

**Analyzing the Prominence of Remembering History and
Folklore in Selected Novels by Ralph Ellison Invisible Man
and Zora Neale Mules and Men.**

تحليل أهمية التاريخ والفولكلور في روايات مختارة لـ رالف إليسون
(الرجل الخفي) وزورا نيل البغال والرجال).

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على الرغم من النظام القمعي والعنصري في المجتمع الأمريكي ، فقد تنوعت التجارب في التقاليد الشفوية والفولكلور الشعبي للمجتمع الأفريقي الأمريكي ، مما أثر على الأدب سلبا و ايجابيا . يهدف البحث إلى دراسة اهمية استنكار التاريخ والفولكلور واللذان يعتبران كعناصر مهمة في تكوين الذات في روايات مختارة للكاتبين رالف أيلسون (الرجل الخفي) و زورا نيل هير ستون (البغال والرجال) . اهتم الكاتبان بهذه الاعمال الادبية لما لها من أهمية كبيرة في الحفاظ على هويتهم كمواطنين أصليين في المجتمع. تعتبر الروايتان والتي، أحدهما خيالي والأخرى غير خيالي ضروريتان لفهم تطور الهوية الأفريقية الأمريكية. تجمع رواية (الرجل الخفي) تجارب الكاتب أيلسون في الشمال والجنوب مع الفولكلور الأفريقي الأمريكي لخلق تصور غني للحياة في الولايات المتحدة. أما رواية هير ستون تصور التحول الكبير في معايير تقييم الأدب الأفريقي الأمريكي خلال القرن العشرين. الكاتبان مهتمان بدمج الفولكلور واستنكار التاريخ في رواياتهم لأهميته في الحفاظ على هويتهم كمواطنين أصليين والبقاء كمجموعة غير متجزئة من المجتمع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التاريخ ، الفولكلور ، البغال والرجال ، الرجل الخفي.

Abstract

Despite the repressive and racist system in American society, the diversity of individual African-American experiences has accompanied the ancestry of their oral traditions and folklore, influencing literature positively or negatively. The paper aims to examine history and folklore in the well-known two novels Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and *Mules and Men* by Zora Neale as essential structuring elements in the formation of subjectivity. The novel *Invisible Man* synthesizes his experiences in the North and South with African-American folklore and motifs from Western white works to create a rich depiction of life in the United States. The fluctuating popularity of Hurston reveals a significant shift in the criteria for evaluating African-American literature during the twentieth century. In light of their authorial attitudes and sociological and historical evidence about African-American manhood, a comparison of the two authors' works reveals that Ralph Ellison presented a vision of ideal African-American manhood based on models of white masculinity. And "resurrection" of Zora Neale Hurston's work has become an important story for anyone interested in this unclassifiable work. These works examine American history and society's facts and circumstances to question white and African-American people's traditional gender roles. In asserting the place of black women and condemning the attempt by white writers to write black history, Hurston was an influence not only for these women writers but also, more broadly, on the black movement in the United States. The two writers were interested in incorporating folklore into their writing because it was vital for them to keep their identities as original citizens and stay together.

Keywords: History, Folklore, Mules and Men, Invisible Man

1. Introduction

We've recently learned a little about the Harlem Renaissance. We should have finished reading Zora Neale Hurston's and Ralph Ellison's assigned works by now. Zora Neale Hurston (1903 - 1960) Born in Eatonville, a small Florida town, Zora Neale Hurston is one of Harlem's Renaissance lights. At age 16, she first came to New York City as a member of a travelling theatrical troupe. An exceptionally talented storyteller, who captivated her listeners, she attended Barnard College, where she studied with anthropologist Franz Boaz and came to understand ethnicity from a scientific perspective. Boaz encouraged her to collect the folklore of her native Florida. The eminent folklorist Alan Lomax described *Mules and Men* (1935) as "the most captivating, genuine, and well-written book in the field of folklore" (Hurston, 1935, xii). A forerunner of the feminist movement, Hurston inspired and influenced contemporary writers such as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker through books such as her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942). Hurston is well known for many works; the most recognizable is *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Though she is frequently identified and thought of as a writer, she was, first, an anthropologist. Known for her vibrant and unapologetic personality, Hurston wrote works of fiction that drove forward both the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights movement. She also wrote several essays and non-fiction pieces. Ralph Ellison is most well-known for his novel, *The Invisible Man* (tragically, Ellison's second novel was destroyed in a fire in his home, and he never again wrote another book). While the *Invisible Man* has been interpreted and re-interpreted for years, it began as a metaphorical conversation of visual identity--a man those around him could not see. The term "Invisible Man" and Ellison's story have become a part of the American lexicon (vocabulary) and identity over the years--to the point that its origin is often forgotten. However, the concept still permeates pop culture even today.

2. History Background

The "folk" of the nineteenth century, the social group designated in the original word "folklore," were rural, illiterate, and destitute. In contrast to the urban population of cities, they were peasants living in the countryside. Near the end of the century, the urban proletariat joined the rural poor as folk on the back of Marxist theory. The designation as a social underclass was a recurring theme in this extended definition of folk (Bascom, 67). The term "folkloristics," along with the alternative name "folklore studies," became widely used in the 1950s to distinguish the academic study of traditional culture from the folklore artefacts themselves. (Dundes,1978) . When the United States Congress passed the American Folklife Preservation Act (Public Law 94-201) in January 1976, to coincide with the Bicentennial Celebration, folkloristics in the United States came of age,

"... [Folklife] means the traditional expressive culture shared within the various groups in the United States: familial, ethnic, occupational, religious, and regional; expressive culture includes a wide range of creative and symbolic forms such as customs, belief, technical skills, language, art, architecture, music, play, dance, drama, ritual, pageantry, and handicraft; these expressions are mainly learned orally, by imitation, or in performance, and are generally maintained without the benefit of formal instruction or institutional direction." (Bronner, 239).

