

## POSTMODERNISM

(1) What happened overall in American cultural history after the Modernist period (1909-1962) is *postmodern* uncanceled; (2) the dominant culture imposed by secular liberal elites after the 1960s is *Postmodernism* and *Postmodernist* capitalized; and (3) a recurrent state of mind transcending historical period is *Postmodern* capitalized. This dating of the end of the Modernist period defers to the mythic force of the 1960s as the Countercultural Decade, though some founding Modernists published after that date and a few current Modernists sustain that high tradition.

ORDER OF TOPICS: General definitions, Postmodernism vs Modernism, Modernist legacies, precursors of Postmodernism, inversion, religious belief, God, Atheism, Socialism, "equality," Realism, ethnic fiction, Modernist tradition, 1960s countercultural fiction, Postmodernist aesthetics, Academic Expressionism, criticism of Academic Expressionism, Postmodern education, "higher" education, "social justice," Women's Studies, Political Correctness, Anti-Americanism, Feminazism, politicized literary criticism, Nazis at Yale, Theory, hoax fools PC editors, poetry, PC poets, PC poetry bias, painting, drama, Hollywood, entropy:

### GENERAL DEFINITIONS

"Reverences are dying." (Thomas Pynchon)

"I define *postmodern* as incredulity towards meta-narratives." (Jean-Francois Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, published in French in 1979, in English in 1984)

"[Postmodernism] overcomes the modern worldview through an anti-worldview: It deconstructs or eliminates the ingredients necessary for a worldview, such as God, self, purpose, meaning, a real world, and truth as correspondence... This type of postmodern thought issues in relativism, even nihilism." (David Ray Griffin, "Introduction to SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought," *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*, David W. Orr, SUNY 1992)

"The Post-Modern is above all characterized by the inflation of discourse, manifesting itself in literature through the illusion that technique can remove itself from history by attacking...objective reality...and in criticism by the development of secondary languages which presumably 'demystify' reality, but actually tend to further obscure it... Post-Modernism is a period characterized by an absolute failure of theory... This is a Narcissism mobilized at a new level of defensive rather than celebratory expression, in which the...audience is blamed in advance for a failure in communication...The Post-Modern critical intellect often finds it sufficient simply to subvert art... The American intellectual/artist is essentially a spoiled brat, and critical standards have been fatefully eroded by his posturings... Irony functions as the intellectual's only sentiment... It is not surprising that we have a literature with no characters, only situations... The most damaging hangover of Avant-Garde pretensions remains the concept of technical breakthrough, of art as the experimental adjunct of scientific methodology... In the sixties we hedged our bets with Entropy... The Post-Modern ended...when it could provide no values as an alternative to the marketplace." (Charles Newman, *The Post-Modern Aura*, Northwestern 1985: 196)

"The Postmodernist position is a disabling one—Postmodernists are just epistemological pluralists, with no firm general position available to them, and so, however radical they may seem as critics, they lack a settled external viewpoint, and this means that so far as real-life ongoing politics is concerned, they are passively conservative in effect... Postmodernists are by and large pessimists, many of them haunted by lost Marxist revolutionary hopes, and the beliefs and the art they inspire are often negative rather than constructive... Universal truth is impossible, and relativism is our fate... All texts are seen as perpetually referring to other ones, *rather than to any external reality*... Authorial (or historical) intention should no more be trusted than Realism... This attack on Realism is absolutely central to all types of Postmodernist activity. But in refusing to come inside any existing system, or to make any exposition of one, in anything but a playful or evasive manner, it also has to deny the possibility of proposing a system of its own, without betraying its own premises...within a broadly Marxist paradigm... Postmodernists liberally opposed all holistic explanations (even if they sometimes readmitted them through the back door by promoting

arguments which were in sympathy with those of Freud and Marx... This general move from a liberal emphasis on self-determination to a Marx-inspired emphasis on other-determination is of immense importance....

