A literature of change: Slave narrative rhetoric in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man

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A LITERATURE OF CHANGE: SLAVE NARRATIVE RHETORIC
IN RALPH ELLISON'S INVISIBLE MAN

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Andrew Jack LoVerde
December 1996
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ABSTRACT

The slave narrative can be defined as a literature of change. Slaves wrote of their tragic exploits in an effort to persuade the public to bring about an end to slavery. Their writings incorporated rhetorical tools to make their appeal for change more effective. The rhetorical tools and devices these writers used are still evident in the writings of present day African Americans. One such writer, Ralph Ellison, adopted these rhetorical conventions to establish a link between the past and the present, to demonstrate how sociopolitical issues are still unresolved, and to dispel the stereotypical image of the African American.

This study proposes that there are essential elements of the slave narrative which have been revived and used by Ellison in *Invisible Man*. These elements arouse emotional and sentimental reactions, and implore the reader to the narrative’s petition for sociopolitical change. This thesis demonstrates that Ellison’s use of rhetorical tools follows the literary style created by the slave narratives.
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INTRODUCTION

It seems peculiar that America—a land founded upon the concept of freedom—allowed an institution such as slavery to exist within its own borders. There was a contradiction between the concept that all men were created equal, and the practice of slavery. These concepts became a fertile source for slaves to address in their writings. Hundreds of slaves created manuscripts which not only showed the lack of equality in the system of slavery, but also the lack of humanity among those practicing slavery. Writers such as Frederick Douglass, Solomon Northup, and Harriet Jacobs used a variety of rhetorical devices to evoke emotional responses and appeal to their audience's political, ethical, and religious values.

As the slaves wrote their narratives, they laid the foundation for a genre within the African American literary cannon. Traces of the slave narratives are to be detected in African American writings during the period of the Harlem Renaissance and Post-Harlem Renaissance Movements in the early part of the twentieth century. However, it wasn't until Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man that the use of rhetorical devices in the slave narratives was put to its full metaphorical potential to highlight the individual plight of Ellison's African American protagonist.

In 1952 Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man appeared in the bookstores throughout the United States. Jack Bishop asserts that Ellison's education and reading of African American literature helped to mold his writings. He pointed out that Ellison relied heavily on slave narrative techniques and rhetorical strategies, developed by
Frederick Douglass and others, in order to evoke, not only a complex response from his readers, but also to show through his protagonist the injustices that still prevailed in the late 1920's (45). Ellison's narrative strength relies heavily on the power of affiliation with African American history because he needs others to join his cause for equal rights and independence.

This study is undertaken in order to present the connections between the rhetorical foundations of the slave narratives and Invisible Man. Chapter One identifies and defines the key rhetorical terms that are used throughout this thesis. Chapter Two explores three slave narratives in the context of the rhetorical tools identified in Chapter One. Chapter Three examines Invisible Man and demonstrates how Ellison used the rhetorical tools found in slave narratives.
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND RHETORICAL DEFINITIONS

African American texts known as "slave narratives" were written by slaves and ex-slaves during the time of American history when slavery was legal. The works chronicle the lives of the slaves as they endured abuse and sought their freedom. The slaves told their tales in an effort to bring about reform. This genre is not only a form of historical literature, but it is also a form of persuasive literature as it was written for the purpose of persuading America to end slavery.

The slave narratives are a valuable resource for twentieth century African American writers such as Richard Wright, Alice Walker and Ralph Ellison who invoke the anguish of slavery and its legacy in their narratives. According to Henry Gates in the introduction to The Classic Slave Narratives, the slave narratives set the standard and style used in African American sociopolitical work such as W. E. B. DuBois' The Souls of Black Folk. Gates also states that "hundreds of slaves felt compelled to tell their tale" on paper or at anti-slavery lectures held in the North (x). Gates suggests that the concept of slavery was a "peculiar institution" because of its brutality and inhumanity (xi). It is this very brutality and inhumanity which is the focus of the slave narrative. Ironically, the slave narrative owes its creation to the existence of the harsh slave system it set out to destroy.

Gates asserts that "from 1760 to the present, almost half of the Afro-American literary tradition was created when its authors and the black readers were either slaves or former slaves" (x). These slave narratives were a curious phenomenon in that
their graphic and horrifying descriptive accounts of bondage illustrate the fact that the slaves and ex-slaves had confronted these terrors through their narratives instead of blocking them from their minds.

These narratives were predominantly read by white audiences (Gates x). This leads to the assumption that those who bought and sold slaves also read their works. This could be either for morbid fascination or for educational reasons. However, these reasons must be viewed in light of the background and culture of the audience. White Americans of the slave era prided themselves in their concept of morality and freedom (Armento and Nash 84). Beverly J. Armento and Gary B. Nash contend that after the Revolutionary War the whites in the North were proud of their freedom from British rule (84), but the southern slave masters abused this freedom by stealing freedom from others through enslaving people for material gain (284). It was this pride in freedom which gave the slave narratives an audience.

America had gone through its expansion westward in the mid-1800's and was at a turning point in its history. The environment was perfect for the slave narratives to have an effect on the white audience. Historically, America had expanded its borders from coast to coast, and now was beginning to turn its attention to internal problems. One of these internal problems was what to do with slavery. Notably, Edward Reynolds says that prejudice and white supremacy are consequences of slavery (4). The initial problem with slavery was its morality. A predominantly white culture dealt with the concept of right versus wrong. The cultural setting of a moral society which prided itself on freedom and which educated a populace to read
for themselves was ironically reading about the moral problem it generated. Society in fact did suppress freedom--the very existence of slavery is an example.

The white society provided schooling for their own children in order to encourage reading and education. However, this education was not made available to African Americans. Some slaves were taught by their white owners to read and write in secret, even though violating the law meant punishment or death for the slaves. Sometimes a literate slave would teach other slaves on the plantation. A number of these slaves, such as Nat Turner, had learned the forbidden skill but wrote in secret. In addition to the above facts, most slave narratives were not distributed through reputable publishers but through underground sources, resulting in a greater attraction and demand for these publications (Starling iv). Censored literature attracted many readers just for the thrill of "forbidden fruit." Even today we can see where the threat of censorship or controversy surrounding a book or movie makes it an instant best-seller or block-buster.

It is this desire for the uncommon which seems to attract an audience. Where the uncommon is not available to the general public, graphic morbid details attract the audience with a promise of something different. An example of morbid fascination literature in the 1950's is The Diary of Anne Frank, which became very popular. This work has several parallels to slave narratives in that Anne Frank was a young Jewish girl who became the victim of an inhumane society. Nazi Germany had set out a program of genocide to wipe out all Jews within its borders. The Jews were treated like cattle, beaten, robbed, abused, recruited for inhumane medical
experiments, and tortured for entertainment. The issue of difference here was not pigmentation, but religious beliefs. Those who read The Diary of Anne Frank experienced vicariously the pain and terror the young Jewish girl had to face, just as readers of slave narratives "experienced" the pain of slavery.

Whether they were considered authentic accounts or fictitious works, slave narratives were very popular. Gates believes that slave narratives were true accounts; in his introduction to The Classic Slave Narratives, he describes the slave narratives as "extraordinarily popular texts" (xi). For example, Frederick Douglass' Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass, An America slave, Written By Himself sold 5,000 copies in its first four months of publication in 1845, and it sold over 11,000 copies in a two year period (Gates xii). Given the size of the reading public at that time, these figures would make it a best seller by today's standards. Even though these works were taken directly from Douglass' lectures, and had already been presented to the public through his lecture tours, they still generated a high number of sales. Gates makes it clear that these lectures and these works became a part of the canon of African American literature which has endured into modern times (xii). These slave narratives endure because of their persuasive rhetoric.

In general, rhetoric is the art of using words effectively, selectively, and persuasively within the structure, content, and style of the work. The classical rhetoricians such as Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian suggest that rhetoricians seek three goals: to teach, to persuade, and to move the reader. These classical rhetoricians also suggest that rhetoric is used to persuade the reader to take a course
of action, to influence the thoughts or actions of the reader, to elicit guilt or innocence in the reader, and to appeal to the reader’s emotions. Once this takes place then the writer’s appeal is accepted and dealt with in some way. The slave writers needed to prove that they were former slaves, and that the instances they wrote about were true. Furthermore, it was necessary to establish an ethical voice, to present the brutality of slavery but most of all to convince the audience.

This chapter defines seven rhetorical tools and later chapters show how these tools were used in three slave narratives and *Invisible Man*. All these narratives employed persuasion which has three variations: pathos, ethos, and logos. These means of persuasion are part of the "rhetorical situation" which involves the reader with the text (Bitzer 2-4).

Aristotle, the master rhetorician, suggests that the proper province for an art of rhetoric is the study of souls and the occasion for moving them (145). The narratives used in this study are written by those who desperately needed to move souls to save an entire race trapped in bondage. In addition, Aristotle identifies three rhetorical tools: pathos, ethos and logos, which cause different reactions in the reader (Bizzell 161). Pathos appeals to the emotions of the reader, ethos appeals to the reader’s concept of morality, while logos appeals to the logic of the reader. Thus the spirit, mind, and soul of the reader are targeted by the effective persuasive writer. Pathos centers on promoting such emotions as pain, fear, and joy. By generating these emotions, the writer is able to control the reader’s reaction, and through that control produce either an ally or an enemy to a cause (Bitzer 2). In *The Rhetorical*
Tradition, Bizzel quotes Aristotle as saying, "Pathos appeals raise . . . emotion[s] favorable to the rhetorician's position" (146). Overall, pathos is the most successful rhetorical tool because it appeals more to the emotion than to the intellect.

The first person point of view is one technique of pathos which gives the slave narrative its impact. The reader is not a casual observer of the atrocities involving beaten slaves and raped servants, but is actively involved as he or she is made to identify with the victim of these crimes. The pronoun "I" is a powerful tool of persuasion. "I" welcomes the reader into the narrative, and the reader then becomes a part of the predicament in the narrative. This sense of a first person experience makes the reading more compelling and penetrating.

Where pathos deals with emotion of the reader, ethos has to do with the moral character of the writer. Do we believe the writer? The writer must establish credibility in order for us to believe the narrative. If the writer loses his or her credibility, then the narrative becomes little more than a fictitious story, and if the reader sees the narrative as fictitious, it will not inspire change.

Unlike pathos and ethos, logos deals with the logic of the argument. The role of the narrative is to persuade. If the logic is faulty, the argument will never stand. While a writer uses pathos and emotions as the spring board for the argument, the ethos and the logos are both vital to make the presentation effective (Bitzer 4). If the writer loses credibility, or cannot present the logic behind the changes called for, then the discourse fails as a form of persuasion.
Subliminal contrast is another rhetorical tool found in slave narratives. Using words to form a picture is part of the subliminal contrast technique. According to Jerome Bruner’s Theory of Instruction, the writers transfer their experiences into a mental model of a world through representation in words and language (10). This rhetorical device allows the writers to create a picture which is so clear that we can place ourselves into the scene they have presented. Subliminal contrast allows the writer to present a scene in such intense detail that the reader cannot find anything to compare it with (Rockas 60).

Symbolism is a technique where the writer uses an object, image, or word in order to draw upon other feelings, beliefs, or experiences the reader may already have. For example, if the writer refers to a cross in the narrative, the reader thinks of Christianity. How the writer portrays the cross will then force the reader to alter, enhance, or enforce their concept of Christianity and to apply this revised understanding to the text. Symbolism allows the writer to say more with fewer words. This technique is used by writers to substantiate a point. Symbols are an innate and an intricate part of our lives. To each reader they connote many meanings.

Clearly, pathos, ethos, logos, subliminal contrast, and symbols make up a large part of the rhetorical arsenal available to the writer. Simply, the focus is on the reader’s reaction, the author’s tone, and the logical reasoning used to engage text interactions. These components solicit reader involvement regardless of the reader’s opinion on the subject. The reader is forced to respond to the text. The reaction may
be negative or positive, but the use of these rhetorical tools require a reaction on the part of the reader.

Rhetorical devices such as terms which create images of good and evil, or "God" and "devil," are present throughout the slave narratives. According to Kenneth Burke in *A Grammar of Motives*, "God" and "devil" terms are binary opposite terms (106). Richard Weaver in *The Ethics of Rhetoric* states that these "God" and "devil" terms have multiple meanings (212). A "God" term is a superior term that suggests power and goodness, while the "devil" term is so repulsive that it is at the opposite end of the spectrum (Weaver 222). Slave narratives make use of "God" and "devil" terms in their writings to generate images desired by the author. To the slave, slavery is a situation of evil, misery, self-destruction, torment, and anguish. To Christians, hell is often referred to as being an abode for condemned souls and devils. This was the most abhorrent place a Christian could picture, and so the constant referral to it as an example of the slave’s life was graphic to the reader. Because these terms appear so often in the slave narratives, we assume they are used to describe the indescribable. Certainly, the slave narratives contain more repulsive words than good words, and the intent is to engage and enrage the reader.

