and Huck consider conscience “whether lower or higher, . . . only an internal[s]ed cultural sanction, a false constraint upon natural behavio[u]r.”² Therefore, the novelist terms conscience as moral sense, and believes it is “oppressive and erroneous,” for it directs man's choices and makes him hypocrite. Furthermore, the novelist denies the existence of a “real moral” code which human beings can live by.³ For example, Hank Morgan, the hero of Twain's *A Connecticut*

Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1963) rejects the conscience, thinks that it is conventional morality, and believes that it "is one of the disagreeable things connected with a person ... it would be better to have less good and more comfort."⁴

Twain presented his readers an escape novel that is rich with incidents of violence, hypocrisy, and cruelty. The setting of Huckleberry Finn is the early nineteenth century in St. Petersburg, a fictional small town in northeastern Missouri on the banks of the Mississippi River. Remarkably, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a sequel to The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, but the hero in the former book is the homeless motherless boy Huck Finn whose father is almost absent besides being abusive. Tom Sawyer ends with Tom and his friend Huck becoming rich after finding a treasure in a cave. The Widow Douglas, a wealthy respectable Southern lady in St. Petersburg, adopted Huck and took him to live with her. She, and her sister Miss Watson began to rehabilitate the homeless boy to be a respectable Christian according to the strict social rules of the upper class, and to attend the school and go to church; a way of life he couldn't conform to. The novel, henceforth depicts man's struggle to escape the restraints of society.

The Postwar period in twentieth-century USA was a time of artificial social and political stability, chaos, and counterfeit. Frederick R. Karl states that "America was an imitation of America."⁵ Ellison's novel displays the chaos in that era by describing places, situations, and groups totally disharmonious with the general shallow stability to reflect the shallow peace brought by Eisenhower. In relation to black nationalism, it's worth mentioning that Ellison himself was a grandchild of slaves.⁶ Moreover, his novel is concerned with invisibility, and activism.⁷ In his novel, the novelist seizes the problem enforced on, and ... internalized by black writers, and artists, and reveals the extent to which black writers are pointedly forced, or at least aggressively expected, to write only as an act of political protest, or only in support of the political cause of racial justice.⁸

Irving Howe in his famous 1962 essay "Black Boys and Native Sons," criticised Ellison's Invisible Man for practicing a new style, a one that Howe calls as "illusory freedom" in writing instead of "replicating" Richard Wright's style. Howe wants Ellison to conform to the racial, political, and emotional constraints, and does not see the black writers as free writers or to have the right to feel free. Accordingly, they must not invent new artistic experiments that have no relation to a "political agenda."⁹ Howe demands from Ralph Ellison to write for a political goal, and argues that the black writers should write on their protest against racial discrimination whereas art-for-art's-sake is for white writers.¹⁰ Ellison refutes Howe's argument justifying that banishing the black artist to

...a domain of expression that gives priority to a group or community mentality, which discourages an individual relationship to art work, making it impossible for the artist/writer to ever be just that-an artist/writer- because she will always be, in the first place, a "black writer", which is to say, at best, a writer who takes up the activity of writing only as a political act and not for the sake of itself, and at worst, a writer who is not capable of literary "greatness" because such greatness is a status conferred on those who succeed in aesthetic terms, and aesthetics are disinterested, while black writers, of course, are not.¹¹

Therefore, Ellison rejects Howe's argument that a black writer must devote his writings to "seek out [his] individual identities," and to be "militant." Because for although this supports the black issue, it deprives the black artist to be creative by restraining his talents from aesthetic expression aesthetically. Ellison counts Howe's argument an affront and believes that the black artist is on equal terms with the white artist in at once serving a political purpose, and concerned with art-for-art's-sake. The hero of Invisible Man attempts to settle his personal identity with his racial identity. He asks: "Who am I?"¹² The novel becomes a "double commitment to a discourse of political protest—even militancy—and to one of individualism."¹³ Ellison asserts "When I write, I am trying to make sense out of chaos. To think that a writer must think about his Negroness is to fall into a trap."¹⁴

Section Two: The Theme of Escape in Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn

The escape theme is dominant in Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, and it has an effect upon the structural and symbolic elements of the novel. Throughout the action of the novel which is set in the antebellum South, the novelist delineates Huck Finn, and the fugitive Jim Turner as alienated antiheroes: a "social pariah and a slave."¹⁵ The narrator of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), who happens to be the hero himself, namely the fourteen-year-old boy called Huck, tells his story of searching for freedom and adventure.

The reader notices that Huck's choice of escape is justified; first of all, the practice of violence, whether by relatives or strangers is targeted upon himself. His first escape is an escape from the cabin he called a house in the woods because his father threatens to kill him.¹⁶ He finds a canoe, and shoves off down the river.

The character of the father, Pap Finn, is drawn as a brutal drunkard town man (Ch.1, p.8) who "used to lay drunk with the hogs in the tanyard" (Ch.1, p.8). Pap Finn stands for irresponsibility and amorality. Huck's first escape is right then for he flees to the woods to protect his life. He escapes his father (emphasis mine) whom he "used to be scared of him all the time" (Ch.5, p.20). In one of his fits of anger, Huck narrates: "He chased me round and round the place with a clasp-knife, calling me the Angel of Death, and saying he would kill me" (Ch.6, p.31). Here's a description of Finn:

His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl—a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white (Ch.5, p.20).

The most dangerous circumstance on Huck's life is his father's threat which is a physical one, but the Widow's and Miss Watson's rigid morality have a psychological danger. Here the menace is to his present boyhood and future manhood.

Huck may have been affected by the runaway slave Jim seeking freedom, or Tom Sawyer's daydreams of escape, but what about the effect of his father? The reader may observe Twain's portrayal of Finn as a grotesque figure:

He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl—a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white. As for his clothes—just rags, that was all (Ch.5, p.20).

Pap Finn is corrupted, hates law, hates education, wants Huck's money saved with Judge Thatcher. The coming passage is pap's welcome (emphasis mine) to his son after being absent for about a year: You've put on considerable many frills since I been away. I'll take you down a peg before I get done with you. You're educated, too, they say—can read and write. You think you're better'n your father, now, don't you, because he can't? i'll take it out of you (Ch.5, p.21).

Pap's escaping Judge and Mrs. Thatcher's attempt to reform him is like Huck's escape from Miss Watson, the Widow, and Aunt Sally. The narrator adds:

Pap he hadn't been seen for more than a year, and that was comfortable for me; I didn't want to see him no more. He used to always whale me when he was sober and could get his hands on me; though I used to take to the woods most of the time when he was around (Ch.3, p.12).

