

---

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Focalization in Ralph Waldo Ellison's *Invisible Man*

**Marcella Melly Kosasih**

English Department, Universitas Kristen Maranatha, Bandung, Indonesia

**Corresponding Author:** Marcella Melly Kosasih, **E-mail:** [melly\\_kosasih@yahoo.com](mailto:melly_kosasih@yahoo.com)

---

**ABSTRACT**

This research deals with focalization as an important aspect of narratology developed by structuralists. This research aims to explore how the new concept of point of view in narrative theory differ from traditional concept. In doing so, the researcher applied the new concept to the discussion and analysis of Ralph Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man*. From the analysis, it is shown that Ralph Ellison has made use of multiple focalizers in telling the story, not of a single narrator, as analyzed by using the traditional concept of point of view. The use of multiple focalizations provides the readers with objective viewpoints by representing the perspectives of black and white people and, in turn, supports the racial issue the author wants to convey. The approach applied in this research is qualitative, and the data were gathered from the novel. From this research, it is hoped that the readers can have a better understanding of modern narratology and can later apply the theory in analyzing other works of fiction.

**KEYWORDS**

Focalizer, modern narratology, multiple focalizations, narrator, racial issue

**ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 02 August 2023

**PUBLISHED:** 13 August 2023

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2023.6.8.14

---

**1. Introduction**

Ralph Waldo Ellison is a famous 20<sup>th</sup>-century African-American novelist. He was born in Oklahoma City in 1914 and educated at Tuskegee Institute. He was best known for his award-winning novel *Invisible Man*, which was regarded as "a groundbreaking meditation on race and marginalized communities in America" ("Ralph Ellison Biography"). Orville Prescott (1952), the main book reviewer for the New York Times, on the publication of the novel, said that "Mr. Ellison is a finished novelist who uses words with great skill, who writes with poetic intensity and immense narrative drive" (para 1).

Published in 1952, *Invisible Man* focuses on an African-American experience as its dominant issue: the experience of being black and without identity. The unnamed protagonist's experience leads him to the fact that he must accept his invisibility and define himself by moral choices. *Invisible Man* continues to be held up as one of the most highly regarded works in the American literary canon.

Based on the traditional concept of point of view in narrative theory, the main narrator of *Invisible Man* is the invisible man whose name is unknown to the readers. He is a first-person narrator and the center of the story. He tells the readers the story so that the readers will directly accept his views. The problem is whether he is a reliable narrator in the sense that he sees all that he narrates. The researcher will try to look at it from the perspective of modern narratology.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What exactly is the invisible man's position in the story?
2. How far is the narrator of *Invisible Man* a reliable one?
3. What are the impacts of applying modern narratology, especially focalization, in the novel?

**Copyright:** © 2023 the Author(s). This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Published by Al-Kindi Centre for Research and Development, London, United Kingdom.

The objectives of the present study are to explore the narrative technique in *Invisible Man* by applying modern narrative theory, to know the impacts of applying modern narratology to the novel, and to provide the readers with the new concept of point of view and its practical application in literary analysis so that they can later apply the theory in analyzing other works of fiction.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Previous Studies**

Ellison's *Invisible Man* has become a popular work in the eyes of many researchers. Topics of discussion and approaches are varied, and each research has shown its uniqueness.

Zulfikar and Muslim (2019) discussed Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* by using Young's theory of representation and Garner's theory of whiteness. They aimed to reveal "how whiteness is constructed as a racist act in society" (p.1). The research showed that terror and supremacy are used by whites to make black people inferior to whites.

In her article, Fu (2017) discussed how black people tried to survive in a society of white supremacy by using tricksterism which "can become a survival strategy through which oppressed groups or individuals may attain a certain degree of personal and political autonomy within the restrictions of an oppressive dominant system" (cited in Fu, 2017, p.93). The blacks have to wear a mask to trick the white people into eliminating racial discrimination.

