



## Power-Struggle, Panopticism, and Hegemony in Ellison's *Invisible Man*

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## Abstract

Ralph Ellison's acclaimed novel and his sole masterpiece, *Invisible Man*, is said to have been one of the world's greatest African-American novels. It is replete with discussions of racial discrimination, identity crisis and studies of systematic (racial) exploitations. The depictions are coalesced with existential accounts of bodily sensations and struggles with the self and the society. Nevertheless, a more profound look at the context and deep structure of this novel can reveal its ideological and social critiques as well. In fact, Ellison had arguably acquired a well-versed knowledge regarding power-struggles within social systems prior to the development of this lengthy novel. Such issues, then, appear to be among the sidelights of this work. Ellison explores many political discussions of his predecessors and sometimes prophetically unearths many to-be-discovered issues and theories, years before their actual coinages by theoreticians and sociologists like Michel Foucault. With this hindsight, this article tries to study the novel's oblique or direct references to social ideologies, hegemonies, and the theory of Panopticism at stake.

## Keywords

Hegemony, Panopticism, Power-Struggle, System, Brotherhood

## 1. Introduction

This essay embarks upon Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and its embodiment of power-struggles and questions of social systems, social justice and ideological intricacies. In my reading of this politically-loaded novel, I will ultimately emphasize Ellison's intellectual rigor in his depictions of power-play and his ideological/social scrutinies as a long testimony about political totalities and tyrannical dominations.



These features, as I will suggest, are among integral parts and vital themes of the novel, some of which were employed and discussed long before they appeared as specific social theories (e.g. Panopticism). And they are not themes we usually *choose* to evaluate; as Ellison himself once noted, “you don’t choose the theme; the theme chooses you” (Early, 2010: 63), a theme which is endorsed with, and entailed in, systematic dominations.

Ellison, in his early adolescence, was affected by the coercive ideologies of his society and racial cruelties of his officials. His birthplace, Oklahoma, as Bloom suggested, was a “rogue state of sorts” and definitely gave “mixed messages to the young Ellison” (2008: 15). According to Lawrence Jackson, Ellison “remembered having dogs set upon him walking down the roads—the spectacles, insults, and burlesques of a poor black teenager’s life in Oklahoma City...the dangers he faced onboard the train college and the violence that almost incapacitated him for his music school audition...” (2002: 56). He was exposed to the complexities of his society and such background affected his thoughts when he studied music and later took many odd jobs. In New York, he was acquainted with Langston Hughes and Richard Wright—two political spokespersons and towering figures of Harlem Renaissance—who encouraged him in his writings. As Gerald Early observed, Hughes “was a mentor to many rising African-American writers and artists” (2010: 49). After WWII, Ellison started working on this novel, in which he expressed almost all of his personal and social standpoints. The novel, according to the famous Ellison scholar J. F. Callahan, was an immediate “burst upon the American scene” (2004: 293); it was also a powerful achievement “in American race relations and literature,” though “uncommon for a black man” (Bloom, 2008: 15). Referring to Ellison’s greatness, Gerald Early averred that “Few writers have established themselves at the top of their profession with only one book” (2010: 8).

Ellison was moreover a fine cultural and political critic. Michael and Lena Hill once famously noted that Ellison’s “imagination pierces myriad vibrant cultural spaces” (2008: viii). *Invisible Man* is influentially a product of its time, the cultural and political standards, and the socially strangulating situation regarding the black people. Bloom accordingly suggested that



[a] full appreciation of *Invisible Man* is not possible without knowledge of the intoxicating and strident political temper of Ellison's times. New York was the center of activity, and, with the encouragement of Richard Wright, a published black writer, Ellison gravitated to the intellectual and political left which included the Communist Party of America. The party's revolutionary optimism and support for the oppressed held a natural appeal for Ellison in particular and blacks long suffering under the prevailing discriminatory practices in general. (2008: 17)

The social and political intricacies revolving around the black and their pejorative positions inside the white-dominated system were undoubtedly among the main concerns behind Ellison's despair and the complexities which were compiled deep in his unconscious mind. His *Invisible Man* soon turned into a classic. Critics and thinkers would even turn to *Invisible Man* in order to comment on the events of their own day. As Richard Purcell interestingly exemplified, "writers and pundits in the public sphere drew parallels between Ellison's critical engagement with race and American identity in *Invisible Man* and President Barack Obama" (2013: 20).