Postmodernists tend not to be well informed about current practices in science and religion... Their eagerness to embrace what seem to be 'politically correct' positions has too often led them to express utterly bizarre and ill-informed, not to say politically biased, accounts of what scientists are doing... The Postmodernist period is one of the extraordinary dominance of the work of academics over that of artists... It showed the indubitable superiority of the deconstructor's 'insights' to the text's unwitting 'blindness' to the contradictions it encoded... Postmodernists reproached Modernists (and their supposedly 'naïve' liberal humanist readers...) for their belief that a work of art could somehow appeal to all humanity... The Postmodernist attitude is therefore one of a suspicion which can border on paranoia (as seen, for example, in the conspiracy-theory novels of Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo, and the films of Oliver Stone)... I believe that the period of its greatest influence is now over. Its founding fathers are in their turn encountering the skepticism of a new generation." (Christopher Butler, *Post-Modernism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2002: 3, 6-7, 14, 16, 23, 25, 27, 32, 42, 59, 61, 114, 127)

"The tendencies of the Modernist to construct intricate forms, to interweave symbols elaborately, to create works of art that, however much they oppose some established present order, create within themselves an ordered universe, have given way since the 1960s to a denial of order, to the presentation of highly fragmented universes in the created world of art, and to critical theories that are forms of *phenomenology*. Myth has given way to the experiencing of aesthetic *surfaces*. Traditional forms, such as the novel, have given way to denials of those forms, such as the anti-novel. The typical protagonist has become not a hero but an anti-hero. Writers such as Robbe-Grillet, Fowles, Pynchon, Barthelme, and Pinter are called *postmodern*." [italics added] (C. Hugh Holman & William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. 1936; Macmillan 1992: 370)

"The term *Postmodernism* is often applied to the literature and art after World War II (1939-45), when the effects on Western morale of the first war were greatly escalated by the experience of Nazi totalitarianism and mass extermination, the threat of total destruction by the atomic bomb... Postmodernism involves not only a continuation, sometimes carried to an extreme, of the countertraditional experiments of Modernism, but also diverse attempts to break away from Modernist forms which had, inevitably, become in their turn conventional as well as to overthrow the elitism of Modernist 'high art' by recourse to the models of 'mass culture' in film, television, newspaper cartoons, and popular music. Many of the works of Postmodern literature—by Jorge Borges, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, Roland Barthes, and many others—so blend literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful, that they resist classification according to traditional literary rubrics. And these literary anomalies are paralleled in other arts by phenomena like pop art, op art, the musical compositions of John Cage, and the films of Jean-Luc Godard and other directors.

An undertaking in some Postmodernist writings—prominently in Samuel Beckett and other authors of the [Atheist] literature of the absurd—is to subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the meaninglessness of existence and the underlying 'abyss,' or 'void,' or 'nothingness' on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended. Postmodernism in literature and the arts has parallels with the movement known as poststructuralism in linguistic and literary theory; poststructuralists undertake to subvert the foundations of language in order to show that its seeming meaningfulness dissipates, for a rigorous inquirer, into a play of conflicting indeterminacies, or else to show that all forms of cultural discourse are manifestations of the ideology, or of the relations and constructions of power, in contemporary society." (M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., 1957; Harcourt 1999)

"Postmodernism can be characterized as post-Marxist in political and post-industrial in economic terms. In terms of theoretical discourse, it is poststructuralist. (125) Bakhtinism... finds not hollowness but... plenitude, endless possibility, an open program.... (126) The ground of truth is desire for empowerment (128)... It is a very basic politics of popular desire (132)... Postmodernity is a condition of 'permanent revolution'... (133) Poststructuralism emphasizes rupture, discontinuity and fragmentation.... Bakhtinism is a

thoroughgoing materialism that has nothing to do with Idealist dualisms... Postmodernist thought ...celebrates...the margins over the centre, the piecemeal over the planned.... The Postmodern is unable to theorize itself as a system, or only as a system so open as to lack systematicity, a random walk without boundaries... (129-30) These are strategies of the carnivalesque...leveling...the hierarchical distinctions between high art and the philistine...into a state of paradigmatic flux that permits elements to be combined freely... It totalizes in terms of the body and the social, of physiological and social processes that are free of the will to transcendence simply because they cannot be transcended.” (131) (Barry Rutland, “Bakhtinian Categories and the Discourse of Postmodernism,” *Critical Studies* 2.1/2, 1990: 123-36) [M. M. Bakhtin was the leader of a Communist intellectual circle in Leningrad in the 1920s whose thought contributed to international Postmodernism. All this is an Atheist rationale for hedonism.]