Furthermore, Abang and Obasi (2017) discussed vision versus illusion as a symbol of reality. By examining the plot, characterization, and the author's artistry, the researchers concluded that the author's artistry played an important role in his success in conveying "the vision of integration in the fight to establish a voice and identity in the voiceless and invisible cosmos of the oppressed" (p. 20).

In another study, Mohammad (2018) discussed the quest for identity. In his opinion, "the protagonist of the novel is in search of identity through a desperate quest in a world of nightmares" (p. 128). As an oppressed minority in the United States, the blacks have their identity taken away by their destiny and the white people. The protagonist, however, is reflective in achieving visibility. He is determined to act to achieve a new identity.

The various topics and approaches discussed above have inspired the present researcher to find a different one in analyzing the same novel. She will discuss focalization in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* by using modern narrative theory.

### **2.2 Focalization**

In this part, the researcher will discuss three aspects on which the analysis of *Invisible Man* will be based. They are focalization, types of focalizations, and facets of focalization.

Focalization is a new concept in narrative theory coined by structuralists in response to the traditional concept of point of view. The traditional classification by using the terms taken from the pronouns used has brought about questions. The terms "first-person point of view" is traditionally used when the story is told as the personal experience of "I," "second-person point of view" when "you" is referred to the readers, and "third-person point of view" is used when the story is told as it happens to a given focal character referred to in the third person. Steven Cohan and Linda Shires (2015) argue that "a third person cannot narrate. The pronouns 'he' and 'she' refer to the characters narrated, not to an agency responsible for the narration. A first-person pronoun appears to refer to a narrator only because of circumstance; the character being narrated happens to be a narrating agent as well." (pp. 91-92). Concerning the second-person, "you" is "obviously not the narrating agent responsible for the text: 'you' [is] a reader, not the narrator" (p. 92).

Genette (1983), who also rejects the classification, uses the term 'focalization' to differentiate between the one who narrates a happening and the one who sees it as, according to him, the two persons are not necessarily the same. (p.206) In Mieke Bal's words, focalization is "the relationship between the vision, the agent that sees, and that which is seen" (Bal, 2017, p.135). The agent that sees the vision is the subject of focalization – or called the focalizer (p.135) – and that which is seen is the focalized object (p.137).

According to Rimmon-Kenan (2002), position in relation to the story and degree of persistence are two factors that influence the different forms of focalizations. The type of focalization is either external or internal, depending on where the focalizer is in the story. There are constant, variable, and multiple focalizations based on persistence, and each applies to both the focalizer and the focalized. (pp. 76-79)

Rimmon-Kenan (2002) mentions three significant perceptual, psychological, and ideological elements of focalization. The perceptual element of focalization deals with the focalizer's senses and involves the regulation of perception by place and time. The cognitive and emotive aspects influence the psychological aspect, which is concerned with the focalizer's thoughts and feelings. The ideological aspect focuses on the 'norms' or ideals of the text as they are portrayed from the narrator's (or focalizer's) prevailing point of view. As a result, other ideas, if any, lose importance. (pp. 79-84)

### 3. Methodology

This research used a qualitative research method, the characteristics of which are "The focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive, and the product is richly descriptive" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Concerning the instrument of the study, the purposeful sampling technique is used to obtain cases deemed rich in information to complete the data (Sandelowski 2000). The researcher has chosen to discuss and analyze a novel written by Ralph Waldo Ellison entitled *Invisible Man*. Data collection is focused on discovering the nature of the specific events related to the research problems. The data analysis will be based on modern narrative theory developed by some structuralists to make the analysis more objective.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Plot of the story

*Invisible Man* takes the 1920s South of the United States of America as its setting. It is a story of an unnamed young black man who has to live underground because of his invisibility. He is invisible because people refuse to see him. He has the talent of speaking in public and is given a scholarship to a negro college because of it. When he is a college student, he is assigned to drive Mr. Norton, a white trustee, to see places in the black neighborhood. He is then dismissed from his college by Bledsoe, the president. Equipped with the recommendation letters from Bledsoe, he goes to New York. The letters turn out to be letters that confirm his expulsion.