The seventh rhetorical tool addressed by this thesis is repetition. Specifically, many words, phrases, ideas, rewording, or reminding are used for the purpose of emphasis or clarity. Repetition is needed to call attention to the key issues and ideas the writer wants us to remember. Once these issues and ideas are firmly planted in the reader’s mind, their role is to produce the desired change.
These seven rhetorical tools are found in the selected three slave narratives. An analysis of these works will show how the writers presented information using these tools in order to generate a highly emotional response from the readers and to enlist them to the cause of the author. Overall, these rhetorical devices in both the slave narratives and Invisible Man educate the reader as to the plight of the African Americans.
CHAPTER TWO

SLAVE NARRATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Francis Smith Foster defines slave narratives as "the personal accounts by black slaves of their experiences in slavery and their efforts to obtain freedom" (3). Foster’s definition identifies the component of the narrative where the narrator seeks to obtain freedom. This gives more depth to the slave narrative because the focus for the pain and the suffering is all directed towards the efforts to obtain freedom. This focus is then continued in the narratives in an effort to abolish slavery and injustice, and to allow others to obtain freedom and equality. Many of these slave narratives were written before the abolition of slavery.

Three classic slave narratives which span approximately two decades are written by Frederick Douglass (1845), Solomon Northup (1853), and Harriet Jacobs (1861). These slave narratives present the views of two men and a woman. They also provide the varied background of one African and two African Americans. This sample offers a well-balanced overview of slave narratives where the rhetorical tools used are employed again by Ellison in Invisible Man.

Certainly the most famous of these three works, because of its gripping rhetoric, is Douglass' Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass. In his introduction to The Classic Slave Narratives, Gates says that Douglass’ narrative welcomes "all classes of readers" and that it attracts those who love adventure and those who are drawn to bondage details out of morbid fascination (xiii). In his narrative, Douglass cleverly engages the reader with the use of two voices which
intermingle at times. The first voice expresses his opinion of bondage. The second voice pleads to the reader to save his people. Douglass’ adventure takes the reader into the world of slavery where beating and abuse are common occurrences, but the slave is able to endure this treatment by clinging to hope.

Like Douglass’ narrative, Northup’s *Twelve Years A Slave* combines a sensational element of adventure with a slave’s bizarre experiences in the Southern states. Northup’s narrative is detailed and well-balanced, using various glimpses into the lives of slaves he knew. Through the text we glimpse the life of a slave during his bondage years.

In a similar vein, Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl* appeared with a preface to inform the readers that this is a true account to the best of her recollection (xiii-xiv). Her captivating rhetoric fuses sentimentality with the typical components of a slave narrative. Jacobs’ account addresses sexual exploitation. She was abused and raped by her owner.²

Slave narratives, characteristically, are broken down into a beginning, a middle, and an end. Each narrative has a format or formula involving a succession of episodes. The beginning scene details either the incident of capture or plantation birth which informs the reader how the writer became a slave. The middle of the slave narrative depicts the brutal treatment mixed with attempts to escape, failure, and either caution or punishment. The end of the story is when the slave is actually able to break free of slavery and either obtain freedom legally, or escape and become a run-away slave.
The three slave narratives cited above share common rhetorical components and conventions. Foster believes that the "ex-slave narrative had a generic formula involving capture, birth, death, violence, and brutality" (57). It is a descriptive journey of tears, sighs, and terror which makes the audience uncomfortable with the current status quo (58). The horrors of slavery provide the components which make the narrative compelling. According to Foster, the formula follows the slave’s concerns and becomes sociopolitical in nature (53).

In her prologue to The Slave Narrative, Marion Wilson Starling states that John W. Blassingame believes that the slaves, through their narratives, spoke for themselves (xv). By speaking for themselves the slaves were able to use sympathy and sociopolitical pleas to promote their cause. In fact, Blassingame says that the slave narratives were frequently dictated to whites, who then prepared the manuscripts for publication (xv). Starling states that abolitionists helped write and publish accounts of the African Americans in order to stop slavery (xv). Although some of the narratives may have required ghost writers to prepare the narrative for publication, it was the anguish of the slave which gave the narrative its soul, and the ghost writers needed to preserve the anguish of the speaker’s voice to give the narrative its persuasive power.

Each of the above mentioned three narratives begins with or suggests the phrase "I was born." Starling notes that the sensitive reader picks up on the serious tone (xvii) as they become witness to the first major event in the lives of the slaves: their births. The opening statement, through the mentioning of the family tree,
suggests or implies "I'm a person" (xvi). The narrative forces the reader to recognize
the narrator as an actual living person. It calls for the reader not to see the slave in
the usual stereotypical image, but implores the reader to see the slave in a new light.
Once the narrator has proven his or her existence, then the narrator recounts the
inhumane events in his or her life (xvii). Substantially, the reader must know or
believe that the slave or ex-slave existed, but more so, the reader must believe that an
actual slave wrote the narrative, lived the experience, and sought to stop the abuse.

Once the reader is introduced to the writer and understands how the writer
came to be a slave, the reader looks for the adventure in the narrative (Starling 57).
Hence the reader’s interest is aroused. Readers are drawn into the journey whether
they want to become a part of it or not. The narrative journey of situations and
scenes challenges and threatens the reader (Foster 49). The reader is astonished,
amused, and intrigued due to the clever resourcefulness of the narrator. In addition to
this journey motif, the writers used Christian terminology in their works to appeal to
the Christian reader. However, Christian terms have different associations for the
slaves than they do for the white Christians. For example, the slave discusses the
salvation of his or her soul, but is actually referring to the end of slavery. The
religious implications are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Douglass’ *Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself* was published in 1845, and is recognized today as the
"Grandfather narrative of them all" (Starling 13). Its vitality still flourishes because it
is considered to be the leading authority (13). William Lloyd Garrison describes
Douglass' narrative as being written with great power and intensity. Continuing, Garrison says, "it is the most thrilling work which the American Press ever issued" (Quoted in Starling 25). This statement emphasizes Douglass' narrative's key placement and power in American history—a compelling narrative which establishes the format for all others to follow. Overall, Starling devotes an entire chapter, over sixty pages, to Douglass' use of rhetorical conventions and to the impact of his work.

All of the rhetorical tools discussed in the first chapter of my thesis are found in Douglass' work. For example, Douglass employs pathos: "Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and spirit . . . behold a man transformed into a brute" (259). Here he bluntly tells the reader of his physical transformation as a result of more than just physical pain. By doing this Douglass allows the reader to express emotions to his words. Douglass needs sympathy to get the reader to join his side against brutality. Another example of pathos is the Aunt Hester incident where she disobeys orders. The slave master takes her into the kitchen, strips her from the neck to the waist, and hangs her with her arms stretched. He beats her until red blood drips to the floor (259-262). The young Douglass wants us to feel his own physical pain and his aunt's physical and mental pain. Later he is beaten like his aunt. He is broken in "body, soul, and spirit" so that all that he has left is his imagination (283). He is beaten and tamed like a dog. He elicits our empathy and we feel for him because he is confined by a chain of iron, and because there is no one, white or African American that he can turn to. Douglass forces the reader into his world so the reader can feel his humiliation. This reaction goes hand-
in-hand with the reaction we get from Douglass' use of pathos and ethos as he cries out, "I am left in the hottest hell of unending slavery. O God, Save me! God deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any God? Why am I a slave? I will run away. I will not stand it" (269). Douglass paints a picture of slavery difficult for us to imagine, as it is almost too much for him to endure. His only hope is that someone will come and rescue him. Douglass is in agony, and seeks God to help him, but due to his abuse he is uncertain if God even exists. The writing of the narrative is his release from his agony and his anxiety. His ethical argument is based upon his living conditions, but his plea is a cry for help because we see from the pattern of his narrative that he has lost his faith. By the same token he tries to figure out what to do even though temporarily he asks questions like, "is there any God?" (263) or laments that "freedom now appeared to disappear" (279).

Obviously no one can save him. He seeks God like a modern day Job. Both prayed to God for deliverance from their plight. Douglass cries. He kneels. His wails for freedom are drowned in tears while he remains shackled like a dog. His desire to be free can only be granted by another person, possibly through God’s guiding hand. Some readers would ask these questions: Do we trust Douglass? Is he worthy of belief? We trust him positively and absolutely. It is highly improbable that such atrocities would be fabricated. We trust him so much that if it were possible, we would shatter his chains and take him away from his living hell. Douglass appeals to the reader through pathos, ethos, and logos to deliver him from his hell.
Douglass’ position that slavery is unethical demonstrates that ethos combined with “God” and “devil” terms creates a powerful rhetorical tool. His appeal to God and references to hell shift his arguments into the realm of morality and ethics. His references to slavery being like hell, and calling out to God for deliverance, imply that he believes slavery is of the devil and freedom to be of God. Thus his readers would be drawn to abolish slavery as an act of morality and with the blessings of God. The logical conclusion to Douglass’ position is that slavery must be abolished. Thus Douglass’ work demonstrates pathos as an appeal to the emotion, ethos as an appeal to the ethics, and logos as the logical conclusion of his position.

Douglass describes his slave experience in vivid, graphic details. The pronoun “I,” combined with pathos, takes the reader gradually into graphic scenes such as:

They, however, at length combined, and came upon me, armed with sticks, stones, and heavy hand spikes. One came in front with a half-brick. There was one at each side of me, and one behind me. While I was attending to those in front, and those on either side, the one ran up with the hand spike, and struck me a heavy blow upon my head. It stunned me. I fell, and with this they all ran upon me, and fell to beating me with their fists. (313)

This graphic picture is so intense that the readers have nowhere to turn. We become a part of the brutal scene. As a rhetorical tool subliminal contrast allows the reader to experience the scene vicariously. The description of the incident makes the readers feel as if they are part of the narration. The brick and the spike show and demonstrate the hatred that is prevalent in the slave system. These objects also show the unnecessary violence which white supremacists used to maintain control over African Americans. Douglass demonstrates how the institution of slavery is horribly
barbaric. It is the pronoun "I," combined with the emotional attachments to the text, that forces this scene to become powerful and persuasive.

Like any writer, Douglass enriches his narrative with symbols. He says:

Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me, and behold a man transformed into a brute. (293)

The scene demonstrates the use of symbolism. This quote emphasizes the fact that Mr. Covey makes Douglass feel like an animal. This passage emphasizes looks and physical strength, thereby ignoring intellect and emotion, creating the symbol of the slave being less than human and only good for hard physical labor. Douglass is bitter about the way he is perceived. At this point, he feels there is nothing left. He is in anguish. One assumes that because of this transformation, he wants to get revenge or to escape. As a free man, Douglass needs to discuss the brutality so that the Northerners will respond to pathos, ethos, and logos in order to join his cause.

Besides pathos, ethos, logos, subliminal contrast, and symbolism, Douglass adds "God" and "devil" associations to his narrative in order to recruit the reader to join his abolitionist movement. For example, Douglass reflects during the transport from one slave owner to another:

I date the entertainment of a deep conviction that slavery would not always be able to hold me within its foul embrace; and in the darkest hours of my career in slavery, this living word of faith and spirit of hope departed from me, but remained like ministering angels to cheer me through the gloom. This good spirit was from God, and to him I offer thanksgiving and praise. (273)
Douglass refers to slavery as the "darkest hours of my career," and the use of "dark" associates slavery with the devil, the Prince of Darkness. In juxtaposition, his comfort is the hope of freedom and it is associated with ministering angels and God. These binary oppositions, "God" and "devil" associations, help Douglass to plead for freedom for his people. The white Christian reader knows that a soul in darkness is a soul in hell. Hell is a place of outer darkness, and Douglass sees his life as being dark. This reference to hell allows the rhetorician Douglass to convince the white reader to join his cause as they would become associated with ministering angels and God.

Repetition is an effective rhetorical tool to constantly remind the readers of his pleas. In this passage Douglass repeats his message to seek freedom:

Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever . . . I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing my self dead; and but for the hope of being free I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed . . . or if a slave killed his master . . . fruit of abolition . . . now I learned it . . . the act of abolishing . . . abolition . . . abolitionist. (280)

Douglass knows that through killing either himself or his master, his life will end and so will his bondage. However, he knew that by contributing to stop slavery as an active abolitionist, he could save his race. The continuous repetition of the word "kill" is a means of thinking and contemplating how to be free. However, he doesn’t want to kill himself, he desires life over death even if it is as a literate slave, but he still strives to become an abolitionist. By continuously using the word "abolition" in his writings with various suffixes, Douglass emphasizes his stand and also plants the word in his reader’s mind. His solution is to "run away" at a time that he can escape
safely (280), then learn to speak in front of crowds and to write in order to educate the populace about the immorality and brutality of slavery.

Readers trust Douglass’ credibility because he has elected himself as a representative for the other slaves in bondage, and he risks his life as an escaped slave. Douglass’ stand against slavery arouses pathos, ethos and logos just like his narrative does and his credibility rises. It is his credibility which draws an audience when he speaks of his slave experiences and when he presents his cause and calls for the abolition of slavery.

In the same way Douglass employs rhetoric to manipulate our emotions, Solomon Northup, in *Twelve Years A Slave*, appeals to emotions as a means to draw the reader quickly into his world:

> With the paddle, Burch commenced beating me. When his unrelenting arm grew tired, he stopped and asked if I insisted I was a free man. I did insist upon it, and the blows renewed, faster and more energetically, if possible than before . . . I prayed for mercy. (25)

Northup presents a straightforward way for the reader to experience each blow. By reading about repetitive blows and pain, the reader needs to join with the writer’s position. This example of pathos is more effective when used with the pronoun "I," as this makes the reader feel as if he or she is the recipient of the brutal attack and will anger the reader to the point where he or she would oppose any system allowing such punishment.