“Today the streets may be quiet, but journals, university presses, and lectures bristle with defiance. Especially in literary criticism... The radicalism of the 60s prepared us for Derrida’s association of freedom with mobility or endless possibility, as well as his attack on hierarchies and on arbitrary, invidious distinctions between right and wrong, sane and insane. His program of releasing interpretation from the constraints of logic, authorial intent, the text, and the dictates of authorities meshes with the ideas we have all heard before: that students have a right to their own language; that expertise is a dangerous undemocratic charade; that standards are elitist; that correcting someone smacks of ridicule, arrogance, even tyranny; that claiming truth for one’s values means imposing them. The political appeal of Derrida’s work lies in its familiarity, not its novelty. He keeps alive themes that no longer animate political movements.... He offers...hope.... The power we have lost in Congress we can recapture in our prose.” (Michael Fischer, anarchist, *democracy*, 1981)

“Postmodernism, which places itself ‘beyond good and evil,’ beyond true and false, inhabits a cosmic bubble. It would be a good thing if fear of a universal crisis allowed us to burst the mental bubble of Postmodernism--if it washed away the euphoria of our pious wishes and brought us once again to see straight.” (Andre Glucksmann, “The Postmodern Financial Crisis,” translated from the French by Alexis Cornel, [www.city-journal.org/2009/19](http://www.city-journal.org/2009/19))

#### POSTMODERNISM vs MODERNISM

Modernism was a climax in the evolution of literary aesthetics originating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—a peak wave of achievements (1909-1962). Modernists produced *by far* the most influential works of American literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The novelist William Styron complained that he and John Updike and other writers of his generation worked “in the shadow” of the towering Modernists. The Modernists criticized the emerging modern society and trends of Postmodernism, which is so-called because Postmodernists, after the 1960s, defined themselves in reaction against the Modernists.

Like the Modernists, most fiction writers since 1960 have opposed Postmodernism—notably Saul Bellow, Wallace Stegner, John Irving, Don DeLillo, Cormac McCarthy, Marilynne Robinson—but most of the elite writers are the most Postmodernist—Norman Mailer, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Philip Roth, William Gaddis, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Walter Abish, Robert Coover, Renata Adler, Susan Sontag, Joan Didion, William Gass, John Hawkes, Joseph McElroy, and others. Pynchon most epitomizes Postmodernism. Most elite Postmodernists live or have lived in or near New York City and most are or have been academics.

The outstanding critiques of Postmodernism are O’Connor’s *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), Robinson’s *Housekeeping* (1980), DeLillo’s satire *White Noise* (1985), and McCarthy’s apocalypse in *The Road* (2006). Melville compared Hawthorne to Dante. *The Road* (Inferno), *White Noise* (Purgatorio), and *Housekeeping* (prelude to Paradiso) constitute a contemporary analogue to the trilogy of Dante.

#### MODERNIST LEGACIES

The early Modernists originated many techniques adopted by later writers such as Porter, Gordon, O’Connor, Bellow, Stegner, DeLillo, Robinson and McCarthy—such as the iceberg principle, nonlinear structures, multiple points of view, stream of consciousness, and the mythic method. Ralph Ellison studied

Hemingway and Joyce before producing his masterpiece *Invisible Man*. Toni Morrison wrote a masters thesis on Faulkner and combines Modernist characteristics--archetypal symbolism, myth, lyricism, multiple viewpoints, transcendence—with Postmodernist characteristics such as anarchic individualism as in *Sula*, decentered character, discontinuity, ambiguity, and openendedness as in *Song of Solomon*. Morrison is an Afrocentric matriarchal Feminist and her vision is Postmodernist in rejecting “melting pot” universality, most clearly in *Tar Baby*—reversing the integration ideal of Ralph Ellison and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Steinbeck and Stegner carried on where Cather left off in dramatizing the mainstream history and mythology of the American West. Gordon did the same for the South. Gordon, O'Connor, Robinson and Erdrich have written with distinction in the Modernist tradition of *holistic realism*. McCarthy likewise is an heir of the Modernists in countering liberal naivete and Postmodern decadence—by implication--with *both* the most powerful Expressionistic prose style since Faulkner (in *Blood Meridian*) and the most resonant plain style since Hemingway (in *The Road*)--invoking *both* writers.