Ellison then was politically, societally and ideologically well-versed when he energetically took the task of *Invisible Man* in his hand. He studied many events, issues and books prevalent in his time, and gathered what was necessary about the political situations in accordance with the condition of the black. He accordingly incorporated diverse features into his work. Kerry McSweeney sees the influence of folklore as one of the main issues which affected Ellison, offering "the first drawings of any group's character...to humanize the world" (1988: 40); such element is essential "to the understanding and to the depiction of the informing spirit of black America" (1988: 40-41). Larry Neal also witnesses the political conflicts in Ellison's account of folkloric history, a history which is "non-dialectical" and attempts at creating "its own universe" (qtd. in Bloom, 2008: 38). In such a world, with numerous rigid philosophies like the Brotherhood, any "tottering" and leaping outside of the system would mean falling "outside of history"; this is what happens to the tragic character Tod Clifton (qtd. in Bloom, 2008: 38). Ross Posnock, in his thoughts upon political views of Ellison in this novel, points to the "world alienation" when finally, the protagonist "reluctantly concludes that he has 'overstayed' his 'hibernation'" (2005:



62). Later in the novel, the narrator falls into “epiphanies he has in the aftermath of Tod Clifton’s death,” and about “men of transition” who were “too obscure for the learned classification” and finally plunged out of history (2005: 63).

One introduction, among many, to Ellison’s novel again begins with another emphasis on the social and cultural background. It suggests that cultural and psychological intricacies within the American society “edifies on two accounts. First, it notes the novel’s ingenuous meditation on the absurd *ironies of America’s separate-but-equal society*. Second, it appreciates *Invisible Man’s* quirky, yet undeniable exemplarity in fictions about *twentieth-century black life* (Hill and Hill, 2008: 1; my emphasis). Hill’s undertaking begins with such an outlook, preserving the fact that the social and political surroundings of the novel remain the first and foremost issue at hand. To satisfy its critical realm, the critic must feed upon the occluded shadows Ellison depicts and strive to decode the enigmatic demonstrations and “mainstays of figurative language, among them metaphor, irony, symbol, and satire” (Hill and Hill, 2008: X). The shadowy invisibility of the narrator is a direct result of the power-play on him by the state laws, and ultimately by the government.

These studies, all in all, clearly point to the iconic portrayal of the philosophical and political systems at work both during Ellison’s time and in his novel. Ellison, rather surrealistically, expressionistically, and existentialistically forms an autonomous world which is not at odds with the real world, but loyal to it. The systematic exploitations, in the forms of hegemonies, ideologies or Panoptic observations are dexterously and skillfully demonstrated by Ellison; they are witnessed as they control the minds, and as they set out to maintain surveillance upon people (whether white or black). These are the issues which construct the bedrock of this study.

## 2. Power-Struggle, Ideology, Hegemony and Panopticism

Let us briefly survey the notions and their meanings in such a context. Among these notions there is a comradery, and all of them, directly or indirectly, fall under Marxist philosophy. As an opening remark and also the heart of their writings, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (1948: 9). According to their earlier analyses, Marx and Engels paid close



attention to the social systems and the main element they identified as the “base” of every society was labor, money and most importantly, *economy* (1998a: 19-21). It is ultimately around economy that all other institutions revolve, and it is these institutions through which a society functions. The other minor institutions include family, education, religion, etc. These are known as the elements shaping the “Superstructure” of each and every society (1998b: 98-99). As economy controls everything and everyone, it can lay labels on them, exploit them and turn the people into mere “instruments” working like dependent and operative *cogs* inside a functioning system. They become tools for the sake of production and this is the way the society runs, with its organizations being in mutual relationships.

Into such a systematic running of a society, there needs to be employed a ruling philosophy and naturally a ruling class (*bourgeoisie*). They are considered as the purveyors of known values and meanings to people’s lives; and by the word “people,” the rulers usually mean the lower or working class. Because rulers have the economy (and money) in their hands, the working class is turned by them into exploited slaves who are in need of their money and mind-set in order to keep on living. The philosophy behind the ruling class is famously known as *ideology*, which often has a coercive domination over people, determining what to do and what not to do. Such an undertaking usually takes place through devising a systematic *law*. And these norms, rules and regulations are also in accordance with the ruling class and its benefits, so that it can go on with its power over the country.