The reader perceives pap's malign impact on Huck's character; what would the son absorb from a drunk, criminal father except lying, stealing, swearing, smoking. Finn "is not merely Huck's biological father, but his spiritual father as well as Jim [and] ...sets the pattern for Huck's later escape values."¹⁷ His sound heart then motivates him to rescue Jim from bondage on the Phelps farm, and later to befriend him to lessen his loneliness. Contrarily, Pap is an illiterate Southern white who hates education. He rages at the "govment" (Ch.6, p.28) for letting "negroes" to vote, for not granting him his parental authority over his son, and for not allowing him to have his "rightful" share of his son's fortune.

I'll never vote agin as long as I live. And to see the cool way of that nigger—why, he wouldn't a give me the road if I hadn't shoved him out o' the way. I says to the people, why ain't this nigger put up at auction and sold?—that's what I want to know. And what do you reckon they said? Why, they said he couldn't be sold till he'd been in the State six months, and he hadn't been there that long yet. There, now—that's a specimen. They call that a govment that can't sell a free nigger till he's been in the State six months.

He refuses to obey the laws of the settlement society, believes that his society is a corruptive one, but he is in that very corruption. Indeed, his escape didn't take that deep meaning of Huck's escape into the West.

Bluefarb classified Finn's and Huck's escapes into two types: Finn's is an escape "from the ... beneficent aspects of the larger civilization that would eventually free slaves and ... give them the vote!"¹⁸ Huck's is an escape for freedom of that superficial "civilization," and moreover an escape for the freedom of man from a fake civilization which uses Jim Turner as both a slave, and a play thing which is "too many for

[him]" (Ch.3, p.11). Huck ends his book with these words: "I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. [Because] I been there before" (The Chapter Last, p.295).

The way of life that the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson offer to Huck is one of primness, fastidiousness, while that of Aunt Sally is of a suffocating love. Miss Watson treats her slave Jim Turner cruelly. He rejects both ways because he finds them restrictive, and chooses the only alternative: to light out of their land to the openness of water and space. "You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft" (Ch.18, p.119). Huck feels imprisoned in their life style that although his father has kept him locked, Huck describes these days as better than the restrictive days he has spent with the Widow, and as days of comfort: "It was kind of lazy and jolly, laying off comfortable all day, smoking and fishing, and no books nor study" (Ch.6, p.26). Widow Douglas calls him "poor lost lamb" (Ch.1, p.2) because she is displeased with his choice of a different life. Curiously, he dislikes her cleanliness and manners: "She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up" (Ch.1, p.2). Huck decides to stay runaway in the woods:

I thought it all over, and I reckoned I would walk off with the gun and some lines, and take to the woods when I run away. I guessed I wouldn't stay in one place, but just tramp right across the country, mostly night times, and hunt and fish to keep alive, and so get so far away that the old man nor the widow couldn't ever find me any more (Ch.6, p.27).

In one of his adventures, Huck overhears a conversation between two thieves who plan to kill their partner or to tie him to a sinking boat and let nature take its course because he threatened to betray them (Ch.12, pp. 70-2). However, these previous incidents of violence in Huck's life are lighter in comparison with the Boggs-Sherburn incident and the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud, which lead to many violent, and painful deaths and feud (Ch.22, pp. 148-50). Significantly, Huck's rejection of violence, fraud, and hypocrisy is revealed in his withdrawal from taking part in the deceitful actions of the Duke, and the King on the shore. For instance, as the King and the Duke leave, Huck seized the chance to escape, and narrates:

The minute they was fairly at it I lit out and shook the reefs out of my hind legs, and spun down the river road like a deer, for I see our chance; and I made up my mind that it would be a long day before they ever see me and Jim again (Ch.31, p.213).

Although Huck's escapes are impulsive as his flight from father, Pap Finn, and his flight to Jackson's Island (Ch.7, p.36), his main purpose is to escape from the artificial civilization. Huck's escapes are designed to work in the real world while Tom Sawyer's notions of escape are derivative and romantic; a portrayal of his fantasy life (Ch.3, p. 13-15). Unlike Huck, Tom's escapes are the dream of escape or mere daydreams.

For instance, one of his impulsive escapes is his own faked murder which he makes it "look like it had been done by accident" (Ch.7, p.35). He instantly, decides to flee from his father on the day the latter left the "old cabin" (Ch.6, p.52). Noteworthy, Huck's first escape is the significant one for its purpose of true freedom and manhood: it is his escape from the over-civilised restraints of the Widow and Miss Watson. Particularly, he escapes Aunt Sally for two reasons: Her possessive over-sentimentalised love. Like the Widow Douglas, and Miss Watson, she represents a civilization that threatens his freedom.¹⁹ Huck declared his distaste of Miss Watson's morality, or the moral system she stands for, and her vision of Heaven. Huck rejects not only the violence and false sentimentality of the civilization of the "antebellum South," but cannot stand the "cant and the fakery it demands for homage."²⁰

Noteworthy, his escapes with Jim are made at night like the fugitives and "Soon as it was night out we shoved; when we got her out to about the middle we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to" (Ch.19, 121). Hence, his escapes are unplanned, but impulsive, and are the thought of the moment, like his flight from his father, and his flight to Jackson's Island: "All right; I can stop anywhere I want to. Jackson's Island is good enough for me" (Ch.7, p.36). Huck, and Jim spend their journey free from any restrictions even the simplest ones:

... then we lit the pipes, and dangled our legs in the water, and talked about all kinds of things—we was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us—the new clothes Buck's folks made for me was too good to be comfortable, and besides I didn't go much on clothes, nohow (Ch.19, p.121).

Mark Twain offers his reader escapers who share Huck his "desire to shed the restraints and cramping influences of the shore civilization"²¹ like the slave Jim who escapes his slave masters, or the King's, and the Duke's escape of furious citizens, or Tom who escapes dull, ordinary realities. Each escape has its own purpose. All Huck's reasons for escape are either fraud, or violence, or hypocrisy, or freedom, and appear

in some degrees in the other escapers of the novel.

Consequently, Huck's motive for escape, whether intended or not, is to save himself from death on the hands of Pap, and to free himself from the Widow Douglas and her sisters who force over-civilising strictures. Obviously, Twain's novel rejects "the conventional morality and the conventional wisdom of its own time."²² Yet, to escape from society conscience or to attain freedom is a trying matter.

The Grangerfords are different (Ch.18, pp.110-12), and do not threaten Huck nevertheless Huck lit out of them. They are decent, have a stoical dignity, have a pride for their family, for its clannishness, and for its cold cruelty. However, Huck lights out from them and his escape is painful because he liked the family. He escaped their bloody fight with the Shepherdsons:

It made me so sick I most fell out of the tree. I ain't agoing to tell all that happened-it would make me sick again if I was to do that. I wished I hadn't ever come ashore that night, to see such things. I ain't ever going to get shut of them-lots of times I dream about them (Ch.18, pp. 117-18).