Ethos plays an important role in the narrative because Northup establishes his origin and problem early on in the narrative. Northup had been a slave for twelve years. Instead of being born into slavery, he was stolen from his home town in the
North, declared to be a run-away slave, and sold. This demonstrates that the life of Northup as a slave was all the more bitter because this was not the life he was born into. He had known what it was like to live free, and that freedom had been stripped from him. In the first few pages of chapter three, Northup reveals that he was kidnapped, shackled, and doomed, but still he insists that he is no man’s slave (24-26). The response to his defiance is a whipping with a cat rope made of many knotted strands of cowhide (26). His cries of being a free man are similar to other cries of modern day tragic figures. We draw strength from the defiance such protagonists show in the face of adversity. We admire them for looking the devil in the eye and daring to fight back. In Northup’s situation, however, such strength of will does not work. It fails because the world does not care. Hence, the narrative was written to make people care.

The narrative begins in a logical way through Northup’s twelve years of servitude. He discusses names, places, and events which validate his narrative. Northup cried out to affirm his independence and identity when he was kidnapped, which is an "unfortunate mistake" because slaves needed to remain quiet unless spoken to (20). Northup was captured for money but his cry trying to reason with his abductors, "I’m free. I’m a free man," is answered with slaps and hits (20-22). He was beaten, silenced, and transported to the South where he was accused of being a run-away slave from Georgia (25). His abductors hid the secret of his origin. They profited for their lies.
Northup appeals to our sentiments with logical assertions. Throughout the narrative his use of pathos and logos is woven into the text. If a free African American can be falsely accused, torn away from his home, not in Africa, but in America, and turned into a slave, then who is safe? We feel the pain Northup experiences. We want him to escape. We want him to demonstrate that strength of will can prove to be enough to overcome his situation. We want him to be set free. As readers, we believe Northup. We believe him because he is a victim of circumstance. We give ear to his cries for help.

Like Douglass, Northup provides the reader with subliminal contrast. He describes his experience with intense graphic details:

With the paddle, Burch commenced beating me. Blow after blow was inflicted upon my naked body. When his unrelenting arm grew tired, he stopped and asked if I still insisted I was a free man. I did insist upon it, and then the blows were renewed, faster and more energetically, if possible, than before. (25)

Readers are not only caught up in his description, they are forced to look at his illustrations which are also part of the narrative. This passage is so clear that it stands out like a well-painted canvas. The blows are so precise that the passage itself become rhythmic. The rhythm is like a cadence as the arm striking Northup keeps the beat of the unheard music. Northup’s body is the drum used by Burch to pound out his symphony of pain. Burch experiences pleasure through each blow. Like Douglass, Northup uses the pronoun "I" to pull the reader into the scene. In this way the reader can sympathize with his dilemma. The beatings are so graphic that the reader twitches to each blow as the predicament and "I" are transformed into not only
Northup’s but the victim’s plea for mercy. Northup demonstrates the horror of slavery. It is the pronoun "I" with the emotional attachments which make this scene compelling and convincing.

Solomon Northup’s narrative contains elements of sensationalism and subliminal contrast to point out the horrors of slavery. After years of being a slave, Northup’s freedom led him to write a straightforward account (XV). In his account he points out the psychological and physical effects of forced servitude in the deep South. Northup presents his statements as candid and truthful. Some of these truths are horrible. For instance, in a Washington slave pen, African Americans were beaten like animals for no apparent reason other than the color of their skin. The whipping affected Northup’s naked body blow after blow (25). The repetition of the word "blow" shows the powerful force of the narrative. The force emphasizes the necessity for Northup to use graphic pictures in order to get others to join his abolitionist movement. Subliminal contrast assists in Northup’s fight to abolish slavery.

In Northup’s narrative, he uses symbols to emphasize his plea for freedom, as in the following example:

A colored servant brought a light, the bell rung, and soon the vessel started down the Potomac, carrying us we knew not where. The bell tolled as we passed the tomb of Washington! (34)

The bell is symbolic of the Liberty Bell, the bell which was rung so loud and so long when independence was won for America that it cracked. Thus the bell in the narrative can be equated to the symbol of freedom in the United
States. But to Northup it is like a piercing needle as he walks in chains. Symbolically, the hanging bell represents all objects suspended between heaven and earth. In Northup’s case, however, it does not represent heaven; on the contrary, it represents hell on earth. Ironically, George Washington is the symbol of our country’s freedom and his tomb inspires Burch, Northup’s owner, to bow in respect. However, it is ironic that Burch can bow to the symbol of freedom and still deny freedom to Northup and punish him for wanting to be free. This freedom was stolen from Northup just like Burch takes away freedom from others. Hence, Washington’s words and ideas are buried in that tomb—a morbid journey for freedom—and slave owners like Burch take advantage of the burial by burying freedom for African Americans.

After the beatings, Northup relates, "I was all on fire" (25). Simply Northup refers to his intense pain with the word "fire." For Northup, like for Douglass and other slaves, the fire rages on inside with the thirst for freedom. Again, the reference to his body being on fire indirectly calls attention to the concept of hell. Hell is a descriptive word used over and over to drive home the horrors of slavery. In the minds of the readers and the writer, there is no place more terrifying than Hell. To constantly compare slavery with Hell would appeal to the Christian beliefs of the readers, and freedom from slavery could be equated to redeeming a lost soul. As the salvation of a soul is the greatest prize for the Christians, they would be inspired to take up the plight of the African American as a religious mission.
In another passage, Northup describes his hell after his capture as hot rays of the summer sun heating his open wounds on a long summer day:

The hot rays of the summer sun, beating all the long summer day on my bare head . . . my aching limbs. My wrists and ankles, and the cords of my legs and arms began to swell, burying the rope that bound them into my swollen flesh . . . Chapin [the overseer] not once approached me . . . noon tide sun, I still stood groaning with pain. From the long daylight I had not eaten a morsel. I was growing faint with pain, thirst, and hunger. Once only during the day . . . a sip of water to my lips. (88-89)

This passage shows how Northup's rhetoric is convincing, compelling, and moving. Persuasively he tells of his hell, being beaten, no food, no water, swelling in the hot sun. He is so convincing that readers could believe they are actually there with Northup. He informs the readers, seeks the sympathy of the readers, but most of all, he seeks change. By focusing on the unmentionable horrors, Northup attempts to convince Christian readers so that they will do the ethical thing and bring about changes. Words making associations to hell are a rhetorical tool that make the reader become in touch with a part of the story. The reader now has "ownership" of the pain and suffering, and once there is a sense of "ownership," the reader has the authority to make those changes the writer desires.

Repetition combined with simile is another common rhetorical tool Northup adopts to describe his world of slavery. For example, he uses phrases such as "Like a dumb beast," "Like a herd of cattle," or "Like an animal" (50). Consistently, the narrator compares the slave to an animal. The use of repetitive similes comparing the slaves to animals is designed to demonstrate the attitude of the slave owner to the slave. Simile allows the narrator to give greater depth to the image with fewer
words. By depicting the dehumanizing of the slave, the narrator seeks to elicit sympathy for the cause of freedom. The reader feels helpless to turn away, and is forced to experience the writer’s humiliation of being chained and beaten like a dumb beast (50). This dehumanization of the African Americans was allowed by the white Christians, who permitted these kinds of atrocities. Northup wants the reader to feel the impact of each blow, and to feel not only the physical but verbal pain inflicted upon him (25). Overall, by repeating these issues Northup hopes to recruit people to his cause.

Similar to Douglass and Northup, Harriet Jacobs (the pen name for Linda Brent) in her narrative, *Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl*, combines pathos, ethos, and logos. She immediately applies these techniques in her preface when she states, "Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction" (335). Jacobs wants us to know that she not only witnessed the extreme violence in her life, but she also experienced the horrors. She adds, "I am aware that some of my adventures may seem incredible, but they are never-the-less, strictly true . . . with no exaggerations" (325). She also says, "only by experience can anyone realize how deep, dark, and foul is that pit of abominations" (335). Jacobs’ account discusses the worst of slavery. She insists that the narrative is not hear-say, fiction, nor exaggeration. In the introduction to the narrative, L. Maria Child says, "her [Jacobs’] conversations and manners inspire me with confidence . . . no one doubts her veracity" (7). Although at times her account may be romantic because of her sentimental cry, the text retains its credibility because it was endorsed by Child, her personal confidant.
and a well-respected editor at the Massachusetts District Court in 1861 (1). In Jacobs’ narrative, like other narratives, the appeal is to abolish slavery. Jacobs’ narrative is a cry for protection for women trapped within an immoral system. Her use of pathos and ethos is demonstrated by remarks such as the following: "If she [a slave girl] fails to accomplish her purpose, she is whipped or starved into submission against her will" (382). This unethical issue appeals to readers’ emotions but Jacobs continues to hook her readers to assure that they will join her cause. The slave master can also rape his female slaves any time he wants (382-383). Some readers can see that women are very vulnerable in a slave plantation. This control and vulnerability is the heart of Jacobs’ appeal to emotion and ethics.

A symbol found in the narrative is the archetypal old woman. The all-knowing old woman is rendered useless in a slave system, embarrassed, and humiliated in front of the slave owners. It is not her fault that she is "worn out" and "has seventy years" of faithful service (351). She has no freedom, no say, and no rights. Readers are horrified when Jacobs points out that few slave owners were aware of this widespread moral ruin of ethical values. Jacobs captures her readers by emphasizing the wicked slave system. Substantially, in this era, African American women are not treated as human beings but rather as objects as demonstrated through Jacobs’ narrative, a text which makes powerful use of pathos and ethos. As the African American was not allowed to cry out, it is significant that Jacobs gives voice to their inner pleas through her narrative.
Jacobs mentions the horrors of rape and violence for the African American females because the abuse was extremely prevalent. African American women were used as sexual objects because the mixed race relationship, although condemned by society, was viewed as exotic. If the female slave did not comply with the wishes of the slave master, she was punished and abused by being stripped to the waist and whipped until she bled. Also, if a female slave did not respond to the master’s sexual desire, she would be beaten in front of the other slaves as an example to those who would not obey the wishes of the slave master. Other females told similar stories of rape and bondage by their slave masters, thus Jacobs’ plight was not unique. Not only were African Americans cursed by confinement, but the slave women were valued for work and for breeding. However, Jacobs informs the reader that interracial breeding was prohibited. She uses pathos and ethos to charge the reader’s emotions by informing us that if a white female and an African American male mated and produced an infant, the child was either "smothered" or sent to where it would never be seen (383). Significantly, moralistic readers would reflect and back away from the text or re-read this passage because killing a child or separating children from their parents is wrong. If the white male and African American female mated, their offspring was sent to the market and sold (383). Again, children should never be separated from their parents. But in Jacobs’ world this ironically became a common part of the slaves’ society. In other words, the destiny of the Mulatto (half-breed) could be even worse than the beatings of an African American slave. If the male Mulatto had a good physical build, his life may have been spared, but he was
forced to live in hard labor. From Jacobs we hear the torment over the fact that a woman’s body and her child are not her own. Her appeal demonstrates the torment and anguish felt by a mother and father and in turn this torment can get a reader to join her abolitionist cause. Historically speaking, what Jacob says applies to both blacks and whites. Pathos attracts our attention, and the author trusts that logos will elicit our support. This immoral abuse of slaves is designed to strike at the heart of the Christian morality in an effort to bring about a change.

To further support her pleas, Jacobs employs the rhetorical tool of subliminal contrast; she describes her encounters on the plantation so vividly that it is like watching a horror movie. The reader is drawn into the picture immediately: "They were let loose on a runaway, and, if they tracked him, they literally tore the flesh from his bones. When the slave died, his shrieks and groans were so frightful that they appalled his own friends" (378). Just like Douglass and Northup, Jacobs wants us to feel each rip and tear of flesh as dogs literally eat the slave alive. The moralistic reader is easily horrified by not only the exploitation of slaves but by the abuse of women. Women were used as sex machines and baby providers. They were not seen as intelligent beings. Morally these exploitations and rapes were wrong. But to the slave master, African women were seen simply as exotic female animals to experiment with and not as human beings. Subliminal contrast allows these vivid pictures to never be forgotten. The reader becomes a part of these desperate attempts to escape and these pleas for non-violent freedom. Subliminal
contrast is a powerful way for Jacobs to describe the plight of African American women using her dilemma as a kind of microcosm.

The narrative also relates a situation where the master accused one slave of stealing corn, and another of quarreling with the master’s wife (381-382). Jacobs saw "the cowhide still wet from blood, and the boards covered with gore" (382). The graphic description of this abuse is designed to force a reaction from the reader. The reader cannot brush these images aside. Jacobs described many scenes like the one above. She had witnessed them and she strove to demonstrate the horror she had observed. Like many other African American writers, she highlights the curse of slavery. She states: "I was twenty-one years old in that cage of obscene birds . . . slavery is a curse to whites as to the blacks" (383). The whites are cursed with keeping the African American caged. The blacks are cursed by whips and confinement. Symbolically, birds need to glide and soar through the sky just as a twenty-one year old girl needs to be free.

