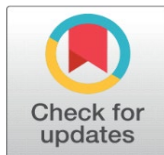
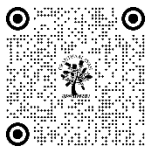


THE ART OF HAILING BLACK EMANCIPATION BY CAPSIZING THE REPERCUSSIONS OF WHITE DETERMINISM IN RICHARD WRIGHT'S NATIVE SON AND RALPH ELLISON'S INVISIBLE MAN

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ABSTRACT

The determining laws of external force and the concept of free will are perceived to be intricate while striving to exhibit a simple and confined elucidation for they comprise every single thing that goes by their appellation when examined with the aid of naturalism and existentialism. These philosophies take involuted peregrinations leading to the vivid comprehension of the relationship between man and his environment. The naturalists navigate far beyond realism intending to get in line with determinism and also claim that a person is organically an animal devoid of free will. Conversely, the existentialists revere 'man' as their protagonist, thereby reputing him with freedom of choice, self-creation, responsibility, consciousness and individuality. The works of African American writers that flaunt the spirit of existentialism can be witnessed as a result of their protagonists' unadaptable restraints whose lives are usually a mare's nest. This research article culls out Wright's *Native Son* and Ellison's *Invisible Man* to cram it up with the unadulterated existential value over the harsh realities of naturalism which is an attempt to make the blacks indomitable and thereupon leading one to contemplate over the universal query; does an individual exhibit his individuality or is forcefully made to establish the chores assigned by the natural determinants?

Keywords: Environment, Existentialism, Individuality, Indomitable, Naturalism

1. INTRODUCTION

Naturalism, a legendary chassis, cannot be labelled within a lone and unembellished definitions for it is stuffed to its gills by a wide range of configurations based on its adherence to natural sciences. Naturalism incessantly stands extolling nature and is allowed to be whittled by philosophy, moral and religion thereby ultimately eradicating supernatural elements. Clark claims, that naturalism gives "pride of place to the natural world, to nature and are dubious or even dismissive of claims that go beyond the natural world: so-called 'supernatural' claims" (Clark 2). He also adds, "Naturalists, then reject any appeals to divine or supernatural entities or power in their explanation of the world" (Clark 2). The rise of naturalism stalked the inevitable triumph of science in progressively delineating more of the natural realm. In this facet, Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) is considered a momentous scientific contribution. His colossal contribution levied tremendous consequences on the outlook of the globe and eventually on the term naturalism at large. Examining the days of yore would explicitly unveil the profuse aspects and characteristics of naturalism and would also

lead to a better understanding of the term by tabulating the list of instigators who propagated and upheaved it from other ordinary slants.

The 17th century scientific revolution saw the emergence of salient works sketched by Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler that glowed with experimental methods and preferable illustrations of the natural world. Mustering the list of naturalists, such as Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, John Stuart Mill, Herschel and William Whewell who are the spillovers of their predecessors, instituted copious works which are evidently the superstructures for all scientific inquiries. "They have also claimed that things such as free will, the self, and morality are illusions" (Clark 2). Westbrook adds, "Determinism: the doctrine that all occurrences in the universe are governed by inexorable laws of cause and effect" (ix). These contributors who are to be designated as potters of various scientific explorations, paved the way for the emergence of the philosophical concept, naturalism which was first originated and propounded by a French novelist, playwright, journalist, and theorist, Emile Zola. Westbrook maintains, "Naturalism as a movement was fathered by Emile Zola, whose essay *Le Roman Experimental* is still an important source of naturalistic ideas" (90). On the contrary, introducing the philosophy of freedom might reroute the naturalists and broaden their horizons with the existentialist notions of free will, identity, meaning in life and existence.

Existentialism, the 19th century philosophical movement embraces the manner of existence of a tangible individual life and also provokes self-determined life. Flynn opines, that "its focus is on the human individual's pursuit of identity and meaning amidst the social and economic pressure of mass society for superficiality and conformism" (20). This beyond doubt establishes that 'man' is not determined by any external forces and that he acts according to his free will and is ultimately free. This fabricates polarity between existentialism and other forms of determinism which is the undeniable characteristic of naturalism. Tracking back its cradle, existentialism was moulded with great tenderness by a Danish theologian, namely Kierkegaard and a German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche who are considered to be the 19th century fathers of existentialism. It attained its vogue in the mid-20th century with the publication of Sartre's *Nausea* (1938), *The Flies* (1943), *Existentialism in Humanism* (1946), Beauvoir's *The Blood of Others* (1945), and Camus' *The Outsider* (1942) and *The Plague* (1947).

Naturalism and existentialism are hardly ever collaborated but simply one follows the other in time. Under the cloud of American literature, it is an unfaltering and gradual move in philosophy from the late 19th century naturalism to the early 20th century existentialism. These dual philosophies nabbed the attention of the readers when identified within the literary context and to a greater extent within the domain of Black literature.