The word folklore, a compound of folk and lore, was coined in 1846 by the Englishman William Thoms (William J, 2020), who coined the word as a substitute for contemporary terms such as "popular antiquities" or "popular literature." The second half of the word, lore, comes from Old English *lār* 'instruction'. It is the knowledge and traditions of a particular group, frequently passed along by word of mouth (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). Folk's definition has changed over time. When Thoms first coined this term, it was only used to describe rural peasants who were frequently impoverished and illiterate. Traditionally, "folk" is defined as a social group of people who share a common set of characteristics and who express their shared identity via distinct traditions. "Folk is a flexible concept which can refer to a nation, as in American folklore, or to a single family." (Dundes,1969). During the 18th and 19th centuries, enslaved African Americans developed a storytelling practice known as African American folktales or storytelling tradition. When enslaved people from Africa arrived in the New World in the 1700s and 1800s, they carried a huge oral legacy that has survived to this day. In the Americas, the specifics and characters of the stories changed, but many of the motifs remained. African traditions, for the most part, slaveholders suppressed the people' languages, traditions, and cultures. As they had done in Africa, enslaved Black people often turned to sing and storytelling as a means of expression. Stories of creation, heroic actions, and magic were the nightly entertainment for them. They were told in the form of parables, which taught morals and values to the audience. An African American folktale type explains why animals look or act in a certain way. Other civilizations also use it; those tales, such as "Why the Lizard Often Nods" and "Why the Owl Never Sleeps at Night", are often amusing and attempt to explain common animal behaviour. There are various tale types, and one of them is the "how-and-why" story. For example, Tappin, the Land Turtle, contains allusions to the horrors of slavery while also explaining how optimism and levity help alleviate the situation. "Why Women Always Take Advantage of Men" and "Why the Sister in Black Works the Hardest" are two further examples of how-and-why stories".(Cunningham, 2020). Folklore has not only assisted African Americans in recording and remembering large-scale events or in communicating morals, as other folk tales do, but it has also assisted with individual family genealogy. Folklore with a genealogical component helps make African American history more accessible and verifiable. Individuals, events, and locales are all mentioned in the stories. Unlike mythological tales, these stories are about real people and their experiences. It's a visual representation of the struggle for liberty and independence. Oral histories are given a sense of continuity and personal interest when genealogies and folklore are intertwined in this way. Many folk tales have a strong connection to family history, making each story unique. It also helps preserve cultural memory and strengthens family ties by allowing future generations to reflect on and honour the hardships and triumphs of their forebears. " This happened in slavery times, in North Carolina. I've heard my grandmother tell it more than enough. My grandmother was cook and house-girl for this family of slave-owners – they must have been Bissits, cause she was a Bissit" (Dorson, 248). The purpose of African folktales was passed down through oral tradition. That storytelling style has a lot in common with other oral traditions worldwide. Despite these constraints, it incorporates a wide range of flexible patterns that enhance composition, memorization, and the ability to re-perform it. In many performances, members of the audience take part in the action. The telling of folktales provided a little break from slavery by African Americans, which helped preserve and

spread African culture. The storytelling tradition also fostered a sense of community because it was one of the few activities that their white masters did not control. Enslaved people sometimes utilized folktales for communicating secret information, such as meeting spots or escape preparations. Many folktales, such as "The Riddle Tell of Freedom," deal with the subject of outwitting one's captors. The relationship between literature and myth is one of mutual reliance. Even though literature cannot be reduced to myth and myth cannot be reduced to literature, neither can exist on its own: myth has always been an integral element of literature (Baumbach,1). Not only does it provide a repository of multifaceted stories for the fictional world-making of literature, which expands, modifies, or rewrites mythological elements in the process of creative reception, but it also provides a repository of multifaceted stories for the fictional world-making of literature. In Aristotle's Poetics, where mythos refers to the plot, Aristotle explains how literature develops from a disjointed set of required and probable events into a coherent whole. As a result, the etymology of mythos (word) reveals that myth embodies the fundamental foundation of literature, which is anchored in oral tradition and the performance of literary works. The term "mythology" is derived from the word "myth." The word itself is derived from the Greek word 'mythos,' meaning tale, legend, or saga. The term "myth" refers to a story that attempts to rationalize the universe and the world around us. It is passed down orally from generation to generation, explaining the religious origin, natural occurrences, or supernatural events. Mythology is a collection of myths about cosmogony and cosmology shared by a specific community at a specific moment in human history. Humans have constructed myths for thousands of years for a variety of purposes. The creation of humanity is a source of wisdom and inspiration for centuries to come. Mythology and literature thrive because of their extraordinary and incredible natures, as well as the belief that there may be something else out there. The myth serves various functions, including social and political control of society. Literature and mythology share many parallels and distinctions. Both are important human creations that will continue to play a vital part in the intellectual world. The literature will always contain elements of myth, which will continue to shape our modern world. The significance of myth in literature, philosophy, history, and numerous other fields cannot be overstated. For thousands of years, they have played an important role in storytelling, whether orally, writing, or visually. They have been present throughout human history. "Ancient Greek and Roman mythology operated as both science and religion in both cultures for millennia because of its ability to explain natural events and life's mysteries" (Literary Terms, 2016). Myths play an important role in cultural studies and academia, representing literature, religion, philosophy, and many other fields. There are many definitions of myth; a myth is a traditional or legendary story that usually centres on a certain hero or event and explains natural, existential, or cosmic mysteries that have no genuine basis. "Myths occur in every society, but Greek and Roman mythology are the most well-known in Western culture and literature" (Literary Terms, 2016). In the end, myths are stories that have been a part of human culture, history, and even religion for a long time. Since the beginning of storytelling, they have been used, changed, and retold by authors. In other words, for most of human history.

Importance of the study: This research aims to clarify the importance of folklore and remembering history in the two selected novels of African American writers. Both writers were interested in their literary works with folklore because of their great importance in preserving their identity as original citizens and their cohesion in society. These texts, one non-fiction and the other fiction are essential to understanding the evolution of the American identity.