The symbol of brutality is a key component of the narrative:

Cruelty is contagious . . . He was divested of his clothes, except his shirt whipped and tied to a tree in front his house. (378)

Senseless brutality and beatings were a common practice in Jacobs’ environment just like in Douglass’ and Northup’s. Cruelty has followed human beings since Cain and Abel. This passage shows the manifestation of cruelty and brutality taken to the extreme in the denial of another’s humanity and individuality. The man is stripped, showing his private parts, and then whipped in front of his own family. Due to his
embarrassment, stripped of his pride, dignity, and clothes, a slave would find death a desirable means of escape.

Brutality is control taken to the extreme. The slave master found brutality both a powerful force of persuasion and a shortcut method to obtain results. Brutality had the double effect of not only breaking the spirit of the victim but also the spirits of those observing the action. It is a solution favored by those who are uncaring and impatient, and the less the slave master cared about his slaves, the more brutal the action would become. Brutality is "contagious" like a disease, hardening the slave master to the pain he inflicts to the point that some slave masters found pleasure whipping their "property" or tying a slave to a tree to show domination. In addition to the abuse of the man discussed above, Jacobs described the whipping of a slave woman (382). Slave masters believed they needed to beat their "property" in order to increase labor production. This belief encouraged the practice of the senseless brutality as a necessary evil.

Besides subliminal contrast and symbolism, "God" and "devil" associations are used to emphasize pathos, ethos, and logos:

I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction-block. She knew some would be taken from her; but they took all. The children were sold to a slave-trader . . . her children were taken away . . . she wrung her hand in anguish, and exclaimed "Gone! All gone! Why don't God kill me?" I had no words for now. (351)

A mother needs to be close to her children to nurture them. This is natural for a mother. In this case, the mother was forced to commit an unnatural act and not only give up her children, but to be the one who leads them onto the block to be sold.
Their trust in her led to their betrayal just like Judas betrayed Christ. Obviously the mother was forced into leading her children to separation, but she had hoped to keep some. The reader can easily sympathize with her. Jacobs needs the reader to see how brutality can be not only physical pain, but can also take the form of mental anguish. This unnatural action is a reference to the kind of action the devil would perform. In this passage, the mother’s choice has been taken from her by the slave owner and through her actions she sins against a mother’s natural love for her children. Besides living in hell—this woman burns inside. She burns because her reason to live has been placed on the auction-block and sold. She pleads to God to take her away from this living hell—a world mourning the physical loss of her seven precious children. This passage generates sentiment and emotion.

Reminding the reader of the lack of freedom is a common force of the narrative. The slave master who rapes Jacobs calls her boy friend a puppy (371). This reference to an animal is the way the whites see the blacks. Jacobs replies, "If he is a puppy, I am a puppy, for we are both of the negro race. It is right for us to love each other. The man you call a puppy never insulted me, sir; and he would not love me if he did not believe me to be a virtuous woman" (371). Jacobs is proud of her race and her man. She will not let her master, the one who has raped her, steal any virtue. The repetition of "puppy" emphasizes the slave master’s blindness to her humanity, and is at the root of the plight of not just Jacobs, but all African American females.
According to Francis Smith Foster, Jacobs' plight was not unique, but that all the slave narratives grew out of tension and ambiguities common to all slaves in the United States (57). Both Foster and Zora Neale Hurston noted that the creation of the slave narratives had its roots in the folk tales and oral tradition (xiii-xiv, 49, 57). The importance of story-telling for the slaves is understated as a means to escape through their imagination because this was the only part the slave master could not own. Their imagination led to tales which were told, memorized, and passed on to others by word-of-mouth. Where it was possible, these stories and narratives were preserved in writing, thus creating the African American literary style which is a part of the African American tradition and literary canon. They were the first known African American writings in the United States, and many contemporary African American writers model their modern works after them.

With the advent of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, public interest in the slave narratives declined because all slavery was abolished. It seemed as if polite society had eased its conscience by outlawing slavery and assumed that the Emancipation Proclamation would cure all the ills for the African Americans. The Harlem Renaissance and the Post-Harlem Renaissance which followed helped to pave the way for the Civil Rights Movement. Post-Harlem Renaissance narratives are still being produced to encourage society to continue with this pattern of change. A slave narrative has the elements to be more than just a tale, because it is a tale with a purpose. An account of the horrors of slavery does little if it does not produce change. This was the intent behind the early telling and distributing of the slave
narratives. It was the intent of the author to abolish slavery. Once slavery was abolished the focus of this type of literature was then transformed in order to address obstacles other than slavery, for the African American community, and so the slave narrative genre was resurrected and blended into the works of Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, and other African American writers. The slave narratives have been preserved because of their adventure, readability, and cries for freedom. These narratives have been preserved as actual accounts of historical events as well as a form of literature. They have served as models for African American writers for over a century.

The three slave narratives discussed above are prime samples of this genre. Each of these used the same rhetorical tools in order to convince the reader to join their struggles for freedom. Once the reader joined the writer, then change could possibly occur. Sociologically, each narrative has the potential to promote change in the African American's world. But this change still did not occur even though some physical action, like the Civil War, took place.

Overall, these slave narratives are resources for all people to read, a way to experience American history in the first-person, and an example to assist new writers. One such writer, Ralph Ellison, read many of these in order to structure his Invisible Man (Bishop 45). It was because these slave narratives were effective in generating feeling and emotion in the reading audience that they helped to abolish slavery; but, they had failed to produce the desired change of equality. Despite this, Ellison used them as a model for the Invisible Man.
CHAPTER THREE

Invisible Man As A Modern Slave Narrative

In 1952 Ralph Ellison wrote *Invisible Man*, which can be viewed as a modern-day slave narrative, to address the *dehumanizing* of African Americans. When Ellison wrote *Invisible Man*, African Americans were no longer slaves; however, they were still subject to verbal and physical abuse. Ellison’s *Invisible Man* is not the story of a slave telling of the terror of slavery, but the story of those who must still experience the "ripples" of slavery. Though characters in the modern slave narratives are not legally considered slaves, they are by no means free. This lack of freedom creates just as many inequalities for the African American as slavery did for their ancestors. From World War I to 1960, a large migration of African Americans took place to the Northern states. These people sought opportunity, more freedom, and less prejudice. New York, Chicago, and Detroit became important cultural and social centers for both labor and artistic creations for the African American. The quest for equality in the North proved to be an illusion, and in the 1950’s African Americans were still denied access to many of the economic, political, and cultural institutions throughout the United States. The African Americans were limited in their employment opportunities. The desirable, well-paying jobs were reserved for the whites, thus trapping African Americans into a lower economic sub-class. In addition, blacks were directed to less suitable and poorly maintained areas through the use of signs to enforce the concept of segregation (Sundquist 2). The 1896 *Plessey versus Ferguson* ruling which allowed "separate but equal" facilities was
misinterpreted and created this literal separation of the races in the 1950's (2). The segregation of the two races forced racial tension and helped to ignite protests and riots in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

Ellison addressed this separation of the races and the abuse of the African Americans through his own slave narrative. He set his narrative in the Harlem Renaissance period, a time when the belief existed that the African American could rise above the abuse if he or she maintained self-respect and dignity through self-improvement. This teaching of the Harlem Renaissance proved flawed because the problem with the state of the African American was not within themselves, but was rooted within the society. It was into this era of black self-deception that Ellison placed his naive protagonist.

Ellison depicted his protagonist as a kind of puppet who is tossed about in the ghettos of the 1920’s. Invisible Man appeared on bookshelves after the Harlem Renaissance and just before the Civil Rights Movement. The success of Invisible Man was due to its timing. Ellison recapped history for the reader by constantly reminding the audience of the past slavery and the present problems. In order to accomplish his task of creating the same level of public awareness and outcry to abolish slavery, Ellison used the slave narrative rhetorical tools: pathos, ethos, logos, subliminal contrast, symbol, "god" and "devil" associations, and repetition to show the slow advance toward true equality.

The key to the success of the slave narratives was based upon solid rhetorical devices which could sway the reader. However, one problem is that not all readers
can be swayed. Yet the narrative presents enough information to allow the reader to contemplate the issues and then decide for themselves. Ellison pleads for all readers to understand and act.

The common ground in John M. Reilly’s introduction to Twentieth Century Criticisms To Invisible Man is the exploration of the theme of personal identity which reveals the conditions of the environment which generate the narrator’s troubles in both Invisible Man and the slave narratives (5). This theme works at two levels: the first is in the consciousness of the narrator, the other is tangled in the experiences he records with the ex-slaves’ symbolic revelations. Somehow Ellison calls for the reader to put him-or herself in his plight for social reform. With a large number of readers joining him changes may or may not occur.

Where the slave narrative writer drew the audience into his or her world by giving the reader a first-hand experience of the horrors on the plantation, these same rhetorical tools allow Ellison to discuss the segregation issue from a first person point of view. Ellison also leads his audience through a sequence of historical events: the African American college life in the south, an encounter with World War II veterans, migration to Harlem, work in a Northern factory, involvement with a left wing political group, and the advent of a writing career. We follow the protagonist through his pilgrimage, just like we followed the slaves on the plantation. According to Eric J. Sundquist, Ellison combines the self-reflective technique of autobiography, the vernacular resources of ethnography, and the nuanced harmonies of poetry with slave narrative styles to write Invisible Man (1-2). Using a combination of all these
elements, Ellison put together Invisible Man to achieve sociopolitical awareness.

When a slave wrote a narrative, he or she used many rhetorical devices to engage the reader. These devices were discussed in chapter two, and they are prevalent in the slave narrative genre. Both Invisible Man and the slave narratives use similar devices to present the message.

Ellison attempts to portray through his protagonist in Invisible Man the weight of racism after the Civil War. Racism and discrimination result in victims. Because these degradations prevail, the African American's rights and level of equality have never been the same as the whites'. Ellison says, "about 85 years ago they [the slaves] were told they were free, united with others of our country in everything social, separate like the fingers of a hand, and they believed it" (15). This verbal promise of freedom was never implemented as the African American expected. Court case results from cases like Plessy versus Ferguson were purposely misinterpreted to further emphasize segregation (Sundquist 2). The ex-slaves after the Civil War and their descendants never really had a chance to be free. They were still separated, delegated to separate rest rooms and drinking fountains. They were seated at the back of the bus or forced to stand. Booker T. Washington, a former slave, saw in his day that an American society which failed to support the African American race would be unable to avoid the coming battle of the Civil Rights Movement (Washington iv). The problem is that this battle is still present throughout the United States.

Washington and Ellison were seeking true civil rights—not just a few privileges. They were part of a tradition seeking not just freedom, but also equality.
Washington's cry for freedom added the plea for equality, just like Prince Hall's (1799) and Gustavous Vassa's (1789) called for equality a century before.

Washington's cry was taken up in the Harlem Renaissance period where writers called for self-respect and self-improvement as the key to gaining equality. However, self-improvement failed to obtain the African Americans the equality they desired. Ellison then took up the cry for equality raised by Washington, but made it clear that self-improvement was not the answer. There was still the need for equality. To drive the point home, Ellison resurrects the slave narrative style. Like Washington, Ellison presents the namelessness and uncertainty of the African American person who is trying to survive in a world of bigotry, prejudice, and hatred, a world that judges people solely on the color of their skin.

Jack Bishop in Ralph Ellison says, "Ellison found it difficult to accept segregation in the South" (44). Ellison studied under Inman Page, a well-known former slave educator (42), and he also studied black writing and music at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute (45). Ellison became an expert in not only African American music but slave narrative rhetoric as well (Bishop 37). He also read "books which seldom ever mentioned Negroes" because he wanted to think beyond the limits of the current situation, so he could write on projects with Richard Wright (49). Overall, Ellison's background as a reader was strong and helped him develop as a writer. His words: "I am an invisible man" describes the way he feels throughout his writing (Bishop 61, 73). These words would begin the breakthrough novel and launch his literary career. In turn, the novel launched a plea for freedom.
Bishop says that *Invisible Man* is about "a young man’s cry and struggle to understand himself and the world around him . . . [It] is a story of innocence, power, and corruption . . . the young hero comes to represent all people who struggle to maintain their individuality" (74). In other words, the only way the invisible man can be visible is by establishing his own identity instead of letting others control what he should or should not be. Bledsoe screams, "Identity! Who has any identity anymore anyway?" to the invisible man’s plea "I am worthy . . . I’ll prove my identity" (Ellison 184). During his identity crisis he cries for salvation on earth. But his pleas for salvation do not work.

The richness of *Invisible Man* is brought out through its rhetorical tools and the protagonist’s quest for his identity in a chaotic world and amid the struggle for moral correctness (Bishop 2). The novel is a key component paralleling African American History. Ellison needed to discuss his historical roots in order to show the reader the sociopolitical problems facing African Americans today. The blacks were segregated and denied access to many areas considered to be for whites only.