Notably, Huck flights are all impulsive even if they were planned. Till chapter Six of Twain's novel, Huck deals with escape as a game. As he confronts the danger of the situation, and realises its seriousness, he begins to plan escape. Moreover, he began to consider the immediate need for escaping his father Pap Finn permanently. Going back to the Widow is for him the best alternative now although not disregarding being "cramped up and civilized" (Ch.6, p.26). Huck believes that he must have a plan to light out:

I thought it all over, and I reckoned I would walk off with the gun and some lines, and take to the woods when I run away. I gussed I wouldn't stay in one place, but just tramp right across the country, mostly night times, and hunt and fish to keep alive, and so get so far away that the old man nor the widow couldn't ever find me any more. I judged I would saw out and leave that night if pap got drunk enough, and I reckoned he would (Ch.6, p.27).

The novelist describes the evolving idea of escape in Huck's mind, and how he believes that his plan should be more effective than merely lighting out from one place to another:

I struck another idea; I judged I'd hide [the canoe] good, and then, 'stead of taking to the woods when I run off, I'd go down the river about fifty mile and camp in one place for good, and not have such a rough time tramping on foot (Ch.7, p.33).

He realises that he should have a main goal set in every escape and this can be considered his master plan. Talking to Jim, he says:

I got to thinking that if I could fix up some way to keep pap and the widow from trying to follow me, it would be a certainer thing than trusting to luck to get far enough off before they missed me; you see, all kinds of things might happen (Ch.7, p.33).

Consequently, Huck seeks pleasure, and comfort, and there is his concept of freedom. He conceives good life where he can find ease and comfort and satisfaction. He calls it freedom.²³ Therefore, Huck's freedom cannot be viewed as a kind of political freedom, but as a kind of pleasure. Huck prefers to sleep in the woods where the "old ways [were] best" (Ch.4, p.16), and enjoys his happy barbarianism: he walks barefooted, smokes, swims naked, floats down-river on a raft, and lives on fishing.

Huck is now a slave in a slave society. His escapes from Pap and the two firm ladies unfold to the reader the slave society, and its values, and consequently he could differentiate between the "society-formed conscience and his heart."²⁴ For instance he feels shame for having Jim with him, and believes he is stealing a poor old woman's nigger that hadn't ever done me no harm" (Ch.31, p.215). Therefore, because he is Miss Watson's slave, Huck writes a letter to her showing Jim's hiding place, but his inner morality wins against the shallow imposed morality of the white civilization when he tears the letter up saying: "All right, then, I'll go to hell" (Ch.31, p.217). He is committed to Jim, and his decision is instant and humane, but not without the innate conviction of opposing the law. He reflects:

I couldn't get that out of my conscience, no how nor no way. It got to troubling me so I couldn't rest; I couldn't stay still in one place. It hadn't ever come home to me before, what this thing was that I was doing. But now it did; and it stayed with me, and scorched me more and more. I tried to make out to myself that I warn't to blame (Ch.16, p.91).

Notwithstanding his belief that freeing Jim is wrong according to the law, Huck decides to free him. He compares him to watermelons, and Sunday-school books, and instead of saying to free Jim, he says to "steal a nigger" (Ch.36, p.248) due to the racial basis of the American society. Moreover, Huck's relationship to Miss Watson's slave is strengthened, and he becomes more attached to him. For instance, in the occasion when Mrs Loftus (Ch.11, p.64) tells Huck that Jim is suspected for his murder, he rushes to Jackson's Island

to run away together saying: "There ain't a minute to lose. They're after us" [italics mine] (Ch.11, p.64)! Huck identifies himself with Jim by using "us" to save Jim from the slave hunters. From that incident till the moment he tears his letter to Miss Watson, Huck's compassion is roused to think of Jim as a fugitive like himself, and not merely as an unfortunate man. Furthermore, he helps him to get his freedom, thus Huck's sense of the meaning of his own escape is deepened to be a quest for human freedom. The excitement of their freedom makes Jim tremble:

Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so close to freedom. Well, I can tell you it made me all over trembly and feverish, too, to hear him, because I begun to get it through my head that he was most free—and who was to blame for it? Why, me. I couldn't get that out of my conscience, no how nor no way. It got to troubling me so I couldn't rest; I couldn't stay still in one place. It hadn't ever come home to me before, what this thing was that I was doing. But now it did; and it stayed with me, and scorched me more and more. I tried to make out to myself that I warn't to blame (Ch.16, p.91).

Freedom from restraints of civilization is acceptable; but such freedom has its dangers too. "Jim is more than ever enslaved to his fears."²⁵ When he runs away to Jackson's Island, he lives in terror of capture. It seems that Jim is a fearful, man-child, and ridden with feelings of inferiority.

Huck's, and Jim's escape are not only a journey, but a flight from tyranny, and from bondage. (Chs. 35, 39, pp. 241, 270) Nash Smith, in his study *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* (1962), attributes their escape as a journey and a "quest for freedom."²⁶ But James M. Cox refutes that point and says: "A quest is a positive journey, implying an effort, a struggle to reach a goal. But Huck is escaping. His journey is primarily a negation, a flight from tyranny, not a flight toward freedom."²⁷ Huck and Jim are going to confront the same dangers of tyranny, and slavery because the horrors are on the shore; hence arriving Cairo and Ohio River can't be a goal of questers for freedom as they would live in an oppressing society. Thus, the reader sees Huck in a constant state of flight. Moreover, the two escapers don't succeed in achieving their goal either "freedom for Huck is ...reali[s]ed in terms of...pleasure... In almost every instance Huck projects the good life in terms of ease, satisfaction, comfort."²⁸ Yet, Huck obeys Tom during the Evasion because Tom promised him to free Jim (Ch.39, p.270). Obviously, Huck has a capacity for love, and the reader admires his moral maturity, his native intelligence, and his determination.

Huck, and Jim do not control their journey, or their raft, they are simply adrift after escaping from Pap (Ch.8, p.46, Ch.12, p.68, Ch. 16, p.90, Ch. 19, p.120). They do not reach a physical goal and their journey never achieves a real physical goal. While on their raft they are in a dream state, and it is the Mississippi current which leads them indifferently. They surrender to the current aimlessly (Ch.8, p.36). However, Huck does not have an opposing view of morality or Heaven as set by his society; his real aim is to help Jim be free from slavery: He does that not because that Huck is an opponent to slavery; but because he has committed himself personally and individually to free Jim. "Huck's choice is a recognition of the fact that in a world such as ours every man must devise his own redemption, salvation, or damnation, as the case may be. His methods and morals in so doing should not be judged by any standards external to himself."²⁹ Mark Twain's novel argues the issue "of a sound heart colliding with a distorted conscience and winning."³⁰ Huck rebels against conscience, because it constrains his natural behaviour. He rejects any constraint or confinement, and quests for life of pleasure and comfort.