Louis Althusser, a contemporary Marxist, sees institutions like education or religion as “Ideological State Apparatus,” working on the minds of people from their earlier years. As Althusser suggests

Marx conceives the structure of every society as constituted by ‘levels’ or ‘instances’ articulated by a specific determination: the infrastructure or economic base (the ‘unity’ of the productive forces and the relations of production) and the superstructure, which itself comprises two ‘levels’ or ‘instances’: the political-legal level (law and the state) and the ideological level (the various ideologies: religious, moral, legal, political, and so on). (1971: 53)



Such undertakings and divisions demonstrate intensely systematic trials to keep people in order, and stop them from an ultimate and inevitable outbreak; the outbreak of the working class against the ruling class (and this “outbreak” is what Marx, according to his “dialectical materialism,” saw as the ultimate scene prior to a communist society, a society without classes, the paradise of the proletariat).

“What, then, are the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs)?” asks Althusser. He goes on to name them:

The following provisional list will give us a rough idea of them: 1) the Scholastic Apparatus, 2) the Familial Apparatus, 3) the Religious Apparatus, 4) the Political Apparatus, 5) the Associative Apparatus, 6) the Information and News Apparatus, 7) the Publishing and Distribution Apparatus, 8) the Cultural Apparatus. (1971: 75)

These eight subdivisions of ISAs comprise the wholistic maintenance of order, and of people’s thoughts and actions. From early childhood, the person is under indirect teachings of the ruling class ideology, seeing the parents and siblings acting in a specified and *normally constructed* manner. Such views provide the person with the accepted and legal manners, the *comme il faut* viewpoints and behavioral disciplines.

Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist philosopher and sociologist (who was under profound influence of Marx, Engels, and Lenin), proposed a revised and upgraded version of ideology known as *hegemony*. Hegemony includes all main features of ideology in its controlling people, but its main perspective is based on “consent” and not “coerce.” As Gramsci puts it, through cultural hegemony “the ‘spontaneous’ consent [is] given by the great masses” (1971: 12). It is considered as an *indirect* dominance. People, under the control of hegemonic philosophies, act as they should, without being forced. The specific features that scholars have usually defined for this mind-set, however, consist of flexibility and conservatism. Specific groups and organizations are able to use counter-hegemonic mind-sets to challenge the ruling hegemony. When a system functions following hegemonic disciplines, it can keep the individuals well occupied with developing ideas and notions—thereby deftly stopping them from outrage and revolution. This society naturally acts more functionally than a society which operates by a coercive ideology.



Into such a dialogue, Michel Foucault, the French philosopher and sociologist, introduces the theory of Panopticism. In his *Discipline and Punish* (1975), he introduces this idea as the inappreciable surveillance of the ruling system. He took the idea from Jeremy Bentham—who designed a type of prison known as “Panopticon”—and intellectually built upon it. Like the idea behind that prison, Foucault also sees the social life as a *seemingly* open prison in which one eye looks over the people without their being able to discern who the guard is. This leads people to an even closer self-scrutiny and self-discipline, ultimately making them live parallel with the ruling ideology and its arbitrary laws.

In such a system, struggle for power often takes place. Power-play takes many complex forms. People as textures of a functioning economy and a running society are continually in and out of confrontations with their superior class. And it deepens the matter when other competing hegemonies add to the fuel of this fire. Race, gender, religion, education, these can complicate the struggles through their counter-hegemonic confrontations. These are apparent in Ellison's novel as his demonstrated struggles concerning racial discrimination in particular. As I go through the excerpts of the novel which saliently encompass these systematic issues, I will discuss the coinages more functionally and tangibly.

### 3. Discussion and Textual Analysis

What can be the main idea behind Ellison's *Invisible Man*? What are his main points in writing this novel, if we put his racial concerns aside? Numerous answers and unending discussions can be devoted to these questions. Yet Ellison's concern, as he himself proposes in his introduction to the novel and early on in the “prologue” section, is the invisibility of the black in their society. Moreover, such invisibility is a direct result of the blacks being exploited as the inferior race. In Ellison's words “despite the bland assertions of sociologists, ‘high visibility’ actually rendered one *un-visible*” (Ellison, 1952: XV). Ellison's deft and hauntingly unusual usage of the word *un-visible* (instead of invisible) addresses the problem in a unique sense: The Black were not—and as I think, could not be—invisible, but were *deliberately* ignored by the eyes.