3. Zora Neale Hurston Mules and Men (1935)

The novel Mules and Men (1935) is the second book published by Zora Neale Hurston, an American anthropologist and writer, born in Notasulga, Alabama, contemporary of Ruth Benedict (1887-1948) and student of Franz Boas (1858) -1942). The result of field research was carried out in Florida and the city of New Orleans in the 1920s. Following the ethnographic method of North American culturalism, the book seeks to describe various cultural traits of black folks or Negroes, as in anthropological literature referred to the time, including folklore, music, social life, material culture and techniques. Although published as a literary production, the book was received as an academic work compared to Uncle Remus (1881), a novel by Joel Chandler Harris. The novel, a hit at the time especially among white readers, features a black narrator-character who tells nostalgically, in a writing style that emulates the language of black communities in the South, stories about the era of slavery - reasons why the comparison with Hurston's work, herself from the post-emancipation South and seeking to innovate in the presentation of the language of the region, was done. The comparison bothered Hurston, first because she had already criticized the novel and, second because

Mules and Men was the result of ethnographic work, far removed from Harris' stereotypes of African-American folklore.

The novel Mules and Men is a collection of black American folklore compiled by a well-known storyteller and anthropologist who grew up hearing the songs, sermons, sayings, and tall tales that have shaped the South's oral history since enslavement. Zora Neale Hurston went back to her hometown of Eatonville, Florida, to gather material, where she had an amusing night with a pinch of everything social mixed with the narrative. This book's stories, "big old lies" songs, voodoo practises, and superstitions are set in the social framework of black life and capture the imagination while bringing back the comedy and wisdom unique to African American culture.

Hurston initially establishes a framework of two interwoven voices in the introduction to Mules and Men: the voice of the ethnographer and the community member's voice. Hurston shows her perspective on anthropology and ethnography in this section in two ways. First, Hurston informs the reader that anthropology provided her with the 'spy-glass' she required to 'stand aside and gaze at my clothes'. The link to the spy-glass is based on the premise that her storey will be a detached view of herself and the individuals she will study. Hurston uses this image to establish credibility - albeit sarcastically - as someone who can remove herself from African-American culture despite her innate interest and entrenchment in it. Hurston's claim to such an approach, and hence to objectivity, is only one part of the process of developing a literary persona. Hurston's claim to the anthropological technique as a helpful tool for studying her culture also lends her authority. Hurston will not simply be casually listening to and recording folklore stories. Instead, she implies that these narratives will be gathered and translated systematically inside a theoretical framework. Hurston imbues herself with a set of credentials that legitimize her final written work by employing the mindset and procedures of an academic vocation.

Hurston, as author and storyteller, weaves her personal encounters with other folklorists into the narrative. She is using social storytelling to perform anthropological study. During her travels in Florida and Louisiana, she keeps a journal of her adventures and encounters with diverse people. Hurston, fortunately for readers, adopts a neutral stance in her narration. She expresses her dread, revulsion, and even excitement about her varied encounters with people openly. She is most interested in learning about the civilization that gave rise to these folktales, which is also her own culture. The opening dialogue between Hurston and the crowd of locals gathered on the store porch is one example of how the two voices mix. Hurston begins by responding to enquiries in Black English vernacular, declaring that she has come to collect folklore, or as the men refer to it, "falsehoods." Hurston responds to their incredulous answer as to why she would want to do that. Hurston battles for acceptability in both the African-American and intellectual worlds in these passages. She expresses her identification as an African-American woman by employing Black English vernacular. She sees herself as an anthropologist who interacts with other anthropologists. Neither her ethnographer identity nor her African-American woman identity succeeds in the first eight chapters of Mules and Men's novel.

The ethnography, published in a two-part book, glossary and four appendices, is a rare collection of folklore and magical and folk medicine practices of black Americans known as hoodoo. The first part is dedicated to the collection of lies [lies], how the black folks referred to the stories circulated among them. In the first three chapters of the opening segment, Hurston transports the reader to the daily lives of black people in Eatonville. Having grown up in the city and being herself a black woman who has long been engaged in the fight against racism, she can participate in the activities of her interlocutors, be it parties or conversation circles, with the help of which she manages to collect a large number of stories, some about the time of slavery, others about the origin of things and animals, and still others about fantastic events that would have occurred with their interlocutors. All these stories are full of humour since, according to the anthropologist, laughter would be one of the forms of the Negroes resist the advances of white - one of the originalities of interpretation.

In chapters four through ten, Hurston recounts lessons collected between workers at a logging company in Loughman and a mine in Pierce. In this context, she describes, between one folklore and another, the relations of power and gender, as well as the games and fights she witnessed. The collected songs are fully transcribed in Appendix 1 of the book, including scores and analyses. The seven chapters of the second part are devoted to hoodoo; six of them concern polls in New Orleans and only one on Eatonville, Florida. In each chapter, she describes the practices of a hoodoo doctor, which she accompanied as a pupil. She goes through several initiation ceremonies, which allow her to describe scenarios, materials, smells and speeches typical of the rituals. Once started, it participates in some works with these doctors, which it presents in detail from the client's request; the amount charged; the paraphernalia (the materials used); where the work should be done;

the sequence of steps of each ritual and the result. The richness of these materials appears in the presentation of each work and its purposes in appendices 2, 3 and 4, for example, the use of roots for medicinal purposes; Hurston describes how illnesses, the causes of which were not identified by doctors, could only be cured with these roots, as they resulted from work done against the person.

Although produced in North American anthropology, *Mules and Men* are marked by an innovative style. The book is written in the form of "telling" stories faithful to the narrative style of its interlocutors, highlighting the sound of the speech through the spelling of words as pronounced by black folks. This particularity expresses Hurston's familiarity with the black culture of which she was a part and her decision to record the innovations of phonetic writing. The novel *Mules and Men* is not just an accurate analysis of folklore. Still, it performs the style of storytelling that marked the spread of folklore and characterized the sociability of southern black communities. Therefore, it can be described as telling a story about an anthropologist who asks her childhood acquaintances to tell her stories amidst parties, conversation circles, and hoodoo works. Thus, it anticipates the dialogical narrative as current practice in ethnographic descriptions in many decades, gaining importance in postmodern anthropology.

Hurston accomplished her first genuine reconciliation with her past in this book, that is, between herself as a maturing individual with literary aims on the one hand and the evolving African-American culture and history on the other. She found the perfect form for showing herself about the great diversity of influences inside the African-American culture that had produced her, as well as for portraying the people of which she was but one member, in an extended literary act—her most ambitious to date. Here she finally came to terms with the whole spectrum of black folk customs, practices, phrases, and forms of behaviour. She began to trust her comprehension of their multiple meanings as a window into the African-American culture.