Section Three: Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man

The release of Ellison's *Invisible Man* in 1952 coincided with the rise of desegregation called for by the Civil Rights movement at a time of great racial crisis and racial discrimination. Moving South and North, *Invisible Man* (1952), traces the comic and deeply tragic progress of a talented nameless middle-class black student from a state college with reliance on white philanthropy, to New York, the north, where Marxists, and black nationalists are involved in the Harlem war to end in living in a hole in the ground which he calls "a home" (Prologue, p. 5).

The main character is a young man who grew up in a black community in the South on the borders. The novelist chose this trait to be a proper noun and named his hero as "Invisible Man." The opening of the novel is completely different to the striking first sentence in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*: "Call me Ishmael" which implies self-acceptance. The narrator asserts the reader: "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me" (Prologue, p.3). The novelist portrayed the narrator as an idealistic and truthful young man. He attends negro college under the care of his white benefactor, Mr Norton who looks like a figure of chalk revealing a row of long, slender, amazingly animal-like teeth" (Ch.3, p. 60). The reader will infer that the protagonist's innocence is his weak point of personality.

The dilemma that Invisible Man faces as an African-American is not internal, but external. Being black, the narrator lives a condition of racial oppression. The novelist describes this situation of living in a racial community as a "trap" because it obliterates his identity and individuality.³¹ That "trap" annihilates even his own visibility as the protagonist has declared that he is "an invisible man" (Ch.1, p.13). However, the black university president, Mr. Bledsoe, describes him as "nervy little fighter" (Ch.6, p.113) when he accuses him of lying to him and to his benefactor.

Significantly, unlike Jim Turner, the invisible man has no feeling of inferiority. He asserts: I am not ashamed of my grandparents for having been slaves. I am only ashamed of myself for having at one time been ashamed. About eighty-five years ago they were told that they were free, united with others of our country in everything pertaining to the common good, and, in everything social, separate like the fingers of the hand. And they believed it (Ch.1, p.13).

One of the inner conflicts of the protagonist is to reconcile his personal identity with his racial identity, but being black, Invisible Man lives in racial oppression in New York. His individualism is obliterated. He starts a journey to assert his own identity but the significance of his journey has become deeper to encompass the "collective, universal nature of human experience."³²

He fears the disappearance of his individuation when expressing the dilemma of his own race. For example, he dislikes to be grouped with black people, to "speak" for their cause or to participate in their fights as in the scene of the battle royal (Ch.1, p.14). He visualises himself distinguished "as a potential Booker T. Washington" (Ch.1, p.14), and "felt superior to them in [his] way" though they didn't care for him (Ch.1, p.15). He abhors the "manner in which [they] were all crowded together into the servant's elevator" (Ch.1, p.15).

He narrates his decision to live by pretense to survive in a society where people "see only [his] surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination" (Prologue, p. 3). Therefore, he is effectively invisible. Invisible Man passes from the Liberty Paints factory in New York to the Brotherhood organization in Harlem, the neighbourhood of New York. Both communities exploited him: the whites in factory Liberty paint deny their dependence on the black to achieve financial success, and Brotherhood uses him as "a token black man in its abstract project."³³ The former is a nightmarish job, while the latter has a policy of betrayal. The tension ends in a terrifying race riot. "I was no Samson. I had no desire to destroy myself even if it destroyed the machine; I wanted freedom, not destruction" (Ch.11, p.188).

Apparently, the society outside Harlem seems stable, nonetheless inside Harlem, the system suffers chaos and inactivity. People of Harlem experience a grotesque, and dissonant living. There, the narrator starts his first steps of self-assertion as he lectures the crowd in the eviction scene on the dispossession of the black—a topic he creates when he witnessed a white marshal and two aides take the insignificant belongings of an old poor black couple (Ch.13, p.209-10). Obviously, the mirrors and the aquariums are metaphors illustrating that so many blacks see themselves as distorted within a society dominated by the blacks (Chs. 4, 19, pp.81, 322-23).

Racism becomes one of the main impediments to individual identity. The more the narrator struggles to reach to a conception of his own identity, the more he finds his energies complicated by the fact that he is a black man existing in a racist American society.³⁴ His sole dilemma is "... the formidable task of freeing himself from the blinding social illusions that render races and individuals invisible to each other."³⁵

Invisible Man asks himself: "What on earth was hiding behind the face of things? If dark glasses and a white hat could blot out my identity so quickly, who actually was who" (Ch.23, p. 381)? As Ellison pointed out, "In our society it is not unusual for a negro to experience a sensation that he does not exist in the real world at all. He seems rather to exist in the nightmarish fantasy of the white American mind as a phantom that the white mind seeks unceasingly, by means both crude and subtle, to lay."³⁶ Invisible Man fears that his personal character will be obliterated if he immerses himself in the struggle of his community against racism. He has his own "personal agenda" which "arrives him" to nourish his individuality.³⁷

He starts a journey of individuation and the course of the narrative is "universal" and "collective" of Man's experiences.³⁸ And because the narrator estimates Booker T. Washington as an ideal example of a distinguished individual, he reached a scholarship to a black college modelled on Washington's Tuskegee Institute. What's more, at the college, Invisible Man is disillusioned with his example, Booker T. Washington, whom he had admired greatly. He started to criticise his self-interested aims. Later, he got involved with the Brotherhood for "personal" interest which highlights that the beginning of his journey has been for nurturing his own identity. However, the narrator believes he was fighting for equality when becomes a spokesman for

a mixed-race band of social activists called the Brotherhood.

Dr. Bledsoe is the self-interested, and deceitful Southern black college president who has achieved power in society by playing on both sides, the whites, and the blacks. He instructs Invisible Man to “let the white folk worry about pride and dignity... learn where you are and get yourself power, influence, contacts with powerful and influential people—then stay in the dark and use it” (p. 113)! Bledsoe is deluded to think that he is powerfully controlling everything, and describes to the narrator the importance of power. In reality, his power was something superficial for Bledsoe is innocently a mere tool in the hand of the whites. The narrator depicts him as follows:

"Old Bucket-head," some of the fellows called him. I never had. He had been kind to me from the first, perhaps because of the letters which the school superintendent had sent to him when I arrived. But more than that, he was the example of everything I hoped to be: Influential with wealthy men all over the country; consulted in matters concerning the race; a leader of his people; the possessor of not one, but two Cadillacs, a good salary and a soft, good-looking and creamy-complexioned wife. What was more, while black and bald and everything white folks poked fun at, he had achieved power and authority; had, while black and wrinkle-headed, made himself of more importance in the world than most Southern white men. They could laugh at him but they couldn't ignore him (Ch.4, p. 79).