Although many later novelists adopted various techniques of the Modernists, few could match their greatest achievements. As a rule, for instance, those who attempted stream of consciousness, non-linear structures, or multiple points of view like Faulkner were not able to make them intellectually significant, merely pretentious. They replaced the clarity and archetypal power of linear narrative with enfeebling disorder, as in Pynchon. Even movies and television have been adversely affected. The use of flashbacks has killed off some TV series. Pynchon, Vonnegut, Barth and others countered Modernism by using its techniques to express a Postmodernist vision, as Tim O'Brien does in his antiwar *Going After Cacciato*. For short story writers, Hemingway proved to be not so simple after all. He was too difficult to imitate and got replaced as a model in creative writing courses mainly by Raymond Carver. The models should include Porter, Gordon, O'Connor, and Welty as well as Carver and Hemingway.

Likewise in poetry, none could match Eliot in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” nor Stevens in “Sunday Morning,” nor the resonant Frost. “The Waste Land,” as a panorama of Postmodern decadence, became such a vortex that all poets had to react to it one way or another. Eliot had distinguished followers such as Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom, but after the 1960s poets were more inclined to look to William Carlos Williams as a model. “The Red Wheelbarrow” is easier to imitate than “Sunday Morning.” Williams opened the floodgates to anything-goes free verse during the Postmodern period, encouraging looseness and reducing public interest in poetry. Even Williams came to disapprove of the formlessness in much of the later poetry he inspired. As Eliot said, “*Verse libre* does not exist.” There is no free lunch and there is no free verse. The “freedom” gained by abandoning traditional meter and rhyme increases the need for compensating qualities of varied rhythm, striking imagery, symbolism, original structure, parallelisms, irony, allusion, mythic resonance and so on.

## PRECURSORS OF POSTMODERNISM

Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) rebelled against the Puritan clergy in the theocracy of early New England on the grounds that her conscience transcended the laws of society. Feminists claim her as a heroine, but Hutchinson followed a male preacher to America and was motivated by her religious faith in a male God.

Elizabeth Peabody (1804-1894), the sister-in-law of Nathaniel Hawthorne and born the same year, was a radical Feminist who wrote the manifesto of the utopian Socialist experiment Brook Farm, satirized by Hawthorne in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), based on his experience there. The unmarried Peabody opposed marriage like Postmodern radical Feminists and argued against the institution with her sister Sophia, wife of Hawthorne, throughout their lives.

Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), whose intelligence intimidated males, was a charismatic Transcendental feminist leader, transcending gender and affirming self-reliance rather than political action until she went to Europe, married an Italian and got converted to Socialism by her exposure to the revolutionary movements against the European monarchies. She felt inspired to lead a Socialist revolution in America. In what now seems a symbolic event, Fuller never made it home. Close to the east coast her ship encountered a storm and sank just offshore. Her body was never found.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) believed in God but he hated Christianity and Democracy, felt victimized, and believed that death was the end of the individual. Also Postmodernist are his romantic solipsism, materialism, bipolar psyche, drug use, alienation, cynicism, and apocalyptic mood.

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) became a guru of the Counterculture in the 1960s for his idealization of Nature, anarchism, rebellion against authority, and civil disobedience against the government. His countercultural groupies had to ignore his opposition to drugs, music, sex, hedonism, and Socialism. Thoreau was Postmodernist and countercultural in his contempt for conventional people and for anyone who disagreed with him.

Henry Adams (1838-1918), a history professor at Harvard, was a pessimistic Atheist whose wife committed suicide. His autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907, published in 1918) influenced the major Postmodernist novelist Thomas Pynchon. In turn, Pynchon became a major influence on DeLillo and others including David Foster Wallace, who hanged himself in 2008.

Jack London (1876-1916), the bestselling writer in the world in 1913, was an Atheist who wrote some good adventure fiction as well as Socialist propaganda and committed suicide with a drug overdose in 1916 in despair over the unpopularity of his Socialist cause.

Some characteristics of *Post*-modernism are evident in some of the originators of Modernism: Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) initiated the tradition of experimental Expressionist prose that some Postmodernist fiction writers extended, including Pynchon, Gass, Barth, Hawkes, Barthelme, Adler, and McElroy. Stein was Postmodernist in the obscurity of her prose, and her egocentricity, solipsism, withdrawal from sense into sensibility, arrogance, and elitism.