After years of reading and writing short stories, Ellison developed the theme of the social problem of his character’s identity being defined by others. The classic rhetorician, Quintillian, says that good imitation strategies can make the writings more convincing (Bizzel and Herzberg 336), thus Ellison imitated the slave narrative formulas and rhetorical conventions in order to generate a more convincing emotional impact through relating it to his protagonist. When Ellison imitates, he does it better
than most writers because he has had the opportunity to develop his skill and to draw from the lessons established by previous African American writers.

Additionally, Sundquist points out that "the novel’s focus is on the hero’s anonymity, and fluctuating identity, and one embracing point of reference—the law and social customs that divided black Americans from white" (2). The issue is that the African American people were segregated in the United States, especially in the Southern states. This segregation involved schools, colleges, public places, businesses, military service, voting booths, sports teams, hospitals, buses and other forms of transportation. In those places where the African American was not segregated, he or she was given inferior service. In other words, the African American people were not treated as equals as the Constitution proclaimed. Although the concept of "separate but equal" was proclaimed, the focus seemed more on the "separate" and less on the "equal." This is the way the African American was treated.\(^4\) The initial problem began, according to Sundquist, in 1896 when the Supreme Court ruling on Plessy versus Ferguson was misunderstood, misinterpreted, and therefore, misapplied (2). Briefly, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of social segregation of white and African American races under the separate but equal doctrine. The case opened when Homer Plessy (an African American) refused to sit in the back of a Jim Crow train car. Plessy won and the Supreme Court adopted the separate but equal doctrine. The whites took the concept of separate but equal literally and segregation became a law of the land. Signs stating separate
placements for the African American race took place, and the abuse only became worse.

This misapplication of the Supreme Court ruling in 1896 became the concept for Ellison’s work. Throughout the novel, the invisible man is left out, put in awkward situations, and separated from the white race because of his skin color. To Ellison separateness parallels invisibility because of the lack of accessibility, individuality, and opportunity. Ellison’s protagonist, the invisible man, became invisible because of the separateness of his race. The separate-but-equal ruling divides the two races so that one never interacts with the other. The African American citizens are invisible to white citizens. They are unseen unless the whites have some need for them. According to Sundquist, this lack of being seen by the whites creates an environment where African Americans are denied access to economic, political, and social institutions (2). Even though the two societies are supposed to be separate but equal, both societies are under the control of the white race and so it is possible for the white race to remove the African American citizen from their lives. As second-class citizens, the African American can be in a room, but no one notices. No one recognizes him or her. No one acknowledges his or her existence. It is, for all intents and purposes, as if the African Americans were invisible.

Rhetorically, Ellison embodies all the frustrations of the African American race through his presentation of separation and abuse, and the invisible man becomes the incarnation of this treatment. No work sums up the cultural and psychological
effects of segregation in the United States more effectively than *Invisible Man*. *Invisible Man* is a major literary work identifying social issues that are still prevalent in today’s society, but which are taking on different forms. Ellison deals with segregation by constantly reminding the reader of its existence and abuse.

The first three rhetorical tools Ellison adopts to add persuasive power to his cause are pathos, ethos, and logos. In *Invisible Man*, Ellison displays the injustices practiced on the African American. Each time the invisible man sought to move forward the white people attacked the protagonist and drove him back. Ellison contends that the African American is treated the same in the 20th century as they were in the previous centuries. He suggests they are still treated improperly as animals. "The boys groped about like blind, cautious crabs crouching to protect their mid-sections . . . with their fists testing the smoke-filled air like the knobbled feelers of hypersensitive snails" (23). In the slave narratives African Americans are seen as unintelligent monkeys; now Ellison, by modifying the rhetorical tools, portrays his race as small insignificant creatures attempting to fight back but with caution, hesitation, and sensitivity because his race is not only beaten, but belittled. Ellison alters the allusion of monkeys into that of snails.

Just the mere mention of an African American acting like an animal triggers pathos in the mind of the concerned reader. A concerned reader cannot separate himself or herself from the text because he or she becomes emotionally involved. If they let the text go awhile, they will remember the suggested animal-like images. In other words, the appeal of Ellison’s *Invisible Man* is to first sway the audience to his
way of thinking through appealing to a reader’s emotions and causing him or her to reconsider their own position on the subject. Ellison wants the reader to become convinced that a change is needed, and then to encourage the reader to make the needed changes. Ellison seeks those changes which are both favorable and agreeable to the African American race.

Ellison relies on an emotional response from his readers when he expresses his belief that nothing had changed in thirty years. Frederick Douglass’ Fourth of July Speech helped people to realize the inhumaness of slavery, but corrective laws were only passed years later (Barksdale and Kinnamon 89). Hence, like Invisible Man, "the Afro-American difficulties sprang from high visibility" in a world where as a person they are treated as (if you will) invisible (Ellison xix).

The next appeal is ethos which raises emotions favorable to the rhetorician’s moral characteristics and character. Ellison’s protagonist thinks, "my arms were like lead, my head smarting from blows. I managed to feel my way to the ropes and hold on trying to catch my breath a glove landed in my mid section and I went over again" (22). The reader through the sharp use of the pronoun "I" is insistently placed into the role of the African American protagonist because Ellison wants us, the reader, to feel the punches while in a weakened state. The language allows the reader to join the cause. The content of Invisible Man consistently questions the morality of the audience. The above passage questions the righteousness of beating up a man until he bleeds and cannot move. By representing his Invisible Man in first person,
Ellison allows the reader to be placed in the shoes of the invisible man, to become both the protagonist and the victim. This rhetorical strategy is used to let the white reader and others feel like a second-class citizen. In turn, the reader can see how the white community has been treating the invisible man and his entire race.

Simply, African Americans had to be careful not to step on white toes. Because of their social status as was illustrated in *Invisible Man*, African Americans tend to use words which reduce the chance of conflict or confrontation with the white race. African Americans are concerned with choosing their words carefully so as not to invite hostility. Ellison’s example of this concern over choosing the right word occurs when the invisible man comes to the Battle Royale in order to deliver a speech (30). Ellison’s protagonist is beaten by the crowd before he can give his presentation. Once the violence is over, the invisible man has the opportunity to deliver his speech, which begins with the words "social responsibility" (30). The fact that an African American would dare to speak on equality generates laughter and ridicule by the crowd (31). Ellison illustrates a very important concept with this scene. The message of "social responsibility" also illustrates ethos and pathos. It is obvious that the African American is being responsible in society by carefully choosing words which will not invite a confrontation. Some lack the social responsibility demonstrated by the invisible man. They take no thought of what they say, or what damage their words will have. Here is a role reversal of the African American being the civilized person while the whites are the uncivilized ones.
In the novel, Norton is one of many characters who like to degrade and use the African American for their own selfish gains. He doesn't call the invisible man by name, he prefers derogatory terms like "Boy," "Nigger," and "Fool," because Norton's desire is to "have every Negro in the country hanging on tree limbs by morning" (141). Norton believes in the old cliche' "A good Negro is a dead Negro" (141). In fact, he would like to re-strap the shackles on all of them. Possibly Norton wants to return as many African Americans to slavery as possible in order to control them for profitable gains. The degradation of the invisible man, along with the abusive words and undisguised bigotry, creates a character which would generate anger and hostility in most readers. This causes emotions in the reader and demonstrates pathos in Ellison's work. Overall the combination of pathos, ethos, and logos helps to stir reader responses.

Significantly, besides pathos, ethos, and logos, subliminal contrast is a powerful rhetorical tool in order to emphasize the need for change. Once the reader has these horrifying pictures in mind then he or she will support this change. The three slave narratives previously discussed use subliminal contrast in the same manner to seek sociopolitical reform and a shift from prejudice to acceptance.

In Invisible Man subliminal contrast, like pathos, ethos, and logos, is also used effectively. Ellison transfers his perceptions precisely so that his audience can picture them clearly. In the scene just before the Battle Royale, Ellison describes the setting and tension: "We were rushed to the front of the ballroom, where it smelled more strongly of tobacco and whisky . . . The sea of faces, some hostile, some amused
around us, and in the center, facing us stood a magnificent blonde . . . stark naked” (18). Ellison sets the stage clearly with a typical night club flavor: booze and smoke, the exploitation of sex, the lust for the girl and the battle to begin, while the large crowd is amusing themselves with sexy dreams and bloody schemes. Ellison describes the naked woman’s appearance from head to toe, through the protagonist’s eyes: "And then she began to dance, a slow sensuous movement; the smoke of a hundred cigars clinging to her, like the thinnest of veils" (19). The stage continues to be set with the metaphor of cigars representing men and smoke representing the men feeling her out in their wet dreams. We discover that she is being visually raped, a foreshadowing of the invisible man’s rape of dignity and pride that takes place two pages later. Ellison presents her as an objective for the invisible man. In order to have her, he must be a white man; he must become white. She is a goal he can never reach, just as equality is a goal that the African American can never reach.

The dancer is being presented to the African American as a public event. There is no privacy available and any response the invisible man has toward her will be displayed publicly. This creates the situation where sex is used to humiliate the African American, to shame him the same way rape shames the African American women. Subliminal contrast is achieved through the successful transfer of a picture into words. The words and language hold the reader to feel the humiliation the African American feels, which in turn substantiates the rhetorical power of words from a mere picture to a rhetorical force. This also alludes back to the slavery days when the African American individual had his or her name, his or her dignity, man-or
womanhood, and pride raped away, ripped away from him or her, leaving him or her
naked and exposed, just like the invisible man is left naked, stripped of all his
attributes of individuality. The chance of the African boy to attain his manhood in
private is also taken away. For example: "Another boy . . . he was the largest of the
group, wearing dark red fighting trunks much too small to conceal the erection which
projected from him as though in answer to the insinuating low registered moaning of
the clarinet. He tried to hide himself with his boxing gloves" (20). The blonde
continues to dance, drooling continues, and the Battle will begin. The erection points
out that the African American cannot possess the white girl. The desire is obvious,
but it is still restrained by the shorts. This restraint can easily remind the reader of
the shackles from the days gone by. In a sense Ellison is subliminally pointing to the
moralistic reader saying, "look at what is happening." The scenes, the images, and
the pictures the white reader has seen and experienced for years are transformed into
words that are unforgettable.

The white men can possibly touch the dancer, but it doesn’t matter. Physical
contact with the woman is not needed to accomplish the purpose of the white males.
They have succeeded in a figurative rape. The literal rape is the pounding each
African American has received for years. If the reader sees the erection as a
metaphor, the Pre-Battle Royale illustrates the penetration of destruction the African
Americans experience by being enticed before a fight. Generally, this penetration
will weaken their Battle awareness and strength. The whites place the African
Americans in an awkward position by displaying the girl, who is forbidden, by
arousing desires they are not allowed to act upon. This creates an inner conflict, and further reduces their sense of security, so they become easy prey for the whites in the Battle Royale. Ellison provides the reader with a picture that can be explored in the mind while he pulls the strings. These images are so insightful and frightful that the reader will never be able to erase them from their mind.

Subliminal contrast is also effective at the end of the Battle: "they were yelling for us to break it up and Tatlock spun me half around with a blow, and as a joggled camera sweeps in a reeling scene, I saw the red faces crouching tense beneath the cloud of blue-gray smoke" (25). The reader easily pictures the protagonist getting battered and Tatlock continuing the beating as if he is a killing machine. The metaphor of red faces screaming viciously, loudly, and rooting for the protagonist’s fall is certainly ironic. The readers assume the role of the invisible man, because they sense the pain, and they have no chance to release these graphic pictures out of their minds. The subliminal contrast technique can easily refer to the days of slavery, of a man being whipped until he is caked in blood, not moving, and senseless as he falls to the ground. Either way the reader will fall into Ellison’s trap. He traps our mind with the clear mental pictures of senseless brutality and pointless harm to a fellow human. The graphic pictures captivate Ellison’s reader because of their raw intensity. When Norton lays down very still, Ellison transforms his mental picture into words so the reader can see it too just as vividly:

He lay like a figure of chalk. I shook him gently, feeling dread within me. He barely breathed. I shook him violently, seeing his head wobble grotesquely. His lips parted, blush, revealing a row of long, slender, amazingly animal-like teeth. "Sir!" (75)
The protagonist sees the body, examines it and calls for help. In the protagonist’s shoes one cannot do mouth-to-mouth resuscitation because the victim is white and the good samaritan is black. An African American saving a white man would be a good gesture, but due to racial confrontations this will be a deadly move for the African American. This powerful scene demonstrates the racial tension between African Americans and whites. In this passage the African American, usually seen as an animal—an image that will always linger in the white mind—wants to save Norton’s life but this gesture is simply wrong. The scene also demonstrates an ironic reversal because in the narratives, the white slave master stood over the beaten African American. Here, Ellison modifies this by showing the possible reversed roles in that a black person can be of value to his or her white bigoted environment. The reader can picture death not only as a reality but as a true catastrophe in a racial battle. This intense scene is just one of many that Ellison writes to emphasize the reality of the sociopolitical problem—a black person cannot do CPR on a white person due to the risk of his or her tarnished reputation.