Consequently, the state of the lack of perception, or blindness that the narrator suffers from leads him to fall a prey to the false ideas, and events of those around him, but when he comes to realise his blindness, he passes into a state of perception underground. The narrator lives in a society whose law is the survival for the fittest where the powerful controls and crushes the weak. Moreover, it is a labyrinthine society enmeshed with counterfeit and injustice, that the narrator with his dedication honesty, diligence, and hard work turns to a weak man enfeebled and de-individualised. Being a young man who judges men and people optimistically, he discovers that he was a fool for trusting people, and for doing what they request him to do. When he finds out that he lives in a labyrinth and has been used, Invisible Man decides to escape to a hole. The incident of the letters exemplifies the narrator's world of counterfeits. Bledsoe, hands the narrator top secret sealed letters to be delivered to secretaries saying: “Keep This Nigger Boy Running” (Ch.1, p.27). These letters exemplify the deception that haunts the system of the country. when he learns that his former headmaster's recommendation letters are, in fact, letters of condemnation. He is invisible since he depends on their help and guidance. Paradoxically, the weakness of the narrator wakes up his mutiny and opposition. He realises that he has to escape that destructive system unseen, hence he retreats in a hole shut from all the systems that exploited his innocence, and perseverance.

The eviction scene is the beginning of the journey of consciousness, and self-assertion for Invisible Man. Before that scene which ends in violence, the protagonist used to follow his benefactor Mr Norton to scenes more grotesque like when visiting a black slum where they heard the story of incest committed by one of the farmers, Jim Trueblood, a black sharecropper, and when visiting the Golden Day bar where they saw “crazies” performing hideous roles (Ch.3, p.57). At all these situations the narrator was not the real driver of Mr Norton, but vice versa. He was innocent, inexperienced, and deluded without the pettiest power to question their orders. At the opposite of black writers, Ellison didn't want his hero to be only a spokesman for his black community. His philosophy is that in his commitment to his race, he risks his own individuation. This fear led Invisible Man to cancel out the racial discrimination in favour of his individuality. For instance, in the eviction scene, the first speech by Invisible Man impresses the Brotherhood, and they offer him to be their representative speaker, but he refuses the job explaining to Brother Jack: “I'm sorry ... I'm not interested in anyone's grievances but my own” (Ch.13, p. 227). He refuses to have any political agenda other than his own personal agenda because simply he is “not interested.” The Invisible Man plans to assert his own individual identity, and he escapes issues of the black in order not to melt personally in the community. It seems that Invisible Man enjoys practicing his talent in speech making: “I wanted to make a speech” (Ch.13, p.227) he professes his desire to practice his talent. Although he introduces himself in the Prologue as “an orator, a rabble rouser” (Prologue, p.12), Invisible Man assured Brother Jack that he is not interested in getting job as the district speaker, and told him: “I like to make speeches” (Ch.13, p.227). The reader concludes that the narrator's commitment to speech making is “purely aesthetic-conceptual, abstract, ideal.”³⁹ In spite of being a good orator, he does not think that the issue of racial discrimination is an obligation. “I only wanted to make a speech” he says. Political employment of the art of giving speeches, he believes, is an obstacle towards asserting his individual identity.⁴⁰ Kim Savelson states that:

Invisible Man's insistence on this “art-for-art's-sake” attitude—irreducible fancy for speech making in and of

itself and his failure to admit or understand the power of his oratory to produce action by others manifest his inclination to relate to public oratory as a realm in which he can discover and protect his own individuality.⁴¹

Brother Jack denies Invisible Man his individuality, and freedom apart from his black people demanding from him to stand by his people to defend their right to obtain racial equality. Invisible Man lives in a world created by his own imagination. Remarkably, Brother Jack is the leader of an organization dedicated to "working for a better world for all people" (Ch.14, p.235), but racist to its core and eager to eliminate people "like dead limbs that must be pruned away" if they fail to serve the group's purpose (Ch.14, p.226). The protagonist asserts "I am one of the most irresponsible beings that ever lived. Irresponsibility is part of my invisibility; any way you face it, it is a denial. But to whom can I be responsible, and why should I be, when you refuse to see me" (Prologue, p.12)? Significantly, various postmodern American novelists treat the issue of identity, and Ellison's novel introduces this topic in a peculiar way.

Invisible Man's vision of life is completely different from the Harlem Brotherhood's vision. Brother Jack asks Invisible Man to perform his duty towards his community while the latter shows Brother Jack that he seeks to assert his own personal individuality away from any other obligation for racial liberations, and that principle he conveys to the people. For instance, in his speech, he demanded people to think of what they want, but that angered Brother Jack, and he addresses him saying: "You appeared to be a man who knew his duty toward the people and performed it well. Whatever you think about it personally, you were a spokesman for your people and you have a duty to work in their interest" (Ch.13, p.227). He probably has felt estranged and un-belonged to the white American society due to racial discrimination, and un-belonged to his black community due to duty vs. individuality struggle. All of them are blind, Ellison declares, to "the protagonist's humanity, his individuality, and the synthetic, creolizing process long at work in this country, making each and every one of us, whether we like it or not, a cultural mongrel."⁴² Though he opposes their principles, he accepts the job offer by the Brotherhood. He needs the means to carry on cultivating his art of oratory. He says: "It was, after all, a job that promised to exercise my talent for public speaking" (Ch.14, p.231). It implies that he does not intend to support their cause of racial equality. It is just "a job" (Ch.13, p.227) which enables him to develop his talent, reciprocally, as the Brotherhood appointed him; they got benefit of his wish to assert himself individually. Brother Jack does not understand Invisible Man's craving for individuality. He informs him that his job is "not to ask [the public] what they think but to tell them" (Ch.22, p. 365); for the Harlem Brotherhood, "individuals don't count" (Ch.18, p.307). The narrator wonders that "[t]hey wanted a machine" (Ch.23, p.394)?

Unlike Huck who escapes the confinement of the Widow to a wider space, Invisible Man escapes his society hiding himself underground. The underground-hole experience is very significant in the novel. The narrator compares himself to Dante when he says: "I not only interred the music [of Louis Armstrong] but descended, like Dante, into its depths" (Prologue, p.7). There, he retreats to live like a cocoon, and as a cocoon, he returns to his society with a productive interactive mentality. He becomes interested in talking for them, and in thinking for them as he does for himself. He finds out that he can be more creative and effective when working for his black community. He expresses his understanding of his cocoon experience after "coming out" saying "it's damn well time. Even hibernations can be overdone, come to think of it" (Epilogue, p.450). It's an "overdone" way of withdrawal, and isolation. Escape or withdrawal of a person with a talent of speechmaking in a situation like the conditions of the black people can be termed no more than a "social crime" (Epilogue, p.450).