Being helped by the son of a white businessman, he is given a job in a paint factory but is nearly killed in a factory explosion. Released from the hospital, he stays at Mary Rambo's. Later he joins the Brotherhood, a political organization that he thinks will fight for equality for all people. His talent in public speaking brings him to become the leader of the Harlem District. When his friend in the Brotherhood named, Tod Clifton, is killed by a white police officer, he becomes aware that the Brotherhood is not an organization that fights for Black people. He leaves the Brotherhood and goes back to Harlem, where Ras the Exhorter accuses him of betraying the blacks. He can escape Ras and his men by disguising himself. He is later drawn into the chaos of Harlem and takes part in the burning of a Harlem tenement. To escape from his pursuers, he leaps into a manhole which lands him in his underground hideout. Here, he writes down his experiences and finally realizes that he needs to respect his complexity as an individual without sacrificing social responsibility.

#### 4.2 Types of Focalization

The novel *Invisible Man* tells a story of a black young man who undergoes a series of difficult and confusing experiences. The black young man is the protagonist. According to the traditionalists, the story is told in the first-person point of view, and the narrator, "I", is the unnamed protagonist. The second-person point of view is also used as the pronoun "you" is involved in his narration. Modern structuralists, however, have different opinions about these perspectives. The narrator "I" is the narrator of the story, but he is not the only focalizer in the story, and the pronoun "you" is not the narrator, but the readers who are involved in the interior monologue of the narrator "I".

The novel begins with a Prologue where the nameless black character introduces himself as an invisible man, gives some explanation of his being invisible, and explains what he does in his secret underground home. In the Prologue, it is shown the invisible man is the narrator who tells his story. The following quotation is the opening of the Prologue:

- (1) I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe, nor am I one of your Hollywood movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you sometimes see in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me, they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me. (Ellison, 1952, p. 3)

From the beginning of the story, the narrator is the one who narrates his own experiences to the readers. Moreover, he is also the character inside the story who sees, feels, and thinks about the events in the story; he plays the role of the main internal focalizer.

In chapters 1 to 25, the narrator depicts in detail what happens to him 20 years before and how he comes to live underground. In this case, the narrator is 20 years younger than the one who tells the story in the Prologue. He tells what he experiences, and the first-person narrative focuses on the "experiencing self" (Fludernik, 2009, 90). The narration is limited to what he knows and experiences; the character focalizer ("I") can only focalize things concerning himself as his focalized objects. Thus, dialogue between characters in the presence of the narrator becomes important to provide different perspectives about the blacks and the whites, the main issue the author deals with in the story. Multiple focalizations are thus engaged by the author. Besides the internal character focalizer 'I', the other characters become other character focalizers of various focalized objects. The direct speech of the other characters is used to reveal what each of them sees, hears, feels, and thinks so that the other characters become the focalizers in addition to what the main focalizer sees, hears, feels, and thinks using his direct speech, free direct speech, and direct thought. In this way, the readers can grasp complete information about their perspectives of the white as well as the black people towards the racial issue the author wants to convey.

In order to reveal the various perspectives of the black and white people, the author makes some focalizers' characteristics as the focalized objects of the other focalizers. The following paragraphs will show some examples.

The main focalizer's characteristics become the focalized objects of other character focalizers. The Veteran, a black man who has clear remarks about race relations, expresses what he thinks about the invisible man to Mr. Norton, a white trustee, in the presence of the invisible man.

- (2) "You see," he said, turning to Mr. Norton, "he has eyes and ears and a good distended African nose, but he fails to understand the simple facts of life. . . . It's worse than that. He registers with his senses but short-circuits his brain. Nothing has meaning. He takes it in, but he doesn't digest it. Already it is – well, bless my soul! Behold! A walking zombie! Already he's learned to repress not only his emotions but his humanity. He's invisible, a walking personification of the Negative, the perfect achievement of your dreams, sir! The mechanical man!" (pp. 74-75)

From the diction used by the Veteran, the readers get a clear picture of what kind of a person the invisible man is: "a walking zombie", "the mechanical man", the kind of man the whites want him to be. The Veteran sees the invisible man as submissive; he just does whatever is told without thinking about it further.