Subliminal contrast is also located in the following scene in chapter two (46 through 53) in the Trueblood saga, which discusses the prevailing poverty the African American people had and still experience. Note that the aftermath of the Civil War caused severe poverty in the Southern and Northern states. Jim Trueblood lives in an "old cabin" in the African American community, where he struggles to make ends meet. Jim Trueblood is a hard working share cropper, family man, and church-goer. He lives life to the fullest. Trueblood represents the good, hardworking African
American who has nothing to show for his efforts. His entire life is lived in a financial hole which reflects the symbolic hole experienced by the invisible man. His family desperately tries to make ends meet, due to the hardships of the circumstances. If there is no change, the whole slave race could end up in a hole like Trueblood.

When examining the subliminal contrast technique in the Trueblood saga, the reader can easily notice that the present picture parallels the life of slavery in the past.

Trueblood, like a slave, is subservient to the white people’s commands. He is an unnoticed person, another invisible man. He represents a negative image of the African American people. He is content in his world of pain and does not try to move ahead or succeed. Trueblood clings to old traditions without adapting to the new ones. He accepts the world he lives in. He works his land. He cannot afford to lose a day of work because if he does, he will be losing part of the crop and in turn no food will be on the supper table. Overall, Trueblood has given up the fight and given in. Ellison shows the reader through Trueblood the way some African Americans give in and accept a life in poverty instead of seeking ways to improve their position. Ellison does this by painting this picture of an African American that is trapped by phoney freedoms and poor opportunities. Subliminal contrast is a powerful rhetorical tool allowing Ellison to enlighten the reader regarding Trueblood’s unfortunate situation.

Trueblood, while a likeable character for the white reader, is a terrifying character for the African American audience. He represents to the African American reader the success of the white society to break the spirit of the African American.
Trueblood has accepted the white man’s assessment of him. He has become what the whites want him to be. He has taken the path of least resistance. Trueblood is the embodiment of the failure of the African American to rise above the sociopolitical barriers. Ellison uses Trueblood’s plight to illustrate that the slavery of the past has only been replaced by a new bondage: poverty. Freedom without equality is only another form of slavery. Ellison can use Trueblood as a microcosm of the African American’s over-all plight; in that the only future for many African Americans is to surrender their dreams and accept poverty as a way of life.

Ellison’s narrative is a mental model representing the real world of the African American through descriptive words and language. The words help us to picture the scene as Ellison wants, and needs, the reader to see it. Ellison also knew that he had to veil his message a little differently from the slave narratives because society would not accept it if he presented his cry for reform in an obvious manner. Ellison needed to draw in the reader, shock the reader, and help guide the reader through turmoil, and the veiling presents an irresistible temptation to do so. Ellison’s descriptive voice allows the reader to develop a clear picture which closely resembles the images he is referring to.

Another rhetorical tool found in Invisible Man is symbolism. Symbols may have many meanings, covering different views and beliefs, but to the African American they consistently allude to bondage. Ellison explains that many protagonists of African American literature are caught up in the most "intense forms of social struggle, subject to the most extreme of the human predicament. Yet, they
are seldom able to articulate the issues which tortured them" (xxiii). Symbolism is used to endorse and enforce these continuous images of struggle and hardship.

Symbols lead the reader to deep thoughts about the torment that Ellison’s people must endure. Rhetorically, a symbol can bring the reader closer to deeper textual involvement. For example: a reader may see a shackle as the chain that leashed a slave, but to other readers it could symbolize entrapment at a variety of levels beyond the mere literal. Possibly Ellison is shackling the white reader to the text for ulterior motives. The shackle leads to separation of the whites from African Americans. Shackles are restraints, limitations, and boundaries. The chains imply that one race has control over another. They represent the superior race to the inferior—an imaginary boundary line that should never have existed.

Symbolism is one of the tools Ellison employs to cry out for change. For example, Ellison used paint as a symbol. The image of paint reappears throughout the narrative. Ellison employs the symbolism of paint to illustrate the effort to hide inconsistencies between what the white race desires and the truth about the American dream. Perhaps, since the landing of white people, they have attempted to make the United States a nation where the rights of whites come before the rights of others. This effort is doomed to failure since the United States has people not only of the white race, and the African American race, but it also is composed of members of other races. Many Americans desire an all-white picture. Ellison uses painting as a symbol of how the white race deals with racial issues through a scene where his protagonist performs a painting job (196-202). Painting over impurities seems the
ultimate solution to the problem for the white race. Once the impurities or the contradictions are covered over, they seem to no longer exist. This may be Ellison’s way of stating that the problems between the whites and the African American race cannot simply be covered up. It is Ellison’s initial message about the invisibility issue: the white people are trying to cover up the black’s color by figuratively covering them with white paint. Moreover, "paint" is Ellison’s word for "red tape."

The white race tries to cover any difference so it cannot be seen. This is why the invisible man is invisible, because he reminds the white power that the world is not all white. The black’s freedom is not as it was promised. The invisible man’s very existence contradicts their desired image and so they make him invisible as the solution to their problem. Ellison challenges the white man’s solution and professes that all people should have an equally fair chance in all their endeavors. Ellison would like to "Keep America pure with liberty paints" (20). He wants all people to become one. Ellison sees the dream that Martin Luther King Jr. came to see: that we all must live and work together; however, we must be accepted for what we are, not what others want us to be.

A further examination of the Battle Royale scene reveals an interesting symbol: the African Americans are blindfolded while they are forced to fight, while the white observers see (79). One of Ellison’s strategies is his play with words. For instance, Ellison uses words such as "blind, blindfolded, and perception" to create a symbol. Blinded, the protagonist does not perceive, nor does he see (17). His inability to see allows him to perceive himself as invisible. His life is an incarnation
of inability and a search for identity. Once he overcomes these tremendous hurdles, he will remove his figurative blindfold, but first he must discover his own identity. It is interesting to note that the white people's hate makes them blind to their deeds. It is the role of the observer to see. This sight versus blindness symbol relates not just to the physical world, but to the mind. It is a play on a popular technique found in Greek plays and Shakespearian tragedies: the motif of the blind seer. Simply, those who are blind are the ones who see, while those with sight are truly blind. In order to see clearly, and to look inward, the viewer must be blind. The African Americans are blindfolded—blinded, and so they see more clearly than those who have eyes but are blind. The white man fears losing control, and in order to maintain it the African American is hindered. The hindering chains of the former slavery days are now replaced by blindfolds in the Battle Royale. The oppressors "blind," the participants in the ring with blindfolds. The whites will not confront the blacks on equal terms. The blacks must always be at a disadvantage. This recurring theme of blindness is a very effective rhetorical device to force the reader to see and perceive the lingering problems. They know the torment inflicted by the white characters whereas the latter remain ignorant. This ritual of the Battle Royale is a reminder of the thoughtless way the whites treated the African American. The Battle Royale is a ritual because it is a continuous series of acts that form a system of reliable, repeated activity. In a sense the ritual--the total, physical control previously maintained over slaves--is preserved and the whites are drawn to it. The whites see, but do not see for they are blind to their unjust, immoral, and predictable behavior.
Both critic Susan Blake and short story writer Shirley Jackson question society's many symbolic rituals which, for the most part, go unquestioned (79, 490). Rituals can be simple or elaborate. They do not need to make sense as long as they are carried out. The purpose behind the ritual has been lost over the generations, but still the action is carried out even if it is no longer necessary. Those who cling to the rituals, and not the meaning, keep the ceremony continuing long after it should have been set aside. Until someone dares to ask the meaning behind the ritual, the show goes on. The Battle Royale is nothing more than a ritual which should have been cast aside long ago.

Any reader can see that Ellison's Battle Royale exploits sex, psychological values, economical values, and physical size in a dramatic way to expose slavery and senseless brutality. By pitting these together within a ritual and setting up reader anticipation, Ellison draws us in like spectators to entice our curiosity. In fact, any ritual when viewed by a different culture can appear ridiculous. Of course it depends upon the context of the ritual. According to Blake, "emphasizing the symbolic rather than the social components, Ellison transforms a social experience into a mythic one" (80). Ellison's myth cries for less reminders of slave memories, the burial of segregation, and the welcoming of all people, regardless of skin color, to unite us as an American society.

It is important to note that the social and mythical experience are a part of an abnormal condition called slavery. The Battle Royale contradicts meaning because the social ritual focuses on the African American condition in the face of white control.
By inviting the reader into the text many follow the growth of a boy into manhood. His rite of passage depends upon strength and is not based upon natural maturity and growth. Blake says, "The youth can expect to become mature: the black can not expect to become white" (80). This ritual of the Battle Royale symbolizes the oppressed people staying with the oppressed people—no matter the outcome of the Battle. Specifically, Ellison allows the reader to interpret the symbols so as to get the reader involved in his modern slave narrative. In this way the reader can become a part of Invisible Man. The symbols can assist in the reader’s mental picture of the narrative which engages the reader in the narrative.

Laughter is symbolic of the ridicule the African American must endure when he or she is made the target of abusive jokes or pranks. In the Battle Royale, when the laughter erupts towards the African Americans, Ellison portrays it as, "the laughter hung smokelike in a sudden stillness" (31). Here Ellison paints the picture of the dreary smoke, hanging in the air. It is a stale air without any movement or motion. There is no wind of change either for the smoke or for the attitudes portrayed by the whites.

This falling man is another type of symbol for the African American. He is beaten down each time he rises. From its onset, the prologue discusses Ellison’s protagonist (possibly himself) and the hole, or pit, that has been created. Ellison identifies the pre-set destiny of his protagonist as a hole or pit. It is a trap which the African American seeks to escape, but it claims each of them. "I am invisible and live in a hole" (6). We find the invisible man clubbed and abandoned like a slave in
a cellar. The cellar reflects and represents a hole (31). This entrapment follows the African Americans throughout their lives.

Throughout the novel there is not only struggle but violent activities that all cause the reader to reflect upon the Battle Royale in Chapter One. Like the Battle Royale, the Golden Day (134 through 148) scene is also both chaotic and bizarre. Both of these situations involve the graphic use of two opposing forces: white against black, or the binary opposition of high and low, master and slave, or superior versus inferior. In the Golden Day the subservient invisible man helps the bigoted Mr. Norton get some whiskey. Mr. Norton, like the slave masters, doesn't recognize the invisible man as an individual. In this scene Ellison's rhetorical use of irony and symbolism is evident. Norton carries with him an old leg shackle from slavery days. He says it represents progress because it enforces discipline. Ironically, the readers understand that Norton subconsciously desires the blacks to still be enslaved. The shackle is an overt symbol of slavery and control.

Ellison aligned himself with Booker T. Washington to demonstrate that the problems of the African American are not just an immediate issue (Ellison 17). Washington was not only born into slavery, he was one of many generations who were bought and sold, beaten and abused. His life was only a link in the chain, a very long chain which shackled him to his ancestors, and which binds the modern African American to their ancestors. Links and chains are symbolic of the slavery which shaped the African American. They are also symbolic of restraints or
hinderance. Ellison transforms this concept of restrain from chains into blindfolds in the Battle Royale.

Inferiority is a theme which runs throughout the entire novel. The invisible man is forced to feel inferior because he is treated as such. One image that emphasizes this inferiority is the "Negro Doll." The doll is a rhetorical tool to symbolically describe the manipulated, tormented, used and abused image of the African American pawn. In essence, the invisible man is just like any slave, he is used like a "Negro Doll," representing a pawn to society, the environment, and to the white supremacy.

Some novels use a cat and mouse chase known as the predator versus prey motif. Ellison uses this predator versus prey motif to illustrate the continuous predatory relationship that has characterized the relationship between the African American and white races for many years. This chase, once a physical game, now is more a mental manipulation. For example, the invisible man’s prey is the white dancer with the tattoo upon her belly and she is the object of his desire (19). She is something to behold, but never to hold. The African American also becomes the predator. Meanwhile, the white males are plotting against the protagonist to use his desire to entrap him and make him their victim. This scene not only demonstrates the chase, it also provides Ellison with the opportunity to illustrate that we are all human beings with needs, no matter our ethnicity or motive, or whether it is good or bad.

In Invisible Man the chase is the mental ploy of the African American man seeking a white female companion while the white man stalks him for animal sport.
Later in *Invisible Man* this picture of the predator versus prey penetrates the reader’s mind. There is a possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play (572). This role is tough with white predators stalking him. He must tolerate both types of white people, the good—helpful ones that are few and far between—and the well-known evil ones. Again, Ellison pits good against evil because it is a reoccurring cycle.

Another use of symbolism deals with light and darkness near the end of the novel when the protagonist sees hope ahead. "Far ahead in the dark I saw the monumental bridge, ropes of lights across the dark river, and closer, high above the shoreline, the palisades, their revolutionary agony lost in the riotous lights of roller coaster" (524). The invisible man has seen the light but the darkness surrounds him. It is in the distance and beneath him. It is something he must go through and pass over. The light is above him and guides him. It points the way he must go and it will be his only guide through the dark. Here the light is symbolic of visibility. We need the light to see. The darkness is his invisibility for in the dark we cannot see or be seen. He knows that no matter where he goes or whatever he does he must deal with the visible and the invisible. Overall, symbolism is a very powerful rhetorical force.