The invisibility thereby was actually not miserably inherent but horrifically adventitious. This would result in “racial violence” and “the unavailability of legal protection” (Ellison, 1952: XV); at such an early moment, Ellison points to the white-dominated ruling class who were in control of the institution of *law* and also most certainly behind other vital ISAs. Ellison’s concerns are then expanded to the “Afro-American” fictions and the power-struggle in their *naïve* depictions, the fact that

[a]mong these was the question of why the protagonists of Afro-American fiction (not to mention the black characters in the fiction written by whites) were without intellectual depth. Too often they were figures caught up in the most intense forms of social struggle, subject to the most extreme forms of the human predicament but yet seldom able to articulate the issues which tortured them. (Ellison, 1952: XV)

A bit later, pointing to the illusory reality created by the ruling ideology, Ellison metaphorically, but ironically, says

... if the ideal of achieving a true political equality eludes us in reality—as it continues to do—there is still available that fictional vision of an ideal democracy in which the actual combines with the ideal and gives us representations of a state of things in which the highly placed and the lowly, the black and the white, the northerner and the southerner, the native born and the immigrant are combined to tell us of transcendent truths and possibilities... (1952: XX)

The references to the ideal of true political equality (Power-struggle against the ruling ideology, dialectical materialism), fictional vision (distortion of reality and injecting made-up norms), highly (the ruling class, the white) and lowly (the working class, slaves, the black) are all intellectually- and politically-loaded terminologies that partially reveal the main social and political arguments at Ellison’s disposal. And all these are further highlighted when Ellison introduces an unnamed narrator, quite unlike a Melville narrator (*Moby-Dick*) who introduces himself with the first sentence or a Woolf narrator (*A Room of One’s Own*) who at least points to identities *tout au contraire*.

Earlier in the novel, the anonymous narrator talks about his ideological fear from the white, and his walking “softly”—in accordance with the accepted norms—so as



“not to awaken” them (Ellison, 1952: 5). The fixation that the black, dark narrator suffers, creates an anxiety in him about light and truth; as he is conditioned, he sees “the truth is the light and light is the truth” (Ellison, 1952: 7). This has led him to his “isolation”: “I enjoy my life with the compliments of Monopolated and Light & Power...I’ve illuminated the blackness of my invisibility—and vice versa. And so I play the invisible music of my *isolation*” (Ellison, 1952: 13; my emphasis).

At a later stage, we have a profoundly symbolic representation of an exploitative system. The fighting scene we witness prior to the narrator’s oration is a metaphoric representation of a cruel miniaturized domination over the black. The fighters are blindfolded, “hysterically” fighting illusorily and in “complete anarchy,” signifying how sinisterly the system gets people into hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles against each other (Ellison, 1952: 23). What is curious about this undertaking is that the ruling ideology remains intact. The seeming “complete anarchy,” then, is paradoxically an anarchy leading to a superior order, maintaining the functions of the system in effect!

A certain depiction of a trial to distinguish between reality and illusion constructs another moment of the narrative. The narrator somewhat questions his invisibility and appears to know, at least unconsciously, the fact that his invisible condition is a *made-up* condition, an exploitation by the ruling white. Yet referring to a primordial state of a perfectly utopian freedom, the narrator marvels “How could it have been real if now I am invisible? If real, why is it that I can recall in all that island of greenness no fountain but one that was broken, corroded and dry? ...Why do I recall?” (Ellison, 1952: 36). His exploited worldviews are articulated later on: “How could anyone’s fate be *pleasant*? I had always thought of it as something painful” (Ellison, 1952: 40), and this painfulness, as it seems to me, is actually *injected* to him. The Invisible Man is thus played with, wasted, and is even taken as a tool for experiments—as we witness in the factory hospital—and the white try to deprive him of his past and his sense of relatedness to his ancestors. But as William Nash rightly observed this great paradox, “Invisible Man has been reminded of his past, albeit unintentionally, and he recognizes his need to rebuild his sense of self on that foundation. Armed with that awareness, he is potentially every bit as dangerous to “the system” as the other trickster figures he recalls” (2004: 109).