Another focalizer who notices the invisible man's characteristic is Brother Jack, a white man who leads the Brotherhood. When he hears the invisible man speaking in front of a lot of people, he is impressed by the invisible man's talent.

- (3) "I haven't heard such an effective piece of eloquence since the days when I was in – well, in a long time. You aroused them so quickly to action. I don't understand how you managed it. If only some of our speakers could have listened! With a few words, you had them involved in action! Other would have still been wasting time with empty verbiage . . . ." (p. 224)

This particular talent of the invisible man later makes him accepted in the Brotherhood.

The author also makes use of another important character, Ras the Exhorter, a very charismatic leader of the black nationalist movement, as a focalizer who expresses his perspective about the blacks in the Brotherhood, including the invisible man.

- (4) "You my brother, mahn. Brothers are the same color; how the hell you call these white men brothers? Shit, mahn. That's shit! brothers the same color. We sons of Mama Africa, you done forgot? You black, BLACK! You – Godahm mahn!" he said, swinging his knife for emphasis. "You got bahd hair! You got thick lips! They say you stink! They hate you, mahn. You African. AFRICAN! Why you with them? Leave that shit, mahn. They sell you out. That shit is old-fashioned. They enslave us – you forget that? How can they mean a black mahn any good? How are they going to be your brother?" (p. 287)
- (5) "And you, mahn," the Exhorter said, "a reg'lar little black devil! A godahm sly mongoose! Where do you think you are from, going with the white folks? I know, godahm; don't I know it! You from down South ..., and the white mahn's foot in your ass all the way to the hip. What are you trying to deny by betraying black people? Why do you fight against us? You young fellows. You young black men with plenty of education, I have been hearing your rabble rousing. Why do you go over o the enslaver? What kind of education is that? What kind of black mahn is that who betrays his own mama?" (p. 287)

From the simple short sentences with auxiliaries very often absent, the readers can still grasp his ideas. The harsh words represent his anger towards black people who join the Brotherhood, including the invisible man. To him, they are traitors who betray their own people because they join the whites who enslave the blacks and thus can never be brothers to black people. That is why the invisible man is pursued by Ras's followers, leading him to go into a manhole to escape.

Multiple focalizations are also used to provide other characters' characteristics for the readers to know, such as Dr. Bledsoe, the black president of the narrator's college. Bledsoe becomes the focalizer, and the focalized object is his own characteristics. He thinks he is an exceptional black among the white folks.

- (6) "You are nobody, son. You don't exist – can't you see that? The white folk tells everybody what to think – except men like me. I tell them; that's my life, telling white folk how to think about the things I know about. Shocks you, doesn't it? Well, that's the way it is. It's a nasty deal, and I don't always like it myself. But you listen to me: I didn't make it, and I know that I can't change it. But I've made my place in it, and I'll have every Negro in the country hanging on tree limbs by morning if it means staying where I am." (p.112)

His actual words show how proud he is of his position while thinking his student is a nobody. He thinks he is an exceptional black among the white folks as he can control the white folks of how they should think, not the other way around. His diction shows his arrogant sense of social superiority. To him, his position is everything; he will do anything to secure his position.

Dr. Bledsoe's true character is seen by Mr. Emerson's son, who sympathizes with the invisible man who is seeking a job. Reading Dr. Bledsoe's letter brought to him by the invisible man; he reveals Dr. Bledsoe's treachery to the narrator. Instead of giving a recommendation, Bledsoe, in his letter, asks his friend to punish the invisible man, who, according to him, has made a great mistake and thus has been expelled. The following is part of his letter to his white friend, Mr. Emerson:

- (7) Due, however, to circumstances the nature of which I shall explain to you in person on the occasion of the next meeting of the board, it is in the best interests of the college that this young man has no knowledge of the finality of his expulsion. For it is indeed his hope to return here to his classes in the fall. However, it is in the best interests of the great work which we are dedicated to perform that he continue undisturbed in these vain hopes while remaining as far as possible from our midst.