African American literature is seen hovering over the quest for freedom trying not to be submerged by the scalding predicaments of environmental determinism. To propose both naturalism and existentialism as a vanguard for Black literature is not just a storm in a teacup. An American sociologist and a civil rights activist, W. E. B. Du Bois clocks the nub of these dual philosophies in his seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). He puts forth the camouflaged and inconspicuous nature of the African Americans. "The Negro is . . . born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness . . ." (Du Bois 9). Eventually, he concludes by enouncing the existentialist notion of securing self-conscious manhood, intending to unite the torn black selves into one truer self. "He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world" (Du Bois 9). Admittedly, the social protest novels by Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, the neoteric personalities of African American literature, crown their work *Native Son* and *Invisible Man*, respectively, with the double scoop of fate and free will.

The present research paper titled, "The Art of Hailing Black Emancipation by Capsizing the Repercussions of White Determinism in Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*" limns black emancipation through the doctrines of existentialism. It extolls the white murder and the act against white determinism for its pure purpose of free will. In a free-swinging manner, it delineates the harsh realities of the Jim Crow environment. It further employs naturalism as its aid in exhibiting the dictating approach of the natural force. This research article grabs the responsibility in answering the queries which include, to which extent do hereditary and environment determine the essence of humanism? How could the modus operandi of the black existentialists be a caveat against white naturalism? In what way does naturalism influence the protagonists of African American writers with its issue of survival, Darwinism, warring emotions and the act of violence? All things considered, this piece of research fabricates its intention of exhibiting the white determinism, the veteran puppeteers of null and invisible blacks in propelling the protagonists of Wright and Ellison to enter the fray for amalgamating their twoness for an ultimate free of choice.

Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) are classic examples of the duo philosophies. Like his predecessors, Norris, Jack London, Crane and Dreiser; without any digressions, Wright has achieved in spawning the novel in the tradition of naturalism. Wright begins his introductory essay, "How Bigger was Born," by repossessing his childhood days to put forth various patterns of behaviour that gave life to his pivotal character Bigger Thomas. He catalogues his influential characters as Bigger No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4 and No. 5. He categorizes them as challenging, violent, as one who possesses the nature of black-against-black and as one who lives in the tenebrous hovel under the white landlord. On the whole, he fulfils his description with his heart-wrenching declaration, "I'd better indicate more precisely the nature of the environment that produced these men, or the reader will be left with the impression that they were essentially or organically bad" (Wright 5). As a result, he spurs himself to portray the determining Southern (Dixie) and Northern (Chicago) parts of America that thronged with ascendancy and dictation. He further proclaims, that "the environment supplies the instrumentalities through which the organism expresses itself, and if that environment is warped or tranquil, the mode and manner of behaviour will be affected toward deadlocking tensions or orderly fulfillment and satisfaction" (Wright 11).

Bigger's life in Chicago is laminated with shame, poverty, violence, anxiety and fear within a dingy single-room dwelling. Part one of the novel titled 'Fear' turns frigid with Ma's dark prophesy over her son, Bigger Thomas, "And the gallows is at the end of the road you travelling, boy" (Wright 39). The road which Mrs. Thomas mentions is the white-designed passage, solely determining blacks. For Bigger, Mr. Dalton's family and its intimates are the manipulative designers throughout the passage of life. Tightly packed between the strangling thoughts, either serving Dalton or neglecting the offer to starve to death made him rove with a glance at the poster bearing a white face with red letters on top of it "IF YOU BREAK THE LAW, YOU CAN'T WIN!" (Wright 43). Such macabre settings of *Native Son* get in tune with Steinbeck's naturalistic fiction *The Grapes of Wrath*. As *Native Son* proclaims the dark prophesy, Steinbeck's central character Tom Joad seems to establish it by getting paroled after his imprisonment in McAlester to witness the harsh realities and sufferings of the peasant families with the Great Depression (1929-1933) as its determinant. "The *Grapes of Wrath* was written to arouse sympathy for the millions of poor farmers and the tenants who have been brought to miserable ruin . . ." (Shockley 355). Travelling through the same cord, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* logs a blow-by-blow account of naturalism.