Ezra Pound (1885-1972), though a great Modernist innovator and a very kind man, was Postmodernist in becoming a fascist, betraying the United States, hating America and going insane.

James Joyce (1882-1941), the Irish genius and supreme Modernist, the most influential experimental writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was also Postmodernist in his cerebral elitism. His long ambitious works are inaccessible to the common reader and require explication by academics. Joyce wrote for professors. Like Eliot, Joyce is most a Modernist and the opposite of a Postmodernist in his affirmation of objectivity, transcendence, and God: "The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence..." Ironically, Joyce's dour secretary Samuel Beckett epitomizes bleak Postmodernism.

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), considered by some the greatest American poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was Postmodernist in being an Atheist, materialist, and hedonist. Only after he had written all his poems did Stevens convert to Christianity. William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) was a secular materialist inclined to Socialism who became the most popular influence on poets of the Postmodern period.

Djuna Barnes (1892-1982) was one of the expatriates in Paris during the 1920s, a lesbian whose novel *Nightwood* (1936) portrays sexual minorities with a Postmodernist vision.

Nathanael West (1904-1940) was a cynical leftwing Atheist screenwriter who wrote the best novel about Hollywood in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *The Day of the Locust* (1939), transcending the absurdity that he blames elderly Christians for threatening a revolution rather than the militant Communists he supported. West died breaking the law, when he ran a red light.

#### INVERSION

The key dynamic of Postmodernism is *inversion*. Postmodernism inverted traditional values, in particular the values of Modernism. The inversion was promoted by secular liberal academics born in the 1930s—during the Great Depression—who converted post-WWII Baby Boomers during the 1960s—future voters for Barack Obama. Many Boomers were radicalized by the Vietnam War, then became academics. The Counterculture of the 1960s demanded immediate justice and peace, blaming traditional American society for all injustice and war. The assassinations of Kennedy, King, and Kennedy and the failure of

liberal programs inverted the idealism of the 1960s into cynicism by the late 1970s, though the most popular countercultural writers had been cynical from the start. Classical liberalism inverted into a totalitarian movement toward Socialism. The liberal crusaders of the 60s who saw themselves as righteous champions of tolerance and free speech inverted their own values later when they moved into positions of authority themselves and during the 1980s they imposed the cultural fascism of Political Correctness, an academic police state dramatized by David Mamet in *Oleanna* (1992).

Postmodern liberal elites inverted moral values with respect to sex, abortion, children, homosexuality, pornography, language, and free speech. Among the *aesthetic* values inverted by Postmodernists are (1) style as the organic expression of significant content to style for its own sake; (2) natural to artificial; (3) universality to singularity; (4) commonality to difference; (5) coherence to fragmentation; (6) integration to disintegration; (7) unity to disorder; and (8) ultimate affirmation to cynical ironic distance and parody. Modernists transcended the spiritual wasteland of modern life—they showed the way out and above. Postmodernists are wastelanders who believe there is no place else.

“One of the great curiosities of this decadent age is the extent to which hallowed values and ambitions from the past have mutated into their opposites...What started out as the free-speech movement at Berkeley in 1964 now appears as a politically correct demand for speech codes, safe spaces, trigger warnings, and constant vigilance against possible ‘micro-aggressions.’ Or think about race relations. In the early 1960s, the rallying cry was for racial integration. Today, at many campuses across the country, colleges are bowing to demands for segregated housing for black students only (Memo to white students: this tactic will not work for you.) There is also a more general mutation, focused not on one issue but a general approach to life. In the Sixties, one saw a rebellion against the idea that colleges stood *in loco parentis* in matters of social and sexual behavior. Students wanted, or said they wanted, the freedom to do as they liked. Today, we see a strange, authoritarian return of the...proctor who seeks simultaneously to impose a new, puritanical regime on campus while at the same time nurturing every certified mode of putatively victimized infatuation. Campuses are hothouses for the exfoliation of every LGBT + extravaganza (the plus sign is a newish innovation meant to forestall laughter at the ever-expanding tail of letters) while at the same time threatening every traditional heterosexual encounter with the stigma of rape.” (*The New Criterion*, October 2016: 1)

#### BELIEF IN GOD

The most significant Postmodernist inversion is from belief in God to Atheism. Surveys of Americans over the years have consistently shown high rates of belief—always a large majority. Yet since the 1960s the secular liberal minority has been able to impose its Atheism in education, journalism, entertainment, and government—even in religious seminaries, as at Harvard.