... Thus, while the bearer is no longer a member of our scholastic family, it is highly important that his severance with the college be executed as painlessly as possible. I beg of you, sir, to help him continue in the direction of that promise which, like the horizon, recedes ever brightly and distantly beyond the hopeful traveler.

Respectfully, I am your humble servant,  
A. Herbert Bledsoe. (p.148)

Mr. Emerson's son is the focalizer of Bledsoe's characteristic – that he is treacherous – as his focalized object, although he asks the narrator to read it by himself. Bledsoe turns out to be a hypocrite.

Moreover, the main focalizer reveals the characteristics of the Brotherhood as his focalized object to show what kind of organization the Brotherhood actually is. The invisible man joins the Brotherhood, whose mission is (8) "working for a better world for all people" (p. 235). In this organization, he feels accepted (9) "I was dominated by the all-embracing idea of Brotherhood. The organization had given the world a new shape and me a vital role. We recognized no loose end; everything could be controlled by our science. Life was all pattern and discipline, and the beauty of discipline is when it works. And it was working well." (p. 296) However, after some time, he realizes that the Brotherhood is not the same as what he has expected before:

- (10) I had thought they accepted me because they felt that color made no difference when in reality, it made no difference because they didn't see either color or men ... For all they were concerned, we were so many names scribbled on fake ballots, to be used at their convenience and when not needed to be filed away. (p. 393)

The organization turns out to fight only for its own interest by using people merely as tools to achieve its goal. He also sees that Jack, Norton, and Emerson (11) "were very much the same, each attempting to force his picture of reality upon me and neither giving a hoot in hell for how things looked to me. I was simply material, a natural resource to be used" (p. 394). The invisible man realizes that he is being manipulated by them for their own good.

The main focalizer expresses what he perceives in reaction to certain events through his direct thought, which can be easily identified as it is placed in the middle of his narration, uses the present tense, uses reporting clause "I thought", and no quotation

marks. Take, for example, when Dr. Bledsoe, the president of the invisible man's college, who is an arrogant black man, shows his arrogance by demeaning the invisible man.

- (12) I heard the high thin laugh again, "You're nobody, son. You don't exist – can't you see that? The white folk tells everybody what to think – except men like me..."

.....

**How long will I stand here and let him laugh at me, I thought, holding on to the back of the chair; how long?** (pp. 112-113)

His reaction, as presented by his direct thought, reflects his perspective that he does not like what Bledsoe is doing. He feels insulted by being laughed at, but he can do nothing except agree with what Bledsoe tells him to do. The invisible man just nods, unable to speak, although he is furious hearing Bledsoe's decision to dismiss him from college.

Through direct thought, the main focalizer also reveals his emotional involvement. An example of this is when the invisible man accuses Jack, the head of the Brotherhood, of trying to be the 'great white father'. Not long after, one of Jack's eyes – the false one – pops out of his head into a glass in front of the invisible man. Jack informs him that he lost the eye while doing his duty, stating that his sacrifice proves his loyalty to the Brotherhood.

- (13) He slammed the glass upon the table, splashing the water on the back of my hand. I shook like a leaf. **So that is the meaning of discipline, I thought, sacrifice ... yes, and blindness; he doesn't see me. He doesn't even see me. Am I about to strangle him? I do not know. He cannot possibly. I still do not know. See! Discipline is sacrifice. Yes, and blindness. Yes. And me sitting here while he tries to intimidate me. That's it, with his goddam blind glass eye ....** (p. 367)

The use of interjection 'yes' repeatedly and simple and truncated sentences, along with the use of repetition of the words 'discipline', 'sacrifice', and 'blindness', shows how the invisible man feels emotionally. The readers can see clearly that he is very upset about the fact that Brother Jack's blindness prevents him from seeing the protagonist. He confirms his idea that he is invisible: even the Brotherhood, which he expects to fight for the blacks, cannot see him.