Ralph Ellison nominates his unnamed narrator as 'invisible' not because he is a phantom or a kind of horrific hallucination but because of the white determinants' unwillingness to consider him as a 'human' altogether. In the 'Prologue,' Ellison's unnamed narrator delivers poignant descriptions about his own plight in the state of hibernation: "I am an invisible man. I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see . . . everything and anything except me" (Ellison 3). In the author's introduction to *Invisible Man*, Ellison sets forth a concatenation of events that elucidate the high degree of inequality which triggers black-white conflicts. Crammed with rage, he declares that the equality for a Negro exhibited on a war footing is denied at the time of relief and cheer. He further drafts the conditioned life of a Negro pilot, where the white officers spurned to look at the humanity of a skilled pilot. "I came to realize that my pilot was also experiencing difficulty in seeing himself" (Ellison xxxi). The novel opens with the narrator inside a shut-off section, an underground home detailing the elements that thrust him into darkness namely, battle royal, illusionary intimacy with whites, Brotherhood and the like. "I lived in the darkness into which I was chased . . ." (Ellison 13). The narrator then recalls his college speech that urges submission to please his leading white audience. His mind then painfully drifts around the battle royal that presents two symbols: blindfolds and the tokens that epitomize the blacks blinded by whites and the gestures of tokenism. These racial scars of both Bigger Thomas and 'invisible man' secure rehabilitation using the bottle of embrocation with existentialism as its essential component.

Existentialism is a means of catharsis for Bigger and the unnamed narrator who are the victims of determining racial trauma. The existential thought takes its place on the pillion following naturalism as a kind of relief for the characters, on whom it acts.

"Sartre . . . claims that the existentialist doctrine that man is free, that he is the being which transcends itself and creates itself by free choice, that he is his own legislator, unfettered by any absolute values or universal moral law, constitutes a true humanism" (Copleston 35). Bigger who is made submissive at the beginning of the novel carry out a series of violent actions that gains meaning and purpose in his black meek life. Entirely offered to the ways of Dalton's family, distress and angst triggered by Mary and Jan, the conditioned aspirations revealed through Gus; makes Bigger shatter the white shells with his own free will to act. Mary's murder though accidental, Bigger's following agendas add essence to his very existence. After the murder of both Mary and Bessie, "there remained to him a queer sense of power.

... Never had ... his will been so free as in this night and day of ... murder and flight" (Wright 270). He declares that he is born with new strength and further experiences the white looming walls fading away. Correspondingly, Frederick Douglass in his narrative illustrates his unendurable affliction as a slave under the white slave owner Mr. Covey and a way out of his horrible clutches. In 1833, Mr. Thomas lays Douglass on sale as a slave and his ingress as a field hand makes him wonder about his near escape from death. Douglass gains nothing more than back-breaking whippings and blood cascading down his body. He takes a repulsive stand by getting into a battle with Covey, after which he decides never to touch Douglass. His resilient nature secures him unattainable freedom and manhood, which is an onerous task in the life of blacks. "This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood." He audaciously attests, "It was a glorious resurrection from the tomb of slavery to the heaven of freedom" (Douglass 67-68).

Similarly, Ralph Ellison vows ransom for his unidentifiable black hero by running through the cord of existentialism. Ellison asserts that his major intention is to traverse far beyond the white restrictions. "Therefore I would have to create a narrator who could think as well as act" and he also adds, that he witnessed "a capacity for conscious self-assertion" in his narrator (Ellison xxxix). The narrator's crave for baked yam at the sight of a street vendor, stabs him with swift nostalgia and gushes out the sense of homesickness thereby lifting him to an "intense feeling of freedom" (Ellison 254). The prescribed Brotherhood life of the narrator under the influence of Brother Jack, assigns him a new name, new residence and entirely transforms him into someone else. This drives the narrator into a manhole (underground), within which he celebrates his very existence by looting favours from Monopolated Light and Power. In all respects, his free will of living underground acquiring a tranquil existence drives him to proclaim, "Life is to be lived, not controlled ..." by any other determinants (Ellison 556-57).

The unfading racial crime against blacks from the victims in the early slave narratives to the 21st century lynching of the blacks by the U. S. cops, road roko, public outcry and racial unrest with fear and hatred have been a long-standing brain-teaser. This achieves panacea with the higher degree of exploration that reveals the daring roles of naturalism and existentialism in transforming the view of the readers by getting to the bottom of harsh realities of the black environment in which they live and as a result, installing the quest for freedom inside the psyche to put away the racial disfigurement determined by whites. It necessitates the readers, when observed through the lens of naturalism, to undress black crime and violent actions that are draped around Bigger and the unnamed narrator by propelling the liability upon the white determinants.

With naturalism and existentialism as its armour, this research paper not only expels the biased predicaments and extolls the value of existence in the life of the 20th-century protagonists but also helps to identify the hidden trauma of Pan-African American racial surge to ensure justice for all unjustifiable black deaths and also quashes the determined blacks succumbing to white cops. Sooner or later, this would energize all blacks to celebrate by illuminating the blackness of their dark present. Altogether, the constraining laws of determinism and the significance of human nature not only tackle the issues of blacks but also intercept the current tensions between Ukraine and Russia by peeling off the hypocritic layers of skin to expose the mean pussy flesh and in a fullness of time, conciliating with the soothing decoction of freedom, existence and humanity.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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