The sixth rhetorical tool, "God" and "devil" associations, like pathos, ethos, logos, subliminal contrast and symbol is found in Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Ellison’s narrative continues the pursuit of identity in chapter twenty-five when Ras fights and drinks (552). In this section, the invisible man realizes that his predicament will
never change because he will always be given "hell and bananas" for his entire existence just as his ancestors were (553). The use of the term "hell" draws us back to the slave narratives which frequently equated slavery with hell. In this hell, the use of the word "banana" reminds us that when the African American was first brought to America, he or she was believed to have all the intelligence and abilities of a trained ape or monkey and was treated accordingly. The banana could also be a symbol of degradation and a reminder of their African roots.

Through the symbolic banana which alludes to animal-like traits and characteristics, Ellison believes that there is little hope for change because this treatment has been an on-going cycle since slavery. Ellison has made his character aware of this treatment, and also aware that there is no escape from this cycle, and this awareness makes the abuse all the more painful. Even though Ellison has noted that the cycle repeats itself, he continues to present the message that "slavery is dead." It is the goal of his effort to make this statement true, and to break the cycle (554).

As Ellison's dream is to break the cycle of "hell and bananas," it is appropriate for him to employ the "God" and "devil" words found in the slave narratives. Ellison adopts "God" and "devil" words to his advantage in order to pit good and evil against each other. This opposition is obvious throughout Invisible Man. The invisible man is confronted by opposing forces in chapter one when he encounters peace and war while watching the dancer. He is serene, even though he cannot touch her; but the Battle Royale brings out the devil in him. The invisible
man becomes a killing machine, manufactured by the white audience for white sport (18-21). The contrasting of "hell and banana" shows the inherent tension between African Americans and whites.

The concept of "God" and "devil" terms is only one use of words to create the image the writer desires. The slave narrative writers and Ellison use other words to create their own reality as the setting for their narratives. These writers recreated their reality and the predicament of their race. In his introduction to Invisible Man, in 1981—written thirty years after publication—Ellison said, "the Battle Royale scene might well be the novel’s only incident of interest . . . my highest hope for the novel was that it would sell enough copies to prevent my publishers from losing on their investment" (xvii). Possibly Ellison felt the words he used were well-orchestrated but not as good as he expected (xvii). Words have a special power that connote or denote an image to the reader. Words also can be repulsive and harmful. We can hear the repulsive devil terms as the white supremists shout: "Let me at the black Sonabitches" (21). The phrase "Black Sonabitches" is a derogatory term used to describe the African American with a bitter and hostile tone. This tone administered by the white race promotes havoc between the races. No matter the tone of voice these words are said in, they are still humiliating and degrading, especially to African Americans.

Such an expression shows the power of devil terms to stir up emotions and anger. Words used correctly by the narrative writer are a powerful tool of persuasion. African American writers use words carefully, because they want to be accepted
equally (Sundquist 31). We can see that Ellison’s message focuses on equality because whenever asked a question, the invisible man responds with, "equality" (31). But no matter what Ellison requests through his character of the invisible man, nothing changes. Ellison creates a powerful image to illustrate the lack of change. Overall, "God" and "devil" terms used correctly as seen in Invisible Man are a powerful persuasive force needed to show the bitterness between races.

The seventh rhetorical tool adopted by Ellison is repetition. Repetition is used to emphasize a point, a key issue, an idea or a concept. Repetition is very common to the slave narrative tradition. The slave writer consistently reminds the reader of his or her problem. The reminder is in form of different experiences, but they all have the same theme. This repeated telling of the horrors of slavery is designed to get the reader on their side. Invisible Man provides a wide "range of literary and historical reference" that can definitely place Ellison’s knowledge of the slave narratives apart from other literature (Sundquist 7). Substantially, the slave narrative is unique because it uses descriptions of horror to support its message of change. It is the repetition of shocking incidents that reinforce the single message: slavery is horrifying. Every story and event related by the slave is designed for its shock value, and to make the reader disgusted with slavery and the inhumane treatment of people.

Slave narrative writers use repetition in the autobiographical accounts for many reasons such as emphasizing inhumane treatment, building reader concern, recreating the problematic situation, or enhancing the horror. Some slave narrative writers used repetition to re-enforce multiple ideas into the narrative, to achieve reader reaction, to
possibly see the reader take action, and to develop sociopolitical elements. No matter the purpose, repetition is used to describe the problem, cry for action, and hope for positive reactions with support. Some critics consider repetition to be a key characteristic of both the slave and the Post-Harlem Renaissance narratives (Sundquist 7). Indeed, Sundquist considers Ellison's repetitiveness to be a key component in his contribution to the "canonical American culture which . . . [can be] identified as white at the same time articulating so perfectly the intellectual and social complexity of Black America" (7).

Edward Margolies, another noted critic, in "History As Blues: Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man," considers Ellison's repetition to serve as the musical orchestration in the narrative. This musical aspect or tone of Louis Armstrong's record playing in the background, "What did I do/to be so Black/and blue?" (133), can become a hidden cry on the part of the African American. The protagonist is not free to speak the question himself, and so Ellison presents it in the form of background music in the scene. What did the African American do to deserve this kind of treatment?

According to Edward Margolies, Ellison again presents the plight of his protagonist when he writes, "I tried to play the game according to the rules but each time I discovered myself, I became more bruised" (133). Ellison makes it clear that whenever his protagonist plays the game according to the white man's rules, he loses. It is the curse of the protagonist that he has no other rules to play by. In the slave narratives, the stories showed how the slaves would try to avoid doing what the slave
master wanted. They would play by the slave master's rules only when they had no other choice, but they knew that when they conformed, they were doomed to lose.

In an interview with Ellison, Margolies quoted the writer as saying, "Blues... is the very nature of past wrongs, pains and defeats, it serves to define the singer as one who has suffered, and in so doing has provided him with a history" (133). Repeating memories of past pain has an effect to fill the mind with a memorable chorus which lingers. In his interview, Ellison discusses his view on life and the Blues, and the reader can see the foundation of the slave narrative woven into his philosophy:

The Blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grains, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near tragic, non-comic lyricism. As a form, the Blues is an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe. (132)

This philosophy of Ellison to squeeze something of value from painful and brutal events reminds us that this is exactly what the slaves did when they first penned their narratives. Ellison revives the same cry as the slaves. He presents a message through his work. The message is that there is a need for change. His repetition takes the form of a comparison: visibility versus invisibility, and is presented to the reader over and over again throughout the work. An example of repetition from chapter one of Invisible Man illustrates this point:

I might as well take part in the Battle Royale... The Battle Royale came first... I had some misgivings over the Battle Royale... I suspected that fighting a Battle Royale might distract from the dignity of my speech. (17)
The Battle Royale is a brutal boxing match which the protagonist must face. The reader is given repetitive comments about the protagonist's feelings concerning the boxing match as a way of reinforcing the feeling of apprehension and the stress the character is experiencing. The Battle Royale scene contains repetition to illustrate Ellison's theme:

The blindfold was tight as a thick skin-puckering scab... Blows pounded me from all sides... so many blows landed upon me... warm blood... I could not tell if the moisture upon my body was sweat or blood. Blindfolded I could no longer control my emotions... A blow landed hard against my neck... streaks of blue light filled the black world behind the blindfold... I could see black sweat-washed forms... in thuds of blows... Everyone fought hysterically... Everybody fought everyone else. No group fought together for long... Blows landed below the belt and in the kidney... I moved carefully avoiding blows... fighting... like blind, cautious crabs... blood spattering. (22-23)

The first lines begin the fast-paced action of the fight and words like "blindfold, black, blood and blows" not only form alliteration and the beat of "B," they also set the tone while the reader feels as if he or she is being pummeled because of the use of the powerful, personal pronoun "I". These four words describe the fight, and at the same time set the tone of bleakness and hopelessness felt by the African American. These powerful words provide the reader with a feeling of doom. The setting of the scene creates the tone of the Battle Royale. The Battle Royale is nothing short of senseless brutality. Those involved feel hopeless because they are blindfolded. There is little chance of being more than a victim, and this alludes to the slavery years. Later in chapter three of *Invisible Man*, short sentences create a feeling of chaos:
The Golden Day was in an uproar. Half-dressed women appeared from the rooms off the balcony. Men hooted and yelled as at a football game. "I WANT ORDER!" the giant shouted ... "THEY WERE THROWING BOTTLES OF LIQUOR!" a woman screamed. "REAL LIQUOR! ... A shower of bottles and glasses splashing whiskey crashed against the balcony ... "LISTEN AT THE WHITE FOLKS" ... "HE'S A WHITE FOLKS' MAN" ... "KILL HIM" ... I never been so close to a white person before ... In panic I struggled to get away ... He was like a formless white death ... the madness of the Golden day. (82-4)

The short sentences describe and create a feeling of unrest. Ellison allows the reader to not only picture the riot, but to feel the total loss of control, an inability to make sense of what is happening to the characters. This sense of chaos and destruction consistently follows the protagonist. Ellison uses "the shower of breaking bottles" and the phrase "crashing against the balcony" to paint a picture of the destruction going on around the characters. The barroom brawl is brutal just as life seems brutal toward the protagonist. Ellison needs to repeat these phrases many times in order to drive home the feeling of the scene, to make the reader fully aware of the full impact of the realistic barroom brawl.

This barroom brawl is an intricate component of *Invisible Man*. Ellison equates the senseless brawl over skin color to a barroom brawl. In most barroom brawls, one event unleashes pent-up anger. People do not know why they are fighting. There are no allies in the battle, only enemies. There is no goal, there is no cause, there is only hostility and anger which is directed against nameless faces. Repetition emphasizes the protagonist's consistent pattern of being in chaotic situations.
There is no apparent reason for the chaos other than the color of skin. The reader is compelled to ask the rhetorical question: Why does the protagonist always end up in chaotic situations, surroundings, or elements? The protagonist must end up in chaotic situations because Ellison is repeating such scenes to make it clear that the African American's life is chaotic and not under his or her control. They are victims. Someone else has taken control of them and abused them. This lack of control of one's life creates chaos and the results are shocking. "This here Golden Day is enough to shock anybody," the girl says to Norton, the vet, and the protagonist (86). We are all shocked by the seriousness of the situation. Repetition intensifies the situation. Overall, repetition makes the barroom brawl disorienting, and, in turn, the reader is caught up in the experience.

The naivete' of the protagonist concerning the relationship between African Americans and whites is explored in chapter one. The "Battle Royale" begins the rite of passage for the invisible man (3-6). Because of his ignorance, he is beaten and driven into a shocking awareness of something that he does not really understand. This is the first doorway which the reader of both the slave narrative and Invisible Man must pass through. They must stop being naive about the treatment of the African American, and they must have it thrust into their faces where it can no longer be invisible. It is designed to shock the reader, just as the protagonist was shocked by his revelation.

Repetition also serves as a retrospective device to remind the reader of the previous torment African Americans were subjected to in the days of slavery. This
reminder is designed by Ellison to emphasize the current dilemmas. Ellison repeatedly alludes to the slave narrative truths to prove his case that the African American is treated as invisible when they encounter white people. An example of reference to the slave narrative would be, "I was limp as a dish rag. My back felt as though it had been beaten with wires" (29). Another example is: "men of sixty or more still caught up in post-Civil War dreams of freedom within segregation" (251). The first example alludes to the beatings and the second example refers to the continuous hope for freedom. In both examples the knowledgeable reader can relate to the descriptions of a slave back in the narratives when they sought to be free.

Slave narratives use repetition to emphasize brutal situations. The interaction of the reader with the writer through reading repetitive devices elicits emotional response no matter who the reader is. In the same way as Ellison adopts this repetition so did Northup and Jacobs. "Blow after blow was inflicted on my naked body . . . I prayed for mercy" (Northup 25); or "the slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear . . . she is whipped or starved into submission to their will" (Jacobs 382). This repetition reminds the reader of reoccurring brutality and slavery. Both Northup and Jacobs consistently repeat these lines to remind the reader of human brutality. For any reader with a moralistic, religious, or humanistic background these unnecessary brutalities can evoke a sentimental reaction which would cause most readers to care for the victim. Some readers may experience violent prejudice, others should be thankful their lives have been protected from this kind of treatment.
Throughout the novel, Ellison reminds us of the past, and shows how these problems within the institution of slavery reflect the present society seeking civil rights. The following scene at the Battle Royale illustrates this point:

Now I felt a sudden fit of blind terror. I was unused to darkness. It was as though I had suddenly found myself in a dark room filled with poisonous cottonmouths. I could hear the bleary voices yelling insistently for the Battle Royale to begin . . . Let me at that Nigger . . . Let me at that ginger-colored Nigger. Tear him from limb to limb. (21)

The repetition and emphasis on "Nigger" creates a reaction in the reader. It is not a word the reader is comfortable with. The word also refers back to the time when such words were used to refer to the African American. It conjures up for the reader scenes of a slave master brutally punishing a run-away slave or a slave who was beaten for not doing his or her job to the slave master’s satisfaction. In Ellison’s prose, such words function to get the reader involved in the story.

In chapter one and three of Invisible Man, repetition emphasizes the humiliation of the African American male. In chapter one the protagonist is pitted against another African American after he has been brainwashed to hate. The protagonist is conditioned to treat other members of his race the same way the white race treats him--as an invisible man: "His face was a black blank with only his eyes alive--with hate of me, and aglow with a feverish terror of what happened to us all . . . I smashed him again and again," with no mercy given (24).