"I had known about the capers Brer Rabbit is prone to cut, and what the Squinch Owl cries from the housetop since the early swaying of my cradle/" she wrote in *Mules and Men*. But it was clinging to me like a chemise. I couldn't see it as I was wearing it. It was only when I was away at college, away from my home, that I could see myself as someone else and stand back and examine my clothing. Then I had to look through the Anthropology spy-glass at that." (Meisenhelder,88).

Similarly, Chapter Five might be seen as an illustration of how a carefully created setting can deliver a forceful critique. Hurston tells ten slave stories in this chapter, starting with enslaved people deceiving. The levels progress from enslaved people deceiving their owners or God to situations in which enslaved people gain their freedom. Hurston moves from fanciful, humorous tales to hopeful and liberating narratives. This very self-aware sequencing of the stories leads me to believe that slave stories are repeated to extend previous acts of resistance to oppression and violence into the present. What appears to be an innocuous, apolitical, or voyeuristic presentation of traditional tales becomes a strong validation of the Eatonville African-American community's quest for affirmation and survival in this fashion?

In Polk County, Zora Neale Hurston may have encountered a similar situation. She gradually abandons her function as an ethnographer to improve the quality of her folklore collection. Hurston's collection of folklore in Polk County had virtually come to a halt, as evidenced by an examination of her narrative voices in Chapters 9 and 10. Hurston says she collects songs from her informants, but most of the information she gives the reader is about Big Sweet's connection with Hurston and the growing conflict between Lucy, Ella, Big Sweet, and Hurston. Ella and Lucy plot to murder Hurston during a dance in the last pages of *Mules and Men*. The capacity of Zora Neale Hurston to let the spy-glass fall away, revealing the war for power that takes place between the ethnographer and the subject, in which both vie to define the field and the possibilities of representation, maybe her most stunning contribution to anthropology. Hurston leaves us feeling the shifts, movements, and tensions that characterize our field interactions, rather than focusing on a pliant item from which we may infer a broad picture of a society. Finally, she teaches us how to write ethnography, rendering the spy-glass obsolete.

4. The Folklore in Zora Neal *Mules and Men* novel .

Hurston's early work as an anthropologist influenced her later interest in folklore. Hurston said, "I was glad when somebody told me, You may go and collect Negro folklore"(Trotman,159). Her involvement in the Harlem Renaissance and her link to the American modernist movement gave Hurston's writing a unique and textured style. Looking at her tri-partite identity provides the most full and accurate picture of Hurston's remarkable career as a folklorist and author. As a professional anthropologist, Hurston saw her career take multiple radical turns as she strove to explore and experience African-American culture and express that culture via her writing. Her unique and fearless nature is reflected in Hurston's writing, which defies

categorization into a particular genre or discipline. Hurston spent several years compiling one of the most extensive and accurate folktale collections concerning African-Americans living in the American Southeast. Anthropology, folklore, and African-American Modernism form the basis of Hurston's writing identity. It is via the mixture of these life experiences that she can present an accurate and comprehensive depiction of African-American cultural identity. Hurston was undoubtedly aware of the controversy that had erupted due to her doubts about the politics of voice in her works. Hurston discusses self-censorship as a racial technique, one that she embraces as a means of self-protection in this paragraph from *Mules and Men*, her earlier ethnographic collection:

Folklore is not as easy to gather as it appears. The most acceptable sources are those with the fewest outside influences, and those people are usually the shyest because they are disadvantaged. They are sometimes hesitant to reveal what the soul relies on... Despite his open-faced laughter and seeming agreement, the Negro is exceptionally evasive. (Konzett,100).

Hurston discovers that her mission shifts from sociological to social in her travels. " She's on a mission to unearth the oldest and most authentic folk tales; therefore, she has to locate those who are most committed to tradition. These uninfluenced people are reluctant to confide in anyone, let alone a stranger or an outsider. This proves to be a hurdle. Folktales are essentially personal confessions of one's religious or philosophical worldview and, as such, are held in high regard by the people who tell them. Hurston's interest in folklore can be traced back to her early work as an anthropologist. Zora gathered the stories for *Mules and Men* over two trips: one to Florida, where she was born and raised, and the other to New Orleans. In Florida, she collected around seventy folktales, and in New Orleans, she collected voodoo stories and other legends. Zora explains an ethnographer's unique path into the discipline in her own words:

"I was glad when somebody told me, and You may go and collect Negro folklore. When I pitched headforemost into the world, I landed in the crib of negroism. From the earliest rocking of my cradle, I had known about the capers Brer Rabbit is apt to cut and what the Squinch Owl says from the housetop. But it fitted me like a tight chemise. I couldn't see it for wearing it. It was only when I was off in college, away from my native surroundings, that I could see myself as somebody else and stand off and look at my garment. Then I had to have the spy-glass of Anthropology to look through at that" (Bloom, 52).

In addition to that, Franz Boas was known as the "Father of American Anthropology," and he admired Zora's work in the discipline. In his foreword he wrote for the novel *Mules and Men*, he said:

Negro folklore has exerted a strong attraction upon the imagination of the American public. There are endless Negro tales, songs, sayings, and accounts of Negro magic and voodoo, but none of them genuinely depict the intimate setting in the social life of the Negro(Gambrell,105).

The novel *Mules and Men* may have vanished from academic consciousness for several decades, but it has recently resurfaced as an excellent classic in ethnography and racial theory. Here are two examples:

"Zora Neale Hurston's folktales, as well as the situations in which they were told, were precisely detailed to highlight the complicated relationships between race and gender in Black life, *Mules and Men* appeared (and was read by the majority of her contemporary reviewers as) a clear depiction of the humour and "exoticism" of African American folk culture. As she points out, "African American mythology continues to play an important role in Black people's efforts to overcome economic and racial injustice" (Bloom,105).

