

## ***INVISIBLE MAN, ORAL CULTURE, AND POSTMODERNISM* \***

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### **Abstract**

The concept of the postmodern is a major topic in literary studies today, and has been variously defined by different scholars. Postmodernism has been defined in purely aesthetic terms as radical fragmentation of literary structure, and in political and historical terms as total subversion and absolute break from the past. My reading of the novel *Invisible Man* by the black American author Ralph Ellison is an attempt to understand and explore various aspects of the postmodern in Ellison's analysis of racial oppression and domination in American society. Ellison's analysis is done in terms of the cultural and epistemic differences between orality and literacy. Characterizing the oral and the literate as offering two fundamentally different modes of epistemology (or knowing and understanding), I suggest that Ellison's engagement with and treatment of these two modes have politically subversive implications on racial domination in Western civilization, and that such subversive implications define the fragmentation and subversion typical of postmodernism.

**Key Words:** Orality, Literacy, Black-American, Epistemology, Postmodernism

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