Ralph Ellison emphasises personal responsibility and its role in the American society. He comments that Invisible Man's coming out is "a social act; it is not a resignation from society but an attempt to come back and be useful."⁴³ Hence, the everyman narrator becomes aware of his responsibility towards his race. Furthermore, he discovers he cannot achieve his individual self alone without the community in a give-and-take relationship in a reciprocal participation, and the individualism he might have achieved in isolation of his black community would have been a deformed individualism.

The Brotherhood tries to have "a terminal point in history" to better "determine the direction of events" (Ch.14, pp. 238, 338). When he finds out the corruption of these organisations, he falls into deep depression confined to himself in a hidden basement. That shock makes him wander exploring an isolated space found in progressive time not linear. He talks of cutting past and future. He imagines the postmodern to be free from slavery, "without boundaries" and, "outside of History" (Ch.20, pp. 385, 337). The reader notices the confusion of the narrator who cannot recognise whether he lives in the past or in the future. It is

the result of the tension he suffers between his belief in progressive history and his desire to witness a world that accepts all types of people despite their differences (Chs.20,23, pp.337,385). He says: "I wandered past the subway and continued around the corner to Forty-second Street, my mind grappling for meaning" (Ch.20, p.337).

Consequently, this fascination cracks his psyche. the novelist portrays the appearance of surrealistic visions, and nonsense images, and a "stream consciousness" from when the doctors set him on electroshock machine. Noteworthy, the character's "hibernation" (Prologue, p.11) helps him to tolerate the stressful conditions of his society, the historical change from destructive, and rapid modernity to chaotic postmodern time, and his own failure to comprehend the assertion of his own identity away from his own community. The novel shows that not only the narrator's psyche is cracked, but also that of his society.

The lasting heritage of slavery is shown in the nameless hero's recounting a nightmare. He narrates an archive of racial practices by racial stereotypes of his childhood poverty of personal memories and historical memories, of anxieties and fears, of violence and slavery even of music and folktales. It can be described as a "chaotic archive."⁴⁴ However, this "self-described nightmare... [is] reduced to invisibility."⁴⁵ The protagonist sees that archive in a series of picaresque adventures that begin to reappear with unsettling constancy because the narrator

... keeps plunging into the same set of experiences again and again—which is pursuing the quest for identity and acceptance from a selective and judgmental group, within it be local white patrons in his hometown, black university officials, New York City capitalist and industrialists, or Communist Party activists.⁴⁶

One of possible interpretations for the narrator's nightmare of weeping slave mothers is an innate rejection of the American racial history. The Narrator escapes the historical situation experiences to a no-man's-land, to an "absurd existence that seems outside of historical linearity and of social hierarchy or special congruity."⁴⁷ The Invisible Man escapes to underground basement, to invisibility alone in contemplation. However, his contemplation turns apocalyptic. He escapes the horrific environment with its shallow democracy which did not grant the blacks their right of freedom and equality. For example, when he told Mr Norton the real conditions of the black, Dr. Bledsoe expelled him from the college. He cannot devote himself to Ras the Exhorter, a Harlem demagogue, for their opposition of racial consolidation. Ras owns an Afrocentric thought, and replies to Tod Clifton's accusation of being ignorant for rejecting black-white brotherhood: "You t'ink I'm crazy, is it c'ase I speak bahd English? Hell, it ain't my mama tongue, mahn, I'm African" (Ch.17, p. 288)! Nor can he dedicate himself to Rinehart the emblem of Harlem hipster. The Brotherhood's derision of individualism made them discharge him from Harlem. It follows then that Invisible Man is left without support.

After eleven chapters, the narrator decides to choose the life he wants to go on living: it won't be the life of the Brotherhood because they do not support self-assertion. He comes to an awareness of the importance of an interactive relationship with the black community: "I had learned that the clue to what Harlem wanted was what I wanted; and my value to the Brotherhood ... depended upon my complete frankness and honesty in stating the community's hopes and hates, fears and desires" (Ch.19, p.316). This is important because it implies that he now feels one with the black community. Before this experience, the reader may remember Invisible Man's potential limitation when he described them as the "black mob" (Ch.2, p.31). Never the less, at this stage of understanding, he and the people of his race have an independent reciprocal relationship of "hopes," and "fears," and have one identical experience. Kim Savelson interprets that Invisible Man "realises that he has indeed been speaking for the community, as he would speak for himself."⁴⁸ For instance, in Tod Clifton's murder,⁴⁹ Invisible Man's emphasis on Clifton's name at the beginning of every sentence in his eulogy is an attempt to grant individuality to the deceased: "his name was Clifton" (Ch.21, p.352).

Significantly, Invisible Man changes the applicability of his art especially, after the murder. He begins to see the black people as group of individuals instead of a group of a "black mob." More than that, he becomes fully aware of his role as a member in Harlem. His enlightenment of his identification with Harlem comes as contrary to his previous of prejudiced view. Considering this change, the reader observes how he has got matured, and he accepts to play the role of Harlem's speaker, only as a speaker! The protagonist narrates how does the crowd respond to his speech: "They were listening intently, and as though looking not at me, but at the pattern of my voice upon the air" (Ch.21, p.352). He intends to show the crowd how hideous is the crime, but individuality was an artificial one. Before that incident, the narrator rejected Brother Jack's request to speak for the black community because he was disinterested, now, in his speech at the incident of

Clifton's murder he accepts to be recognised by the crowd as only a "voice" (Ch.21, p.352) not as an individual, and an identity he has long craved to assert, but feels himself "more human" (Ch.16, p.274). He becomes aware of his role as a speaker to show Clifton himself as an individual. Moreover, in this experience he gets insight of his own role as a speaker for the community because he is a member not merely a disinterested talented educated young man living for himself.