The invisible man reveals his direct thought in the last chapter, which gives the readers a confirmation of how hard life is for the blacks. This also serves as the message the author wants to convey in the novel. Running to avoid the police, the protagonist falls through an open manhole into a coal cellar.

- (14) "You goddam black nigger sonofabitch," someone called, "see how you like this," and I heard the cover settle over the manhole with a dull clang. Fine bits of dirt showered down as they stamped upon the lid, and for a moment, I sent coal sliding in wild surprise, looking up, up through black space to where for a second, the dim light of a match sank through a circle of holes in the steel. **Then, I thought, this is the way it's always been, only now I know it** – and rested back, calm now, placing the briefcase beneath my head. I could open it in the morning and push off the lid. Now I was tired, too tired; my mind retreating, the image of the two glass eyes running together like blobs of melting lead. Here it was though the riot was gone, and I felt the tug of sleep seemed to move out upon black water.

**It's a kind of death without hanging, I thought, a death alive. In the morning, I'll remove the lid . . .** I moved off over the black water, floating, sighing . . . sleeping invisibly. (pp. 439-440)

The main focalizer's thought reveals that he becomes aware of the fact that blacks have always been trapped underground, a condition which is (15) "a kind of death without hanging . . . a death alive" (p.439). They do not have the freedom to live as freely as the whites. The invisible man's awareness becomes the reader's awareness as well.

The Epilogue focuses on the 'narrating self' (Fludernik, 2009, 90), in which a now older and mature narrator depicts his retrospective comments, evaluation, and moral conclusions. The narrator, as the main focalizer, is, in the end, aware of the fact that he used to submit to others, to follow what other people want him to do. This is his retrospective comments:

- (16) And my problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way but my own. I have also been called one thing and then another while no one really wished to hear what I called myself. So after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others, I finally rebelled. I am an invisible man. Thus, I have come a long way and returned and boomeranged a long way from the point in society toward which I originally aspired.

So, I took to the cellar; I hibernated. I got away from it all. But that wasn't enough. I couldn't be still, even in hibernation. Because, damn it, there's the mind, the mind. It wouldn't let me rest. (Ellison, 1952, p. 444)

Besides the retrospective comments, the invisible man also gives an evaluation of what has happened and what he has done:

- (17) Whence all this passion toward conformity anyway? – is the word. Let man keep his many parts, and you'll have no tyrant states. Why, if they follow this conformity business, they'll end up by forcing me, an invisible man, to become white, which is not a color but a lack of one. Must I strive toward colorlessness? But seriously, and without snobbery, think of what the world would lose if that should happen. America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain. It's "winner take nothing" that is the great truth of our country or any country. Life is to be lived, not controlled, and humanity is won by continuing to play in the face of certain defeat. Our fate is to become one, and yet many – This is not prophecy, but description. Thus, one of the greatest jokes in the world is the spectacle of the whites busy escaping blackness and becoming blacker every day and the blacks striving toward whiteness, becoming quite dull and gray. None of us seems to know who he is or where he's going. (p. 447)
- (18) ... Till now, however, this is as far as I've ever gotten, for all life seen from the hole of invisibility is absurd. (p. 449)

In the end, he gives a moral conclusion that he decides to emerge, to leave his old self in the hole, to come out with a new perspective, that he should respect his complexity as an individual while at the same time doing his social responsibility:

- (19) In going underground, I whipped it all except the mind, the mind. And the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived. That goes for societies as well as for individuals. Thus, having tried to give a pattern to the chaos which lives within the pattern of your certainties, I must come out; I must emerge. ..., and I'll be up and around with mine. And, as I said before, a decision has been made. I'm shaking off the old skin, and I'll leave it here in the hole. I'm coming out, no less invisible without it, but coming out nevertheless. And I suppose it's damn well time. Even hibernations can be overdone, come to think of it. Perhaps that's my greatest social crime. I've overstayed my hibernation since there's a possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play. (p. 450)

From the discussion, it can be seen that the narrator is reliable in telling the story. Although the readers do not know the name of the narrator and the narrator has never mentioned his name explicitly, the readers can take his measure of what kind of a man he is. From his characteristics, as seen by the main focalizer and other character focalizers, the readers understand him as a naïve person who is seeking his identity as a black person in the middle of white society. The invisible man's position in the story is as the main narrator-focalizer, so the readers tend to rely on his evaluation and judgment. Thus, the ideological facet of focalization used in this novel is that of the narrator-focalizer, especially the mature older invisible man. Although other characters' perspective is present in the novel, the readers will be mostly influenced by the invisible man's set of values.