According to Graciela Hernández (University of Michigan) wrote in "Multiple Mediations in Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*":

"*Mules and Men* is a precedent-setting study of folklore in the African-American communities of Eatonville and Polk County, Florida and New Orleans, Louisiana, in which Zora Neale Hurston attempts to represent her fieldwork experiences in writing. In this work, Hurston uniquely records a variety of slave tales, songs and conversations by interspersing these cultural forms with the ethnographic narrative" (Hernández,351). Zora Neale Hurston opted to anthologize the imagination of Southern, working-class blacks by documenting the folklore of her hometown—traditions, songs, jokes, and stories. She grew up listening to the "menfolk" on the store porch, but this time she would use "the spy-glass of anthropology" to observe them. Eatonville in the 1930s was shown in *Mules and Men* as a place where African Americans were subjected to racial prejudice through humour, attitude, spirituality, customs, and poverty. As a consequence of her study, which was influenced by her experiences as both an insider and an outsider, she has created a compelling and realistic portrait of Eatonville's citizens.

Using *Mules and Men* as an ethnological study, the Eatonville community was caught, displaying the humour, attitude, spirituality, customs, poverty, racism, and sexism surrounding African Americans amid the

Great Depression. For her research, her dual perspective of both an insider and an outsider had a beneficial and a harmful impact on her findings. Despite the prejudices and negative connotations connected with idiom usage and story embellishment, Hurston's most pleasing narrative voice derives from her use of the vernacular. Hurston's study as an anthropologist fell flat despite her well-documented engagement with New Orleans' hoodoo culture. Because she lied and misrepresented herself and her goals so frequently, the culture was subjected to an unfair assessment. Hurston hoped that her studies would help her understand the social context of black life; nevertheless, her interpretation and narrative voice helped her understand the social context of her own life. Today, it is widely regarded as an essential academic resource for its historical and literary value to our understanding of the black South. The novel *Mules and Men* makes a necessary argument for the necessity of reconsidering the African folk aesthetic in its proper tests the concept that people were making art that didn't need the sanction of art to verify its beauty." testifies Hurston's belief that "folk were creating an art that didn't need the sanction of art to affirm its beauty" (Abdul-Jabbar, 96). Literary critics today praise Hurston's use of between-talk, claiming that it depicts the process of gathering folklore while piquing the audience's interest in the content. "Through the manipulation of the "between-story discussion and business," Hurston can give women in her text a voice (Wall). The *Mules and Men* is an anthology of Eatonville's verbal and customary history; thus, Hurston not only heard narratives, dialect, phrases, jokes, and songs, but she also experienced the beliefs, superstitions, rituals, sports, and dances.

5. The relation between folklore, cultural memory and history.

Stories, customs, and beliefs are passed down from generation to generation worldwide. Their cultural heritage is passed down through generations through folklore. Folklore has played an essential role in chronicling African American history. The first slave ship arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, marking the beginning of African American history. Slavery enslaved African Americans in more ways than one. During their slavery, they were barred from attaining any information, including reading and writing. Illiteracy was used to maintain control because intellectual stimulation offered African Americans thoughts of freedom and independence. Slavery had a profound impact on African culture, which was enormous. Enslaved people needed to give up their true nature to become servants to Anglo Americans.

Nonetheless, even though they were barred from engaging in activities associated with their African culture and heritage, the native Africans in America managed to keep their culture and languages alive. Folk tales, which enslaved Africans wrote to remember their experiences, were crucial. These tales, spoken in secret, had themes of hope and liberation and characteristics specific to the oppressed people who told them. Enslaved people taken from West Africa dealt with and preserved their experiences in America by adapting oral storytelling practices from their predecessors. The information was also helpful to follow generations who wanted to know what happened to their ancestors who had been sold into slavery, notably in the nineteenth century.

Folklore has not only aided African Americans in documenting and recalling major historical events and imparting moral lessons, but it has also aided them in researching their family histories. Folklore has not only assisted African Americans in documenting and recalling major historical events and imparting moral lessons, but it has also aided them in researching their family histories. Using genealogy and folklore to connect oral histories to the past provides continuity and an element of personal interest. Family history plays an important role in many folk stories, and the fact that each narrative is unique is because one's heritage will be entwined with its telling. It also helps to keep cultural memory alive and strengthens family values by allowing descendants to think about and honour their predecessors' past experiences. In more recent decades, novels and book retellings of this family history have emerged as the most effective means of preserving African American folklore and culture. Folklore has served as the inspiration for some of the most famous works of African American literature throughout history. Their African heritage not only provided them with the fortitude to fight another day but also supplied them with comfort. Although the past is crucial in shaping our identity and history, it is possible that much of the story of the early African Americans would have been lost to the passage of time if it had not been for their drive and perseverance. African Americans can still look to their forefathers and foremothers for guidance today, thanks to their continuous sacrifices.

Hurston tried to pursue folklore studies. She noted how the traditions were performed as art, their context, variations, functions, and worth to the community. Personal encounters with these men and women enriched Hurston's "falsehoods" and her own story. Traditional folklore research was more accessible for Zora to conduct since she had time to build relationships and become familiar with the daily lives of the storytellers in an informal atmosphere. The casual setting—the social outlets, the discourse, and the daily encounters

between folklorists and subjects—made Zora's research more natural since she had time to create relationships with the tellers and become acquainted with their daily lives. The narrator builds on everyday events by incorporating cultural elements such as gastronomy, religion, and heritage. Informal culture brings forth misogyny, stereotyping, violence and racism. She frequently indicates that her subjects consider themselves illiterate, slothful, and subservient to whites. She conducted the functionalist study, highlighting the significance of "lying" as an escape or diversion in illiterate societies. Hurston looks elitist since she doesn't emphasize contextual disparities in her portrayal of the community. Hurston's description of the African American accent may be exaggerated in terms of her writing style. It's more likely that she recorded the idioms because she distinguishes the local slang and the hoodoo culture of New Orleans. Colloquial expressions and casual language produce a witty, realistic tone. The portrayal of their small-town Southern "counterparts" seeming illiteracy may have outraged African American readers at the time of publication. This is a well-crafted piece of writing. According to the scholar, Hurston aimed to involve the reader in the process of gathering folklore itself. Although Hurston had no recording devices, she relied on her notes and memory to transcribe the dialogues. Maybe she exaggerated or distorted their stories by writing her own. Hurston tries to capture the community aesthetic through language, tone, and mannerisms, but she misses reciprocity.