The systematic functioning of the ruling class ideology is later demonstrated as a system of cogs; this is when the seemingly good-natured Mr. Norton says to the Invisible Man “*you* are important because if you fail, *I* have failed by one individual, one defective cog” (Ellison, 1952: 45; Ellison’s italics). Mr. Norton, as he appears, seems to be a rare individual of this system; ineluctably a part of it, Norton yet cares for the lower class or the black, what the system deems “other.” He feels along with the black vet, and as we see them talk, their discussion feels as if the race is not at all a matter, as if they are virtually equal. That discussion is arguably one of the rarest democratic discussions between a black and a white, and as Ellison depicts that moment, it seemed to be a perfect state even though temporarily.

Dr. Bledsoe, who is one of the vital and effective cogs in the hands of the white and Norton’s antithesis, later voices his (and also the narrator’s, if he wants to be a part of that system) obligations. When the protagonist tells him about Mr. Norton’s will for going to the forbidden districts, Bledsoe rages at him: “Damn what *he* wants... Haven’t you the sense God gave a dog? We take these white folks where we want them to go, we show them what we want them to see. Don’t you know that? I thought you had some sense” (Ellison, 1952: 102). Here the ideological circulation of accepted ideals is apparent, and this is not even in the hands of Bledsoe nor any other person; the operator, or better to say the groups of operators are ultimately hidden and behind the curtains. Even Bledsoe is their tool, their instrument for instrumentalization, for the compartmentalization of the society! The narrator’s disappointment with the ruthlessness and worthlessness of the system is furthered at this section of the novel: “I was ashamed for anyone to know of my predicament, it was too stupid to be believed” (Ellison, 1952: 105); and his own helplessness and solitude, having been stuck in that vanity is expressed: “To whom could I turn for help? I could think of no one” (Ellison, 1952: 105).

One of the most significant chapters which contains many political and ideological innuendos is chapter six. Dr. Bledsoe’s denunciations regarding his power in his own territory is the first scene that surprises us, not least because of his empty bragging, but because his illusory position is also deceptive. “... they *support* it, but *I* control it... I’m still the king down here” (Ellison, 1952: 142). Bledsoe in this scene is either attempting at a self-deception to brag about his power, or he is simply another foolish



inferior who is demented in the complexities of the ruling systematic power, fallen into distorted and illusory holes of certain versions of reality; a reality made up for him and his likes. No matter why and how he caterwauls, whether out of self-deception or disillusionment; he is a functioning part of that circle and must either keep functioning or be crossed out of “history” like the subsequent disaster that happens to Tod Clifton.

“Power doesn’t have to show off,” he says, “Power is confident, self-assuring, self-starting and self-stopping, self-warming and self-justifying... when you buck against me, you’re bucking against power, rich white folk’s power, the nation’s power—which means government power!” (Ellison, 1952: 142). The hierarchies shown in the last few sentences demonstrate the awareness he has about his superiors; he knows where he is and wishes to keep his position intact and safe. “If there weren’t men like me running schools like this, there would be no South. No North, either,” he goes on

[T]hese white folks have newspapers, magazines, radios, spokesmen to get their ideas across. If they want to tell the world a lie, they can tell it so well that it becomes the truth; and if I tell them that you’re lying, they will tell the world even if you prove you’re telling the truth (Ellison, 1952: 142-143)

The first sentence of the last couple of sentences depicts the hegemonic undertaking and the second one depicts the counter-hegemonic answer. These two, surprisingly, run parallel with each other, and it is exactly what the power demands to keep on living: the whole ideological philosophy and its compartments forming one single entirety, going in one and the same direction.

Bledsoe’s playing along the with the game seems to be more than believing in it, though he preaches “don’t believe in it”; his trial to have his counter-hegemonic stance also seems to be vain and void. Later on, we see the vet telling the young protagonist: “play the game, but play it your own way” (Ellison, 1952: 153); in Bledsoe’s idea, these words seem to be only words without actions attached to them (Ellison, 1952: 153). This severe distortion of reality is later on emphasized when the narrator sees, in a symbolic scene, a “black policeman directing the traffic” (Ellison, 1952: 159). The naïve and gullible protagonist sees the scene as “*real*” and senses the Harlem once again. He regains hope and courage virtually built upon a systematic lie, a distorted reality.



