

Tessa ROYNON

PREFACE TO THE SPECIAL ELLISON COLLECTION,
LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAS-2018

Тесса РОЙНОН

ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕ К ТЕМАТИЧЕСКОЙ ПОДБОРКЕ СТАТЕЙ,
ПОСВЯЩЕННОЙ РАЛЬФУ ЭЛЛИСОНУ
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In September 2017, the first International Ralph Ellison Symposium took place at the University of Oxford, UK. This wonderful event, sponsored by the Ralph Ellison Society and Oxford's own Rothermere American Institute, gathered together scholars from Japan, South Africa, Russia and Ukraine as well as the USA and Western Europe. Keynote addresses were delivered by John F. Callahan (Ellison's good friend and literary executor), by Marc Conner and by Lena Hill. In addition, twenty-three further enthusiasts for Ellison's work, ranging from undergraduates to established senior academics, gave papers on the diverse and challenging writing of this great African American novelist, public intellectual and cultural critic.

It is an honour to be invited to introduce this special issue of *Literature of the Americas*, in which scholars who gave presentations at the Oxford symposium now publish full-length and highly sophisticated articles. The eclectic nature of the themes and approaches in this collection of essays testifies to the wealth and diversity of Ellison's own writing. Three of the essays place *Invisible Man* in new contexts: rethinking the novelist's debt to Raglan (Crabbe); re-positioning him in relation the African American writers who were his contemporaries (Brown); and emphasizing the role of magic in this text (Haile). Three further essays continue the important work of parsing

and interpreting Ellison's unfinished second novel: a consideration of the influence of Malraux and on shamanism in the underdiscussed Book I of *Three Days Before The Shooting* (De La Piedra); a close reading of the intertextualities in the sermon at the heart of that work's Book II (Devlin); and an illuminating study of cinematic codes in *Juneteenth* (Vysotska). Moore's essay, meanwhile, is the perfect accompaniment to these six articles in its consideration of Ellison as a cultural figure who illuminates and is illuminated by both the life and the policies of President Barack Obama.

My congratulations and my gratitude here go to my friend and colleague, Olga Panova, for her dedication, her own expertise in Ellison studies and her editorial finesse – three qualities which have brought this project to such timely and noteworthy fruition. It is wonderful to see Ellison's rightful place on the global stage continuing to evolve, in so many different ways, in these rich and varied pages.

Tessa ROYNON
Co-director, with Marc Conner, of the International
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