6. Prominence of Remembering the History in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man.

In his novel dedicated to the itinerary of a young "black" man from the southern United States to New York, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* uses the notion of invisibility to describe the status of "blacks" in the United States. In the foreword to the English edition, Charles Johnson considers his definition of invisibility:

"It is so common and constitutes such an important part of culture and discourse (...) that it is automatically invoked when we speak of the situation of American blacks" (Johnson, 1994: VIII).

Having started its history in the image of itself, even before being an anchor of the ideological and theological principles and values that have guided it since then, even before its history as a nation, it continues to be the anchor that has always been a sign of its ambiguity. Fetters for enslaved people, shelter for exiles, a symbol of freedom or stagnation, they will be, (in the post-war period and in the fabrication of those same dreams, in this America that passes from confusion to the order of supposedly celebrating productivity), reconverted into signs of prosperity that only the power of labour can ensure: "The aftermath of celebration is work. Without the context of work, leisure loses its form and becomes license" (Goffman, 1970: 162).

Bearing in mind that the artist is the generator of exchanges and behavioural changes in terms of thought in a given society, he alone and responsible for determining his ethical values as a promoter of the actions represented and carried out in that same society. However, all the symbolic action consists of the practice of gestures and behaviours conditioned by the continuous unfolding of history. Between instituted time, that which rises before the basic needs of the invention in favour of the stagnant and stabilizing needs of society, there is, according to Cassirer, a magical "now", or a measure of time in which "thought now rises to the idea of the order of time as an order of destiny, which is universal and dominates all being and becoming. Not a chronological time, not a physical time, not even a subjective time, but a mythical time in which intuition and destiny are intimately linked. But what could fall into the hysteria of contemplation is supplied by expression in the creative act. No different is the opinion of Emerson in "Fate" when found in the mystery of life an unshakable force, that of the mind. In effect, power and depth are the ends of a struggle against destiny as a way of overcoming the material formlessness in the intimate disciplining desire of the fragments left by the original chaos. The direct consequence of a superior will, "the will of Divine Providence", destiny depends on and synthesizes the relationship between quantity – reaction – and quality – action:

"History is the action and reaction of these two - Nature and Thought (...). Every solid in the universe is ready to become fluid on the approach of the mind, and the power to flux it is the measure of the mind" (Emerson, 2010). Herein lies a vision of the present that only gains existence as it appropriates a passive space; what Ellison says is "built-in conditions which comprise the pathology of American democracy" (Ellison 1986: 124). This present associated with historical opacity cannot reveal the essence of the gesture, which in turn is crystallized under the muffle of oblivion. But to the suffocation of the selective memory of history, to which Ellison contrasts word and action, the pulse of life is manifested, a memo of a counter-power that finds its source in the fragments of the rubble of human tragedy, or of a new order that unearths the lie and chaos from reality:

"(...) we possess two basic versions of American history: one which is written and the neatly stylized the ancient myth, and the other unwritten and the chaotic and full of contradictions, changes of pace, and

surprises as life itself" (Ellison 2011: 124). Made in the discontinuity of a now that shows devouring reality, Ralph Ellison thinks of the work of art as the most miniature world of art and the world as the minor work of life. Only the human being can be, in his conception of art and life, the most significant work that art contains, even when the threat of death, sweeping it from history, does not make him give up. The expression of minorities is stunted either by racial segregation or by attempts to homogenize it. The diverse identities of the American nation, polarized between North and South, are from a multicultural perspective, the reality of a historical dimension that whites tend to hide, resorting to formulas and schemes that deviate from the chaotic evidence of their own lives. Black aesthetics arises as to the assumption of the history and culture of a race whose oral forms represent the most immaterial reality of their knowledge. From the outset, the dimension of a cyclical time is identified with the nature of their lives, marked by successive geographical, cultural, social and religious ruptures. Opposing the idea of fluidity and progress of the historical vision, this temporal dimension is unified by the organicist of memorial conservation between what is public and private, between what is visible and invisible. It would be impossible for Ralph Ellison to close the curve of this universe. In its essence, the reduction of the announced time, in its becoming, to a form crystallized in the present would inevitably be the irreversible realization of death and the denial of life itself. Nevertheless, life seems to purify itself despite the mediation of objects in this death, only symbolic, only transitory or cyclical. Here time can precede the history of events, just as original time precedes the history of man himself. Juxtaposed, endogenous time and ontological time flow from the time of innocence, where Invisible Man plunges, immutable in its exteriority, to imbue invisibility in the Invisible that Time contains: "And so I play the invisible music of my isolation" (Szmańko, 37). By tearing the veil of a mysterious time, promoting a naive way of looking, in the fusion of the object with the subject, Invisible Man not only concretizes a time of the future, as its corporeality participates in the spiritual and creative activity. The decantation of truth is carried out by the verbalization of a time below history, which in Invisible Man means presenting the determining facts of the moment inscribed in the course of history itself. The moment of the now transposed to the future corresponds to the hero's last endurance test, an occurrence inherent in the full participation of body and spirit. As a matter of expression of the work overflowing physical limits and inertia, the essence of this being who acquires social awareness is equal to the black aesthetic expressed in "Black is Beautiful!" The relevance of this reality is recalled in Invisible Man, focusing on how New York became the place of ethno-cultural reference marked by differences that translate the origin of a heterogeneous population group and the new order that expresses the experience of difference and discovery of the existence of otherness. They are factors in the coexistence of secondary events that intersect in the more organized fabric of power structures, producing differentiated activities that are reflected in the established cultural context and in the behaviour of the groups that hold these experiences, making it possible to disentangle from the established pontificate of history the minor epics of human existence. From a morphological point of view, the city, in Invisible Man, also becomes an aesthetic object and identifies itself with the growth and evolution of the character, with a path that gives it shape and circumscribes it to the origins of the place, in the way of prospecting time, establishing the spatial and hierarchical configuration to dominate the essence of the novel itself.