Ellison comments on his protagonist's last line in the novel where the latter comes back from his escape saying it is "a social act; it is not a resignation from society but an attempt to come back and be useful."⁵⁰ The protagonist's closing line in the novel encourages or enlightens "universal, collective aspects of humanity and art" and encourages to take in consideration the social variety the "individuals who must live according to the realities imposed by these categories."⁵¹

Ultimately, after a long time in seclusion, it is his own choice to integrate with the society. The second stage is his escape underground which offers him a long time of thinking and awareness, thus, it's a contemplative one. Escaping underground all that time does not offer any remedy towards asserting his individuality although he confines himself away from the world outside in order to keep his Talent to himself instead of wasting them and serving others. In the first stage of dislocation, the Invisible Man accounts for the protagonist's abhorrence or rejection to work for the community so he is willingly socially invisible. Whereas in the second stage of escape, the name implies underground invisibility. He becomes invisible to the world outside because he chooses to confine himself from social activity. After "coming out," Invisible Man expresses his understanding saying "there is possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play" (Epilogue, p.450). The second stage is his escape underground: a long time of thinking and awareness. While in the third stage of enlightenment he is still invisible because his writer chooses to universalise his experience. He employs his autonomy for the service of society. This service is interrupted as, firstly accepting his own racial identity, secondly admitting his social responsibility, he aims to dedicate himself in the politics of racial justice. Noteworthy, in the Prologue, which opens the text, the action is at a stopping point, where the narrator is paralysed underground. While in the Epilogue, the novelist continues the invisibility of his hero, but it ends optimistically.⁵²

Essentially, Ellison's Invisible Man depicts the issue of the individual's freedom of choice. For example, the novelist lets his protagonist chooses to escape underground, and then he chooses to come back after recognising that he has a role to play in Harlem. His "decision is based on his own personal experience, and his allegiance to the community, rather than being blind, is cultivated in the process of a prolonged consideration of the many complex elements that characteri[s]e the individualist/activist dichotomy."⁵³ It is a kind of expressing rebellion to gain racial liberation. "I am nobody but myself. But first I had to discover that I am an invisible man" (Ch. 1, p.13)! This suggests that Ellison formed "a new territory of protest, and in this sense, he did not merely demand reform, or dictate reform agendas: He did reform."⁵⁴ The novel becomes an expression political change.

An important question is associated with Invisible Man's quest for individuality is whether individuation is a self-interested matter/ ideal when the drive for that interest is mutual?

Staying underground prepares Invisible Man for the "social act." The protagonist rejects to be an effigy or to lose his identity and become a fragmented image. All through the novel the narrator is "surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass" (Prologue, p.3), "driven by furious bellows" (Ch.19, p.323), and "pumped between live electrodes like an accordion between a player's hands" (Ch.11, p.180) seeming to have no strength in such a world of fragmentation. The corrupt entities that Ellison draws are presented in the black college and the Brotherhood. The former serves "a young, though a fast-rising people" (Ch.4, p.94), and the latter is a loosely Leninist organization (Ch.9, p. 133, Ch.18, p.307). The novelist draws a protagonist who searches for a conceivable cause to the "chaos" he witnesses. He expresses his depression saying: I felt more dead than alive (Ch. 21, p. 395).

Invisible Man shows that "multiplicity was... shaped by the belief... that diverse cultural forms and classes of people might be embedded in distinct types of time."⁵⁵ The novelist's narrator states with the opening of the novel his being invisible (Prologue, p.3) who stores in the unconscious a chaotic racial archive of anxieties and violence.⁵⁶ He wishes that postmodern history would be a history of reconciliation unlike the modern time of racial clash or the previous centuries of slavery.

The narrator sets up his walls in the hole with bulbs, and these lights are "forms of spending, of enjoying something unearned, a black man's revenge."⁵⁷ Invisible Man's burning of 1,369 light bulbs in the basement as a period of hope and release. The narrator justifies his escape in an underground hole saying: "I

have stayed in my hole, because up above there's an increasing passion to make men conform to a pattern" (Epilogue, p.447). Similarly, Huck Finn's reasons of escape are his distaste to conform to the society moral and social standards. Invisible Man rejects the world above because it enfeebles his creativity while the underground brings intensity, and releases his creativity. His defence against the black activists' attack is "Please, a definition: A hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action" (Prologue, p.11). Hence, he flees to "antilife" in order not to be systemised.⁵⁸ Despite the fact that living in a hole is ascribed as passive, and a form of narcissism, the narrator gets a personally supporting experience. After burning 1369 light bulbs in the hole to write down his memories, the narrator, at an insightful moment, decides to burn all the memories he has registered not because he shuns his past, nevertheless it is another aspect of escape; escaping from a condition of still remembering, and then still living in an unpleasant past. He seeks redemption and that he cannot fulfil with a heart, and mind suffering from racial discrimination. Karl explicates: "The real is in one self; not in open pastoral or the urban jungle, but in the invisibility of oneself, in the dark, there, one can efface the past."⁵⁹ The novelist elucidates the narrator's burning of his past memories saying: "Before he could have some voice in his own destiny, he had to discard these old identities and illusions; his enlightenment couldn't come until then."⁶⁰ Noteworthy, the experience of invisibility enables the narrator to have an insight of himself. He declares from the beginning: "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" (Epilogue, p.446).

Invisibility, and counterfeiting underline the narrator's character. Underground, the narrator discovers that he was deceived, and was used because he was naïve, immature, and unsuspecting. His dilemma is the passivity of his innocence that led him to accept doing thing he does not want to do. He was unlike his grandfather who called himself "a spy in the enemy's country" (Ch.1, p.13), and believed that it is foolish to be innocent and kind, but one should "undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction" (Ch.1, p.13) not forgetting his disillusionment, and recklessness of participating in the smoker called the "battle royal" where he was sent out (italics mine) to fight men from his race only to recreate the whites. He is described by the veterinary in the Golden House as an "automaton" because "Already he's learned to repress not only his emotions but his humanity. He's invisible, a walking personification of the Negative, the most perfect achievement of your dreams, sir! The mechanical man" (Ch.3, pp.74-5)! Frederick R. Karl describes the narrator's fighting as "a key image" in the novel, a "mixture of veil and struggle, of furious energies expanded on a frustrating, degrading cause."⁶¹

The characters suffer lack of perception, and one of these characters is the blind preacher Homer A. Barbee, and his blindness, unlike the poet Homer, grants him only invisibility. However, in his prologue to the novel, Ralph Ellison explains that the hero discovers what he had not discovered throughout the book: he has to make his own decision: he has to think for himself. The hero comes up from the underground because the act of writing, and thinking necessitated it. He could not stay down there (Prologue, pp. 9-11). He began to perceive "the advantage of being invisible" (Prologue, p. 5). His creator lets him pass a journey of searching for perception.

Section Four: Conclusion

The protagonists in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *Invisible Man* choose escape as a choice of changing their oppressive realities after suffering undesirable conditions, either false morality and violence or racial and exploitive systems. Escape becomes a kind of fighting for freedom or for self-assertion. Besides, both heroes felt alienated among their own societies.

The novel depicts the struggle to escape the society, and its beliefs. The feeling of freedom changes the escapers' personalities optimistically. For example, Jim's awareness of being free raises in him the meaning of hope. Huck describes him saying: "Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so close to freedom" (Ch.16, p.91). Remarkably, Jim undergoes a character-change, and now he plans to be reunited with his family: "Just see what a difference it made in him the minute he judged he was about free" (Ch. 16, p.92), Huck comments. Escape from enslavement created in him a new man because it gave him life: "I's a free man" (Ch.16, p. 92).