The invisible man is placed in the ring to fight not for sport, but for survival. Despite the treatment, the African American is visible only when the abuse begins, and the cries for mercy wail throughout the forum. To the white audience this Battle
is like a cock fight; there is no regard for the creature. No one actually cares if the combatants live or die. For the whites, the Battle Royale is seen only as a business venture; just as for years the African Americans were property, and the only concern given them was the same concern given to a business transaction.

In chapter three the protagonist states, "I watched, a man [spring] on Cargo's chest with both feet and he lost consciousness. They began throwing beer on him, reviving him, only to kick him unconscious again. Soon he was drenched in blood and beer . . . throw him out" (83). There was no concern that the contestant was injured, only that he could no longer function. The contestant was disposed of like Douglass' Aunt Hester and the old woman in Jacobs' narrative. Ellison connects his narrative with slave narratives. The slave narratives emphasized that once a slave could no longer be used because of sickness or old age, they were cast aside, just like the fighters in the Battle Royale. In the days of slavery elderly or injured slaves were rendered unproductive or useless to the slave owners, and were therefore removed, and other slaves were brought in.

Sometimes it was just as bad to be the spectator as it was to be the victim. One can only watch and not try to save anyone due to the possible consequences. In chapter one the invisible man cannot help the African American who has been beaten. The protagonist must watch and not assist because he knows that he could become the next victim. Even though there are similarities in these two opposite situations, as a spectator or participant, the invisible man is humiliated. The victim suffers the blows and if the spectator witnesses his or her side being beaten, they in turn can feel the
mental anguish. By doing nothing to help, the invisible man endorses the treatment of his race. Because if he helps his own safety will be in jeopardy. Even if this is not his true feelings, he must act as if they are. The invisible man was punched several times, then he "glimpsed a boy violently punching the air and heard him scream in pain" (23). This demonstrates that whether an African American is hit or not, they still feel the blows. On one hand, he must accept the beating; and on the other hand, he cannot move toward the victim. He cannot help the victim because his life would be in extreme danger just like his ancestors'.

The invisible man is the protagonist. He is nameless, without identity like his ancestors. He is searching for his personal identity and self-worth by looking for his place in society. Ellison shows the tension the protagonist confronts, both mentally and physically, throughout the narrative. Chapters eleven and twelve show the same words and phrases that are repeatedly used to create for the reader the feeling of horror that the protagonist deals with each day. His quest for identity is touched on again in chapter twelve when he is asked "What is your name?" (225). This question reminds us of the earlier confrontations in the Battle Royale and Golden Day. In both incidents the protagonist is treated as a hunted animal. Ellison wants the audience to experience these incidents as they occurred. The protagonist is "overcome with shame" (235). We also learn that the invisible man is nameless, erased from existence, or invisible (235-8). He has no identity. Slaves, like the invisible man, were treated as subhuman, with no identity. In fact, many were identified with their master's names attached to their assigned name, like Frederick Douglass, whose name
showed that Frederick was owned by the Douglass family. From the advent of slavery through modern times, many African Americans have not only been treated as invisible, but nameless because many white people do not consider them as a part of the human race.

The protagonist is intentionally nameless in the book. The reader is never given his name, just as the African American had their true names stolen from them, and were given names chosen by someone else. As Ellison’s narrative continues, a nurse enters the scene and the invisible man seems to become a "New Man" (248). The reader asks in what regard the invisible man has become a new man because his life has not really changed nor improved. He is still a nameless soul searching and wandering aimlessly. The invisible man has no real roots in his life, just as the slave was never allowed to have any roots in his or her life. There was always the danger of a slave being sold and torn from his or her family. The change in the invisible man occurs when the nurse has recognized him. To her he is no longer invisible, thus he has become a new man. This recognition has given him the beginning of a root in his life. The novel is composed of incidents to further substantiate the protagonist’s invisible persona while explaining how the white race placed him in this nameless situation. The young Ellison, and his predecessors, dream of the day when he and his people can be recognized as individuals and allowed to develop their potential in a society that offers them both equality and true freedom. Even though there is little hope for change, Ellison still repeats his cry for equality.
Significantly, Sundquist maintains that the "Invisible Man will remain the most comprehensive exposition of America's ineradicable moral dilemma--its foundation in a history of slavery and lingering racism" (6). Ellison drives home his point through role reversal and symbolism as noted above. His adaptation of pathos, ethos, logos, subliminal contrast and repetition also add power to his appeal for freedom, equality, and opportunity. His message to the reading audience is the same as the message intended to be presented by the invisible man. There is a need for social responsibility; however, Ellison makes it clear that both races must act in a socially responsible manner.

Ellison wanted the need for social responsibility in both races to come in a peaceful manner. In fact, the public must become aware that Ellison's dream has potential. In the 1950's the protest began just after the publication of Invisible Man, and the 1960's brought about civil rights--the passing of the civil rights legislation. The period from the 1970's through the 1990's brought additional gains for African Americans. Some found better careers, some developed their own businesses, and many of the barriers which kept the African American from pursuing their dreams were dismantled or weakened in different parts of the country. Not all of the barriers are gone, but these changes have given the African American hope.

In Invisible Man the protagonist acts in a socially responsible manner by trying to avoid conflict in the Battle Royale at first by looking at his separate fingers not touching each other (15). As he soon discovers, this hope is futile. The white people destroy this hope by using words in a thoughtless way. The whites promote brutal
confrontation with the African American by using nasty, foul, and crude language (19-22). The reader can further see that this thoughtlessness in not only the white males' words, but through violent physical action (22). The whites in this scene, like in the days of slavery, still treat the African American people as inferior beings. Clearly, social responsibility is one of Ellison’s key messages to his reader.

It appears that in general, the white person clings to the past—the times they remember, and try to avoid the present through such actions. As depicted in Ellison’s work, their words do not have the power to give hope, they can only destroy and ruin a human being’s ego. In Invisible Man, at the Battle Royale, the protagonist is treated as an inferior. Many white men destroy him mentally—with words, and later physically by inflicting pain. The protagonist definitely understands the meaning of the piercing and biting words like "Uppercut him! Kill that Black Boy" (23). Ellison says, "We have always been caught up in the moral jungle and social struggle... but one never knew because so much in this society is unnoticed and unrecorded" (xxiii). Ellison's point is that if the African Americans are left alone, but treated fairly, then they could be more noticed and achieve greatness. Apparently, Ellison pleads for his people to be given an equal opportunity to prove themselves.

Overall, Ellison adopted the seven rhetorical tools that I have analyzed into Invisible Man to seek an end to segregation. Douglass, Northup, Jacobs, and other slaves and ex-slave writers implemented these seven persuasive rhetorical tools to get the reader to join the cause to abolish slavery. Even though Ellison modified these rhetorical tools in order to discuss his time period, he needed them to persuade his
reader to join his cause. By painting a picture with words, using overt symbols, adopting "God" and "devil" associations, and repeating different harsh scenes with appeals to emotion, intellect, and morality, slave narrative writers and Ellison sought to get the reader to join their cause and help in their call to eliminate physical or verbal abuse. More importantly, Douglass, Northup, Jacobs, and Ellison desired a better life not only for themselves, but for their people.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the slave narratives were popular because of the readers' curiosity to vicariously experience the brutality and inhumanity of slavery. The three slave narratives that were chosen at random represent thousands of other slave narratives. Each provided a reasonable argument against the injustices of slavery. Each swayed the audience not only logically, but emotionally to the writer’s point of view, to raise emotions favorable to the writer’s goal of change. The rhetorical connections of the slave narratives to Invisible Man are phenomenal because of their political, social, moral, and ethical issues. These issues are present in the slave narratives and Invisible Man as they are generated through the use of the same rhetorical tools. Ellison’s Invisible Man is a continuation of slave narratives because he used the same rhetorical tools with a slight modification. Ellison modified the tools to show that Invisible Man is an extension of the slave narratives and to demonstrate that the African American is still being treated as a second-class citizen.

Several years after publishing Invisible Man, most of the rights of the African Americans were still denied, therefore Ellison’s work still dominated the market. It not only sold well in 1952, but it has continued to be in print for over forty years. The success of the novel is attributed to Ellison’s engaging rhetoric and his clever application of slave narrative rhetorical conventions. The five hundred and seventy-two page novel can be read as a modern twentieth century slave narrative.

The seven rhetorical tools defined in chapter one of this study aid the reader in the understanding of the denial of true freedom for the African American. The tools
also help the reader to better understand their analytical use in chapter two and three of this thesis. In chapter two, the three slave narratives were analyzed with the seven rhetorical tools previously discussed. Then in chapter three the same tools were applied to Invisible Man. In the slave narratives and Invisible Man, which were written about a hundred years apart, all showed the verbal and physical abuse the white people evoked and made prevalent in the African Americans’ lives and communities for over two hundred years. The writings demonstrated the plea for true freedom and equality which is a necessity because of the abuse. Unfortunately, throughout these years prejudice and inequality have prevailed.

As the present study demonstrates, Ellison’s Invisible Man is a continuation of slave narratives because the African Americans’ right to freedom in the United States has been denied for over two hundred years. Ellison believes this denial will continue unless something is done. Ellison shared his feelings with modern America through his narrative Invisible Man in the hopes of creating change. Through his prevailing rhetoric Ellison sought change, just like his ancestors did. As a result, Invisible Man takes its place as a modern slave narrative pleading for change. The plea has since been taken up by other African American writers and has moved from the literary field into the political field through the efforts of such people as Martin Luther King, Jr.

Invisible Man is a modern narrative collecting events from the past and updating the present. Invisible Man preserves the slave narrative tradition and creates reader awareness. Ralph Ellison is a writer in the tradition of the slave narrative
because *Invisible Man* is composed of the necessary elements found in the slave narrative traditions and conventions. The success of the slave narratives and their effective use of rhetorical tools paved the way for Ralph Ellison’s success. The name calling, belittlement, beatings, and other wrongful treatments are part of the invisible man’s experiences and they mirror reality. *Invisible Man* is also a modern slave narrative because it depicts the reality of modern society, and just as the slave narratives showed the brutality and paved the way for the Civil War, Ellison’s narrative helped to pave the way for the Civil Rights Movement.

Overall, the slave narratives and *Invisible Man* demonstrate that good writing is a powerful tool of persuasion, especially when the character is a part of a situation that generates tremendous physical or mental pain. The shock effect makes these works stand out above others in the literary community, but it is necessary to drive the feeling home. Ellison and the slave writers had no desire for someone to read their works and be comfortable with them. It was important to disturb and trouble the reader. The writers sought to attract the kinds of readers who would feel a moral obligation to free the oppressed and right the injustice. The slave narratives and *Invisible Man* captivated this kind of audience when they were first published and continue to linger in the reader’s mind, heart, and soul even today.
ENDNOTES

1. The use of pathos as a form of persuasion is not unique to the African American literary cannon. Shirley Jackson, in her short story "The Lottery," uses pathos where the protagonist, Tessie Hutchinson, supports the Lottery until she becomes its newest victim. Her screams of "It isn’t fair!" give voice to the unspoken cry of the victims in the slave narratives. The first person point of view, the system which cannot be denied, and the unfair treatment of an innocent person are found in both "The Lottery" and in the slave narratives.

2. These same ingredients are found in Alice Walker’s Color Purple, which may be viewed as a modern-day slave narrative. We see that the added component of sexual abuse becomes a powerful rhetorical tool to captivate the reading audience. The Color Purple’s translation into a theater-released film proves that the slave narrative style is still popular today.

3. For instance: John Merrick, portrayed in the movie The Elephant Man, was horribly deformed and forced to live as a side show freak. At one point in the story he huddles in an alley, surrounded by a frenzied mob, and cries out, "I am not an animal!" (5). Popular folk heroes from television, such as Dave Roger’s The Prisoner, based on the 1969 series, introduces Number Six, a former secret agent who is held captive on an island and cannot tell if his captors are his former employers or his old enemies. Those monitoring the island try to break him and treat him as only a number, but he cries out against a faceless government agency: "I am not a number, I am a free man!"

4. For many given years, futile promises of freedom and equal rights have been said in similar contexts. The Native American has had his or her land or homes stolen. At one point the Cherokee Nation took the Federal Government to the Supreme Court to guarantee their personal rights and their possessions. Justice Black of the Supreme Court ruled that the Cherokee had a right to live on their land and ordered the Federal Government to withdraw its order for the Cherokee to relocate. President Jackson made the classic statement, "Justice Black made the order, let him enforce it." At that point, President Jackson gave the order for the army to seize the Cherokee land and created a forced march which became known as the Trail of Tears because it took the lives of approximately one-third of the Cherokee people.

5. In 1862, Abraham Lincoln called for an end of slavery, citing it as being morally wrong. It was a bold move because most of the country was not willing to free their slaves (Armento and Nash 349). Challenging the popular opinion and speaking what he felt cost Abraham Lincoln his life, ample proof that words must be chosen carefully because of the adverse effect they can have.
6. The racism is presented even today in television show characters like Archie Bunker in *All In The Family*.

7. *Native Son* also covers these issues of color through the protagonist being surrounded by all white people, objects and the like.

8. One example is *Native Son*. 
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