7. Folklore in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man novel.

In his writings and interviews, Ellison believes that African American folklore, myth, and rituals do not live in a vacuum, distinct from the rest of American society; instead, black and white cultures are inextricably linked. Invisible Man emphasizes this shared and integrated cultural history on an individual and societal level. I will show that Ellison's achievement is based on a narrative method that synthesises antecedent cultural forms, specifically Greco-Roman myth, African American folklore, and canonical Western texts. Critics such as Schafer and George Kent have explored Ellison's use of myth and folklore, going so far as to argue that Ellison's use of folklore "provides a veritable textbook that may be adjusted, according to one's sensibility and worldview" (Butcher, 5). Examining the functions of African American folklore, Western myth, and canonical literature inside Invisible Man, on the other hand, has been chiefly compartmentalized. The diversity of individual African-American experiences has accompanied the ancestry of their oral traditions and folklore, despite the repressive and racist system of American society, influencing literature, positively or negatively. Unexpectedly Invisible Man maintains the integrity of his/meself, having been disentangled from the "me" crowd. The hero tries to reconstruct his identity, even if psychologically dismembered, as blacks disoriented by the technological shock, or as in Golden Day, uniting the memory

fragments of a memory he rediscovers in childhood, in the ancestry of African culture, in folklore, in the rhythms, in an art close to nature with which he identifies and feels harmony:

I laughed, deep, deep inside me, giddy with the delight of self-discovery and the desire to hide it. Somehow I was Buckeye, the Rabbit ... or had been when as children we danced and sang barefoot on the dusty streets: Buckeye the Rabbit Shake it, Shake it Buckeye the Rabbit Break it, break it...(Cartwright, 63).

The diversity of individual African-American experiences has accompanied the ancestry of their oral traditions and folklore, despite the repressive and racist system of American society, influencing literature, positively or negatively:

More specifically, every black American novelist works within and against a narrative tradition, oral and literary, that each inherits as part of one's cultural legacy and in which each participates, however marginally, in the elusive quest for authority, autonomy, and originality. The contribution and significance of each novelist, in other words, are influenced by his or her relationship to past and present novelists and the tradition, both in the narrow literary sense of T. S. Eliot and in the broader cultural sense. (Bell 1987: XIV)

The change in Invisible Man's behaviour between the two endings is nothing but the coherence of the aesthetic experience that launches us into the dematerialization of beauty, into the same abyss that Negro laments in the blues, freeing himself from the domain of matter and the historical current. This lyrical and ascending diagonal of a time without configuration is the most concrete dimension of creativity and spontaneity. The impression of movement is performed in the space reconstructed by the reader. The truth emerges from this present "à la fois sensation et mouvement" (Bergson 1959: 153), as the bridge uniting the two margins of artistic production and enjoyment is cast over time intervals, the "breaks" of jazz. A bridge or measure representing the silence of a natural breathing – contrast of the mechanical asphyxia of the systems – of the rhythmic cadences alternating the sound with the word, the variations are carried out on the thematic tonic: invisibility/identity, neutrality/diversity, transparency/opacity. Three elements whose interaction lead him to the threshold of a space of affirmation/denial that plays with absence/presence, in which the "going" and "coming" of a nebulous wandering centre is centred. This movement grades the "white"/"black" racial dichotomy into an unlimited scale of hues that slide from the world of form to the world of images. This is the world of virtual, where intuition is, in fact, the right path, "establishing communication of sympathy between us and humanity. The absence of configuration that characterizes the temporal dimension unfolds the designed and illuminated space, improvising it from the verticality of an "up and down" coordinate. The allusion to the virtually of the circular form is combined in the movement of escape and transition with a process of fixation of identity:

"(...) in retreat as well as in advance, crabways and crossways and around in a circle, meeting your old selves coming and going and perhaps all at the same time" (Wright,126). At the same time, form tends to define itself in terms of recreation in its stabilising function. This is not a process that finds its end in the project, but it is the work itself that transcends the project: "Without light, I am not only invisible but formless as well" (Curtin, 7). This simultaneously ethical and aesthetic posture explained the possibility of progressive self-discovery and the definition of a self-put to the test and dissected in the Factory Hospital, where Invisible Man sees himself as both protagonist and spectator of a farce, which is nothing more than the attempt to erase form during the creative process. This image of the latent self conveys the "act of pure looking [in which] it differs from everything that has objective form, which has 'figure and name'" (Schultz,159). In this way, shape and figure are enunciated in the analytical process. At the same time, the character is freed from this process to put himself in another perspective, which allows him to synthesize, in the multiple vanishing points, configurations of form whose anatomical requirements and their representation in time coincide with the shape of yourself. Requirements that Ellison will find in the musical rhythms of his culture, that of blacks, or in an aesthetic order that seeks to enhance the idea of movement, that is, the temporal fluidity in space elements of light and shade, so distributed that the one engenders the others justify these breaks in plastic terms; the arrangements of the breaks create the rhythm. Here is the Cubist synthesis of fluidity and the virtual construction of images that the Cubists advocated in the first decade of the 20th century. Possibly this Ralph Ellison, who "was ironically hostage, in the final analysis, of his surrender to the American literary tradition" (Azevedo 1999: 109), is reflected in the way his Invisible Man feels unable to disentangle himself from a "pre-text", as Guillaume designates the "suture object": "[O]bjects that aim to fill a lack, to sew a symbolic wound (...) The suture object remembers to allow forgetting what the conscious does not tolerate" (Guillaume 2003: 24). By giving up on surviving the form, allowing his character to stay him, although tragic in the contingency of his sepulchral stronghold, Ellison survives, however, in rehearsals, until John Callahan

posthumously finishes his second novel *Juneteenth*. His survival from the abyss of death confirms the unconsummated death of his hero in *Invisible Man* and the impossibility of liberation from a fate marked by suffering, "The true darkness lies within my mind (...) So why do I write, torturing myself to put it down?" (Cataliotti,174) in a close relationship between what the ritual of sacrifice represents and what the artist's progression means: "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (Eliot 1969: 17). However, what is confirmed here is above all the identification of the essence of the American black experience with that of the artist and is based on the concept of double-consciousness: "For DuBois, the distinctive essence of African consciousness resided in spirituality, with an origin in Africa and spread through African-American folklore, but also fused by a whole history of suffering, deprivation and faith (or is it an underground 'self-reliance'?)." (Azevedo 1999: 97).