The purposes that guide Huck to escape starts with escape from death on the hand of his father, to escape from moral confinement with Widow Douglas, to escaping to free slave Jim, a purpose that can be described as a sublime aim in pursuit of human freedom. His own sense of sympathy is unmatched in a racist society. Throughout the novel, Huck develops certain values that differentiate him from his society, like sympathy towards Jim, respect to the Widow, besides he did not condemn the society moral doctrines or religious ideas, but thought them unsuitable for him for he "know no better" (Ch.36, p.248). However, he

escapes because he has the ability to live independently, and secede from society standards. Moreover, choosing a boy to be representative of the idea of escape implies the writer's expectation of a new generation growing with rejection to the moral, and social standards of life due to the embedded hypocrisy, and fallacy in the heart of these norms.

Flight is the main theme in Twain's novel. The text is a series of adventures, but indeed those adventures turn to be series of escapes. Huck seeks life free from restrains and false morality. Likewise, he values life of ease and comfort to the extent of accepting to be imprisoned in the cabin by his father instead of living with Widow Watson. The Mississippi, by its wild aimless current, ensembles Huck's love of comfort, and freedom. On the river, he does not worry himself with the complications of life in the town, i.e., he needs to fish and hunt for living, sleeps in the canoe without the least confinement of clothes. Twain portrays Huck to be a different kind of human being. He is special in his own way of worshipping nature not town, of seeking freedom of no boundaries, and in living day by day and not evaluating to be a respectable individual in the society. His contentment and comfort are in the space.

Through escape, Ellison's escaper seeks freedom from racial-discrimination. "When I discover who I am, I'll be free" (Ch.11, p. 188), declares the nameless everyman narrator in Ellison's novel. Additionally, the text of *Invisible Man* is a soul-searching story of one young Negro's baffling experiences on the road to self-discovery. The freedom he was searching for is the freedom of asserting his identity. Identity is his freedom. With a hopeful temperament, *Invisible Man* predicts with the conclusion of the novel "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you" (Epilogue, p. 450)? The novel records his "dread of absorption by the body politic" of the black community. It follows then that in his escape from the communist Brotherhood, the separatist Ras the Destroyer, and Rinehart the way of crime, *Invisible Man* is in pursuit of his true self, and pursuit of self implies to escape illusions. Curiously, he strives toward discovering his self in the underground hole and he succeeds. By delineating invisibility, Ralph Ellison creates the term of social alienation, a term which unfolds the racial-discrimination that besets the Americans. Invisibility in the novel develops to be a metaphor for the social alienation of not only the black race, but of other races.

Although the novelist creates a nameless and physically indescribable character, and although his character declares: "I am an invisible man" (Prologue, p.3), the narrator is present; present because he himself narrates his own story of escape. His underground existence symbolised the black community's rejection of the racial discrimination, and his rising out of the hole like the mythological phoenix ignites the rising 1960s movement. Therefore, Ellison's novel displays an insight into every man's struggle to find his true self. He discovers that to escape the community and hide underground is not the remedy, but in fact it is a "social crime" (Ch.14, p. 459). He escapes his own blindness which prevents him to discern his own role, and escapes the societies blindness to his own creativity, innocence, and humanity. Here, invisibility is a domineering metaphor to blindness in the novel. In the hole, he released his feelings of pain, and anger and attains redemption. Since, developing speech making should be through co-operation and integration with the society, he comes out of the hole, hopeful, mature, and enlightened ready to release all his potentialities for his race.

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¹David F. Burg, “Another View of *Huckleberry Finn*,” in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 29, no. 3 (Dec., 1974), p.299.

²James M. Cox, *Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p.178.

³Burg p.303.

⁴Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, (New York: Signet Classics, 1963), p.116.

⁵Fredrick R. Karl, *American Fiction 1940/1980: A Comprehensive History and Critical Evaluation*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1983), p. 194.

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⁸Kim Savelson, *Where the World Is Not: Cultural Authority and Democratic Desire in Modern American Literature* (Columbus: [The Ohio State University Press](http://www.ohio-state.edu/~press/), 2009), p.126.

⁹Savelson, p.126.

¹⁰Ibid., p.27.

¹¹Ibid., p.127.

¹²Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (The New American Library, Inc., New York, 1952), Ch.11, p.186. All subsequent quotes are from this edition.

¹³Savelson, p.127.

¹⁴Ibid., p.124.

¹⁵Burg, p.309.

¹⁶Mark Twain, *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1912), Ch. 18, pp. 118-19. Subsequent quotations are from this edition.

¹⁷Bluefarb, p.22.

¹⁸Bluefarb, pp. 23-4.

¹⁹Bluefarb, pp. 17-8.

²⁰Ibid., p.20.

²¹Bluefarb, p.15.

²²Burg, p.299.

²³Cox, p.178.

²⁴Bluefarb, p.20.

²⁵Peter Schmidt, “Seven Recent Commentaries on Mark Twain,” in *Studies in the Novel* (Winter 2002), vol. 34, no.4, p. 448.

²⁶Nash Smith. *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer*. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), pp.120, 114.

²⁷Cox, pp.172-73.

²⁸ Ibid., p.178.

²⁹Burg, p.302.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Anne Seidlitz "Ralph Ellison: An American Journey," *American Masters* 2020 (<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/ralph-ellison-an-american-journey/587/>), retrieved on 5th of Sept, 2020.

³²Savelson, p.128.

³³Seidlitz

³⁴"Invisible Man: Main Idea." *Spark Notes* LLC 2019 (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/invisibleman/themes/>), retrieved on 3rd of April, 2019.

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³⁶Ralph Ellison, "An American Dilemma: A Review," in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964), p.304.

³⁷Savelson, p.128.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Savelson, p.132.

⁴⁰Ibid., p.133.

⁴¹Ibid. p.132.

⁴²Johnson.

⁴³"An interview with Ralph Ellison" by Allen Geller. *Tamarack Review* (Summer 1964), p.223.

⁴⁴John T. Matthews, ed., *A Companion to the Modern American Novel 1900-1950* (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), p.278.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p.346.

⁴⁸Savelson, p.136.

⁴⁹Tod Clifton is a black ex-brother who was murdered by the police.

⁵⁰Geller, p.225.

⁵¹Savelson, p.138.

⁵²Karl, pp. 193-94.

⁵³Savelson, p.139.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Matthews, p.204.

⁵⁶Ibid., p.278.

⁵⁷Karl, p.197.

⁵⁸Ibid., p.191.

⁵⁹Karl, p.196.

⁶⁰"Ralph Ellison: The Art of Fiction No.8," *The Paris Review* 2020. (<https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5053/the-art-of-fiction-no-8-ralph-ellison>), retrieved on 13th of June, 2020.

⁶¹Karl, p.192.