The Foucauldian theory of Panopticism, even some two decades prior to its coinage by him, is tangibly described by Ellison in his account of Wall Street. “This was Wall Street. Perhaps it was guarded, as I had been told post offices were guarded, by men who looked down at you through peepholes in the ceiling and walls, watching you, silently waiting for a wrong move” says the narrator (Ellison, 1952: 165). The extensive disillusionment is also symbolically presented a couple of paragraphs later, when the torch in the hands of the Statue of Liberty is “almost lost in the fog” possibly the fog of power and exploitation (Ellison, 1952: 165). The promise of freedom that is supposed to be felt in the Statue is enigmatically missing.

The Brotherhood that the narrator later joins them is another example of one of the most vicious and outrageous methods of controlling people. It acts as a vaccine acts, serving people with a controlled amount of the Left, and directing them into another illusory reality. People in this way *think* that they are protesting, but paradoxically the very leader of this protestation is a functioning cog within the system! This is how Brother Jack and the others act, trying to “reach the people through their intelligence” (Ellison, 1952: 350). At another moment, demonstrating one of the techniques of casting people into illusory realities, he pontificates “say what people want to hear, but say it in such a way that they’ll do what we wish” (Ellison, 1952: 359; my emphasis). This saying, apart from its ideologically-loaded thoughts behind it, has the pronoun “we” in it which means the Brotherhood and black community, as well as the ruling power’s presence everywhere. At the same time, it can easily be the Brotherhood *against* black community. There is simply nothing to be sure of and everything seems to be tarnished by “the fog.”

The narrator, at times experimentative and daring, is actually being severely played by the system, yet he is not aware of this and this is how power works. Even the speeches he is supposed to give in the Brotherhood are assigned and preordained. He must follow a white’s pamphlet for his speech! The white, to prevent from probable out-of-control protests and violent outrages, controls all the blacks. How skillfully the power functions and it is in its mightiest state when it embarks upon the minds of people! In this way, everyone is not always under surveillance and observation, but are automatically disciplined and ordered. “I felt that they were watching me from somewhere up the street” the narrator says, “but I couldn’t see



them” (Ellison, 1952: 482), another reference to Panopticism and its watching over everything.

Perhaps it was because of such ideological and panoptic observation that the narrator was startled by Ras the Exhorter and his purely Leftist views. Ras was definitely an extremist, but the least hope in him and his outlaw forces was that *they* were the only forces who looked for a pure freedom, and a pure equality. They seemed to serve nobody and no ideology but the Harlem values. They knew what they were looking for (to live *humanly* and to achieve equality) and they would sacrifice everything to achieve that goal. Perhaps Ellison himself was more on the side of a Ras-like revolution, and perhaps he saw a certain amount of violence necessary. However, the situation that he portrays later on—the complete and seemingly never-ending anarchy—is entailed with a complete isolation and loneliness. The narrator was looking constantly for something that Ellison sees not graspable, at least in that circumstances and in that period of time. The novel preserves its open-ended specific feature, which suggests that a future is yet to come; who can forecast the winner and loser, we cannot know!

Yet the way this novel is ended reminds us of the way Forster closed his *A Passage to India* (1924), which suggested that a possible bridge between the two cultures was still impossible. In addition, Ellison likewise possibly felt that it was still soon for the black to be reconciled perfectly with other races, but this open-endedness is, can be supposed, an optimist technique at least for Ellison.

#### 4. Conclusion

The novel as discussed is a clear account of powerplay and its systematic control over people and everything and every institution in the society. Among the issues at hand, the most salient ones are identity crisis and racial discrimination that were bolded by Ellison. What he depicted was a simple issue, yet disfigured into a complex labyrinth by many distortive apparatuses: how powerplay—through ideology, hegemony, and panoptic surveillance—leads the black society into disillusionment and self-alienation. They remain either passive and invisible like shadows, or they must agree to go under their flag; those like Dr. Bledsoe actually function like a cog deep inside the manifold system of cogs that keep the seemingly white-dominated



society up and running. What keeps this power over people, black or white, is not simply a totalitarian regime or a coercive and dark force; it is far more complicated. The idea behind such a complex, systematically exploitative society is not necessarily a one-sided philosophy, but a myriad-faceted look that is perpetually and ubiquitously present and observing. This look makes use of every tool it can, white or black, lower or upper class, clergy or outlaw, to keep everything under a holistic, totalizing control. And this power looks from a point invisible and indiscernible to everyone, imposing and transfixing an illusionary “*un-visibility*.” The narrator never understood what operates these compartments and how he/she/they undertake such heinously racial imperialization.



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