8. Characteristics of Folktales and writing style.

The novel *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison has a symphonic literary style that perfectly depicts the different accents and languages of the United States. As well as the accented idiom of immigrants. Ellison imitates the poetic oratory style of Southern Black preachers and the abstract sociological rhetoric of Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries, among other things. The widespread usage of dialects provides a comprehensive picture of American speech encompassing all races and social classes. In addition, the general use of idioms provides a comprehensive view of American discourse that includes speakers of various ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. Ellison's work, in addition to displaying a wide range of speech patterns, frequently shifts between realism and surrealism in its style. The widespread usage of dialects provides a comprehensive picture of American speech, including people of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition to displaying a wide range of speech patterns, Ellison's work frequently shifts between realism and surrealism. An essential part of the intricacy of American society in the twentieth century is captured in Ellison's jazz-like transitions between realistic and surrealistic images. But, Zora Neale Hurston writing style is different. Zora Neale Hurston revolutionized African-American literature's narrative structure. Her works exemplify the distinctive writing style of the Harlem Renaissance writers because she was the movement's driving force. Her writings are known for their use of 'free indirect speech.' To describe the style of narration, which is a mixture of both the primary narrator's use of standard English and a secondary narrator's use of non-standard English. The secondary narrator uses the black vernacular. There are colloquialisms throughout her works and spellings based on phonetics rather than traditional spellings. There are regional aphorisms and long stretches of conversation. The omniscient narrator employs complex figurative language in some of her works. Her works are written in a manner known as 'split,' which demonstrates two distinct ways of storytelling. The Southern vernacular lends a personal touch to the plot. This vernacular use also indicates her works' authenticity. Her unique style is also characterized by the rhythm and word choice she employs. African folktales are thought to have the potential to unite the community: the ancestors, the living, and those yet to be born. They help instill principles and traditions in children to prepare them for life's challenges. Adults traditionally passed these stories while gathered around a village fire under the moonlight, a ritual known as tales by moonlight. The protagonist, or main character, is usually cheerful, kind, and exuberant, yet he or she has a significant weakness such as avarice, naivety, or pride. These flaws quickly become vulnerabilities. They are taken advantage of by the antagonist, or main antagonist, a trickster who, more often than not, leads the protagonist to his or her end. Along with a solid moral or lesson, African folktales frequently use personification, or when an author gives animals, natural elements, and inanimate objects human traits. There are various types of animals distinct to each culture in African folktales, showing characteristics such as charity, honesty, and tolerance, among others. The setting, or where a story takes place, is the final significant commonality across African folktales. Rather than taking place in a specific region, African folktales take place in a generic setting that introduces readers to Africa's climate and varied land formations, frequently referring to the seasons, dry and wet, and their effect on flora.

Conclusion

The use of past myths, traditions, and folklore by Ellison and Zora Neale to remark on the present marks a recurring issue not just in *Invisible Man's* life but in the lives of generations of African Americans. Because "Negroes [are] human, and so being human, their experience [becomes] metaphors for the experiences of other people" (Eddy, 15), Ellison's mythological style demonstrates that African American experience is not limited to African Americans. Ellison's *Invisible Man* can expose essential human truths for the African American population and beyond. Ellison's mythical method reveals all Americans' shared and frequently hidden history. As a result, what affects one person or a small number of people affects the entire society, "much as

the stock market, fads in dress, or automobiles affect the life of sharecroppers, whether or not the sharecropper knows the stock market exists"(Callahan,335) and vice versa. Ellison's mythical method depicts the permeation between the numerous cultures that make up American society and the tension caused by the interaction between people and the social groupings to which they belong. The importance of visibility that makes language a real thing, when placed on physical support, has a relationship in the novel combined with the cultural memory of black people. Firstly, the encounter of Invisible Man with Peter Wheat straw sends us to the reality of the "blues", a fact that sets the tone for the comic/tragic, giving it an inseparable unity. The oral tradition of popular stories, "folk stories", continues this same memory, not letting it die. We are facing a heritage whose intangible cultural assets are preserved for their thematic and affective value, whose pertinence within the group has become the reason for its survival. The ambivalence with which the traces of material screening of the dominant society, the garbage that wheat straw transports in the wheelbarrow when losing content value, is transformed into dissections of the present can be seen. The blues' form of expression, on the contrary, keeps the past alive, being an inspiration for the identity of all Americans, assuring them the certainty of a future. The articulation phases define the past/present/future, being essential elements for the perception of reality and underwrite the novel's actuality, in which, on the one hand, the weapons of the system are played using its language, its form, its ideology, on the other hand, keeps alive a semantic and gestural substrate that reconstitutes the umbilical cord that binds black people to their community. The cultural bond makes it possible to keep alive a memory in the face of the systematization of another one, divorced from its origin and destined for oblivion. Hurston structured her folktales to highlight the relationship between race and gender in black's life; she revealed how males use folktales to maintain and "legitimate" oppression of women and how women use these folktales to "fight" against this power and injustice. In Mule and Men, Hurston stated that black people hide their genuine thoughts from white people. Hurston knew that African Americans often relied on the ignorance of whites. Mules and Men present a continual criticism of how patriarchy and racism govern African Americans in the rural South. Hurston exposes how violence within the African American community often reflects the class, race, and gender of the society. These two texts novels, one non-fiction and the other fiction, are essential to understanding the evolution of the American identity. The two authors were interested in this beautiful art and through the two novels, which is considered one of the most important and oldest human patterns. The writers, especially Zora and Ralph, were able to penetrate deeply into global modernity over the twentieth century, which indicates the extent of the value of this heritage and its civilization that gives it self-gratification enables it to open up to the other. The researcher emphasizes to the importance of adhering to the historical heritage due to its close connection with the national identity, as it represents the primary incubator of the national identity and is considered the memory of the nation and its historical heritage. And the preliminary stages passed through this development, and its most prominent manifestations are historical buildings, handicrafts and folk costumes. Secondly, it turns to the moral aspect, which is represented in the values, customs and traditions that have been inherited from generation to generation. Hence, the historical heritage plays a major role in defining the features of the national identity of the state.

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