

## 論文の英文要旨

論文題目 アフリカン・アメリカ文学における  
アメリカ的精神  
The American Ethos in African American Literature

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In this dissertation, "The American Ethos in African American Literature," I argue that African American literature is currently integral to mainstream American literature and that it is historically nurtured in the American soil and its ideas.

This issue is important because African American literature is still generally considered a weak component and separate--or at least separable from--American literature generally. That is, American writers of African origin have been referred to as "African American"; similarly, their work has consequently been labeled "race literature," "Negro literature," and "Black literature" in the past. These labels are qualifiers, and their effect is discriminatory and exclusionary and tending to "weaken" American literature generally. America has thrived by a process of social assimilation and incorporation; its literature, too, has thrived through the same process. And here I emphasize that this has been and is partially accomplished by African American authors.

The pages following comprise a study of incorporation and partial assimilation. The study is in two parts. Part One, "African American Ideology," I consider the roots of African American literature, deep in the soil of American ideas. I develop this consideration mainly through an extended analysis of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*. Part Two, "African American Dream," deals with African American literature from the point of view of "American Dream."

Ellison published only one full-length novel, several short stories and a collection of essays. I believe, however, that this one novel contains almost all the subject in which African American writers must deal. He represents African American letters in the latter half of the twentieth century. My

analysis of Ellison is prefaced by brief analyses of Richard Wright, George S. Schuyler, and W.E.B. Du Bois, the point being that precursors are not necessarily mentors. That is, although Ellison treats similar topics and ideas—Du Bois' "color line," for example--his basic stance is different from that of earlier African American writers: he writes as an American.

Like his namesake, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ellison celebrates that which is best in the American psyche: self-reliance, individualism, love of democracy. He passionately believed that these and similar ideals would help both white Americans and African Americans understand and survive such ordeals as segregation. So, relatively un-influenced by his predecessors and his contemporaries, relatively indifferent to their conventionally narrow notions, Ellison embraced the Emersonian world-view. Consequently, Ellison's influence, on all Americans and on American literature generally, has been and will continue to be enormous.

*The Invisible Man*, his masterpiece, comprises the major themes and portrays the psychological complexities of the African American predicament. It is a novel of American ideas--Emersonian ideas, I believe--which in their clarity and power, breathe life into the protagonist. The concept "visibility" /invisibility" is a case in point: it has given rise to related concepts, such as "visible darkness" and the "black mask," treated in the works of Gloria Naylor, Jamaica Kincaid, and Ntozake Shange. "Color" and the "color line" are indeterminate, ambiguous and, moreover, problematic; and we have novels of "passing" by such as Charles Chesnutt and Nella Larsen. In such novels we learn that it is mandatory for those who are called "social white" to live in a big town, hidden and anonymous. Therefore, "passing" becomes possible only when African Americans begin to migrate to a big city or when they are city-born. Thus, the social phenomenon of the Great Migration, beginning in the middle of the 1910s, also soon constitutes a new literary category, "migration narratives."

Similarly, Ellison's protagonist, in *The Invisible Man*, experiences his life's turning-point at a Negro college in the South. Alice Walker, Nella Larsen, and other writers have used these Black schools as settings. They are places of ambiguity and deep ambivalence. They make possible an education of sorts, but this education is dictated and supervised by the White founders, and thus becomes another means of control by them. On the slave ships, which figure so centrally in the works of such writers as Amiri Baraka and Charles Johnson, chains controlled the prisoners' bodies; in the Negro

schools, special curricula and propaganda controlled the students' minds. Thus, Black schools and slave ships become an ambiguous topos for African Americans.

Urban Blacks could display their prodigious talent for musical improvisation, jazz and blues. American society was and is, as Sacvan Bercovitch asserts, a society of process, a society of improvisation. James Baldwin, Ishmael Reed, and others have approximated the rhythms and nuances of musical improvisation in their prose, using this experimental technique as example and symbol of process. The grandfather's confession of "principle" at his deathbed in *The Invisible Man* can be interpreted as meaning "democracy." It also means "process" and "becoming".

That is Part One: an attempt to show how American Blacks, as characterized in the works of Ellison and others, have been inspired by such Americans as Ralph Waldo Emerson to comprehend their situation and thus grasp *what is*, the *actual*; Part Two, "African American Dream", is a consideration of African American aspiration toward *what should be*, the *ideal*. The seventeenth century Europeans came to America with the Promised Land in mind where they planned to build "a city upon a hill". I argue that this ideal of Americans transforms itself into an "African Dream" when it is applied to African Americans.

The African Dream variation is an expression of longing for a paradise in Africa, the ancestral homeland. Such a paradise is unlikely ever to be realized, but it echoes the powerful New World Dream of seventeenth century Englishmen. The African Dream is a recurrent theme in the works of poets and novelists of the Harlem Renaissance.

The last chapter in Part Two of this study is largely devoted to an analysis of Toni Morrison's writings, especially *The Paradise*. In this section I elaborate on the symbolic meaning of the South in African American literature. "I have a dream," said Martin Luther King, and gave an entire generation of African Americans support, encouragement, and self-confidence. The paradise, he implied, is *here*, within your grasp. I conclude this section with a discussion of Charles Johnson's *A Dreamer: A Novel* and suggest that Martin Luther King--and before him Ellison and Emerson--gave their people self-reliance, gave them a glimpse of their own potentials and the will to realize these potentials.

Throughout Part Two, however, I revert to the complicated subject of African Americans and The Dream, and conclude that, ironically enough, the African Dream, the ideal, an illusion, can and does help them to survive in American society, the reality.

Throughout Parts One and Two I emphasize the depth to which African-American literature is permeated by the American ethos. Ralph Waldo Emerson, then and now a main proponent of all that is best in the ethos, inspired Ralph Waldo Ellison, who in turn inspired millions of African Americans directly, and indirectly, through the work of later authors. I conclude that African American literature is certainly a very strong and substantial constituent of American literature, and integral to it.