All the major writers in American literature believed in God until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Franklin (theist), Jefferson and Paine (deists), Poe and Melville, though the latter two defined God differently than most and did not have faith in individual immortality. Twain believed in God but in his late despair equated Him with Satan. Drieser and Norris began as Naturalists but ended as Christian mystics. Four of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century originators of literary Modernism--Stein, Pound, Stevens, and Williams--believed in Art rather than in God, though just before he died, Stevens was converted by a priest and baptized. O’Neill and Fitzgerald, both alcoholics, lost their faith.

All the other Modernists were religious, most explicitly Eliot, Porter, Gordon and O’Connor. E. A. Robinson, Frost and Welty were Christians or Platonists; Cummings, Wilder, Cather, Moore, and Tennessee Williams were Christians; Sherwood Anderson and Hart Crane were pantheists; Hemingway, Faulkner and Steinbeck were both pantheistic--seeing God in Nature--and Christian. The religious dimension gives to much of Modernist literature a cosmic magnitude, intellectual diversity, moral strength, and eternal significance. On the whole, Atheist literature shrinks to triviality in contrast. “Religion and art spring from the same root and are close kin.” (Cather) “It’s only very recently that you couldn’t see how the high arts are intimately connected to religion.” (Marilynne Robinson)

## GOD

God is the most comprehensive idea. The secular liberal exclusion of God from schools and literature is anti-intellectual. As a rule liberal academics even exclude the word *God* from indexes in the books they write about religious writers. They do not want to acknowledge the existence of God. Atheists dislike the very idea of God because they do not want to be held accountable for their actions. They feel superior to religious people, claiming to be accountable to reason and science.

On the contrary: (1) The scientific method is *inductive*, whereas the method of Atheists is *deductive*. Atheists leap to a conclusion based on the mere 4% of the universe known to science, using brains developed to only a small fraction of their capacity, far less than the brain development of dolphins. (2) The mind of a scientist is open, the mind of an Atheist is closed. (3) Many great scientists have been religious: Isaac Newton was a Christian, Albert Einstein was a mystic, and the astronomer who originated the Big Bang Theory prevailing in physics today was a Catholic priest. Wernher von Braun, the scientist who built the V-2 rocket and launched America to the moon, affirmed faith in an afterlife by citing the First Law of Thermodynamics: "Nature does not know extinction; all it knows is transformation. Everything science has taught me, and continues to teach me, strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death."

(4) The "string theory" so influential in physics today posits 10 or more dimensions beyond our own, whereas the major religions posit only one. Atheists believe the more fantastic of possibilities. (5) Furthermore, paranormal researchers throughout the country have been amassing scientific evidence for years confirming Von Braun that there is an afterlife—a dimension of energy beyond this material world consistent with the First Law of Thermodynamics. "Is there a level of energy composed solely of the dead?" (DeLillo) Reason built the scientific instruments that are proving—repeatedly, abundantly, and obviously--the reality of an afterlife. It is irrational and unscientific of Atheists to ignore all the mounting evidence against their materialism. Ironically, they resemble the medieval Catholic clergy who refused to look through the telescope of Galileo. The mainstream media hide from any evidence of an afterlife and ignore the paranormal events being recorded every day. According to the philosopher Arthur Lovejoy there are over 30 different definitions of God, including the equation of God with Nature. Atheists are unable to conceive of God as anything more complex than the Easter Bunny.

(6) Since they cannot prove that God does not exist, Atheists are as much invested in faith as a Christian. In the absence of proof, the purely rational position is agnosticism, as exemplified by Ishmael in *Moby-Dick*, who evolves into a pantheist, illustrating that experience prevails over the limitations of reason. (7) Many scientific studies over the years have consistently proven that people who believe in God are happier than Atheists and that belief is healing to people with mental disorders. A current study concludes that cynics are 3 times more inclined to dementia. (8) Such evidence indicates that raising children to be Atheists is harmful to them, whereas faith empowers them. This is a major theme in *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy. Atheists are demented to oppose improving happiness, mental health and the well being of children. "If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent Him." (Voltaire) (9) Belief in God is also more rational than Atheism because in the end believers have nothing to lose and everything to gain, whereas Atheists have everything to lose and nothing to gain.