## 5. Conclusion

In the novel *Invisible Man*, the author uses multiple focalizations, with the protagonist, the invisible man, as the main narrator-focalizer. The use of multiple focalizations gives the readers objective perspectives of the narrator and the other characters in the story in the way that the protagonist and the other characters represent the blacks' and the whites' perspectives. Being an internal focalizer, the invisible man has restricted knowledge of the world he is part of as he cannot know everything about it. Thus, multiple focalizations play a great role in providing what the internal focalizer cannot give. The use of multiple focalizations gives the readers objective perspectives of the narrator and the other characters. The readers can learn the characteristics of the characters in the story as they are the focalized objects that represent each party. The blacks represented by the Veteran and Ras the Exhorter consider whites as those who enslave the black people. Bledsoe represents a hypocrite, a black man who is willing to sacrifice others for his own sake. Jack represents the whites. As the leader of the Brotherhood, Jack turns out to be a white racist who pretends to struggle for the blacks' rights and who manipulates the invisible man to reach his goal. The invisible man is a naïve and submissive black young man who, after experiencing many hardships in his life as a black man, becomes a mature man. The use of multiple focalizations has helped to transmit the author's message that life for blacks is hard as they are invisible to the whites; however, the blacks should respect their complexity as individuals and, at the same time, have a social responsibility to play.

The impact of applying modern narratology, especially focalization, in the novel is that the readers can get more detailed information from the multiplicity of focalizers so that they can understand the story better. This research has shown that modern narratology is of great importance for the readers to enhance their general appreciation of the novel.

The scope of the current research is limited to a discussion of the new concept of point of view developed by structuralists without comparing it with the traditional one. Thus, it is suggested that further research could include a comparison between the two concepts to see the difference more clearly.

**Funding:** This research was funded by Universitas Kristen Maranatha.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**Acknowledgment:** The author expresses her gratitude to Universitas Kristen Maranatha for its support.

**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2660-4454>

## References

- [1] Abang, E. and K. Obasi. (2017). Vision versus illusion: A symbol of reality in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. *English Linguistics Research*, 6(3), 15-21.
- [2] Bal, M. (2017). *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Translated by Christine van Boheemen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- [3] Cohan, S and Linda M. S. (2015). *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*. London: Routledge.
- [4] Fludernik, M. (2009). *An Introduction to Narratology*. London and New York: Routledge.
- [5] Genette, G. (1983). *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane Lewin, with a preface by Jonathan Culler. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- [6] Ellison, R.W. (1952). *Invisible Man*. New York, NY: Random House. Retrieved from eBook Collection.
- [7] Fu, M. (2017). Black's survival strategy: Tricksterism in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 6(2), 92-96.
- [8] Merriam, S.B. and Tisdell. E.J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and implementation*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Brand.
- [9] Mohammad, K.K. (2018). Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man: A Quest of Identity. *Journal of Language Studies*, 1(2), 126-137.
- [10] Prescott, O. (1952, April 16). Books of the Times. The New York Times on the Web. Retrieved November 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/books/99/06/20/specials/ellison-invisible2.html>
- [11] "Ralph Ellison Biography." Retrieved April 25, 2021, from <http://www.biography.com/people/ralph-ellison-9286702>.
- [12] Rimmon-Kenan, S. (2002). *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Routledge.
- [13] Zulfikar, A. and Muslim. A.B (2019). The representation of whiteness in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. *Passage*, 7(2), 1-18.