"Rail as all atheists will, there is a mysterious, inscrutable divineness in the world—a God... He is now in this room..." (Melville) "The unparticled matter permeating and impelling all things is God." (Poe) "I stood in the laboratory of the Artist who made the world and me." (Thoreau) "I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least." (Whitman) "More than once I have been humiliated by my resemblance to God the father...being made merely in the image of God, but not otherwise resembling Him enough to be mistaken by anybody but a very near-sighted person." (Twain) "God is a distant --stately lover." (Dickinson) "Surely there must be a Creative Divinity, and so a purpose." (Dreiser) "Hell is when no one believes." (DeLillo) "I can see how it might be possible to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how a man could look up into the heavens and say there is no God." (Abraham Lincoln) "To me, a proof of God is in the firmament, the stars." (Faulkner) "I had what the Christians call the 'beatific vision'." (Porter) "The ways of God are, of course, incomprehensible but occasionally one seems to catch a glimpse of the working of God's will." (Gordon) "God has given me

credit for a few things He kindly wrote for me.” (O’Connor) “I would just rather get a little more American Indian than Judeo-Christian in my attitudes toward the earth.” (Stegner) “Our teepees were round like the nests of birds...where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children. But the [whites] have put us in these square boxes. Our power is gone and we are dying, for the power is not in us any more.” (Black Elk) An Atheist went on a vision quest and when he returned the elders of his tribe named him Boy Who Sees Nothing.

## ATHEISM

Atheism (disbelief or absence of God) is characteristic of Postmodernist literature beginning with Henry Adams in his autobiography in 1907, *Martin Eden* by socialist Jack London in 1909, and H. L. Mencken the iconoclast. During the 1930s the international Communist movement converted some writers including Sinclair “Red” Lewis and many critics to Atheism, especially in universities, New York and Hollywood. Richard Wright and John Dos Passos embraced and then repudiated Communism. Atheists are satirized by the Modernists Wilbur Daniel Steele in “The Man Who Saw through Heaven” (1927), Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Hemingway in “The Gambler, the Nun and the Radio” (1938), O’Connor in *Wise Blood* (1952) and *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), and later by DeLillo in *White Noise* (1985). In *The Road* (2006) by McCarthy, Atheists are cannibals who enslave women.

Beginning in the 1940s Atheism infused elite American culture from disillusioned leftist intellectuals in postwar Europe through Existentialist philosophy and Theater of the Absurd, influencing professors, critics, and publishers: Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Genet, Beckett, Camus, Ionesco and others. European art films became very popular in the 1960s: Bergman, Antonioni, Fellini--especially *La Dolce Vita*. Intending to dramatize that life is Godless and hence meaningless, the absurdists demonstrated that Atheism is absurd--characterized by alienation and angst—at best. “In every unbeliever’s heart there is an uneasy feeling that, after all, he may awake and find himself immortal. This is the punishment for his unbelief. This is the agnostic’s hell.” (Mencken)

Existentialism begins on the premise of Atheism or agnosticism but American literature moves beyond pessimistic denial—beyond the squid to the white whale in *Moby-Dick* (1851), beyond *nada* in “A Clean Well-Lighted Place” (1927) by Hemingway, *Invisible Man* (1952) by Ellison, and *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) by Bellow. Atheism in American literature is a phase in development to something better, until Postmodernism. As is most evident in the frequently adolescent tone of Pynchon, especially in *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973), Atheism is arrested psychological development.

During the 1950s, supporting the Socialist agenda of replacing faith in God with faith in the State, liberal elites in America began applying the doctrine “Separation of Church and State,” which is not in the U.S. Constitution. Religious expression by individuals in public is not the same as the State establishing a religion. Relying on this illogic is irrational. Yet Atheists govern American culture. *A minority in effect established Atheism as the State religion of the United States*. Agnostics enabled the Atheists. In 2009 the U.S. Department of Justice declared Atheism a religion for tax purposes in reference to the Freedom from Religion Foundation. Belief in God is not a tenet of all religions--Buddhism and Taoism, for example. In 2013 the U.S. Internal Revenue Service was exposed as having for years discriminated against and harassed Christian religious groups but not Atheists.

In 2009 a U.S. Department of Homeland Security memorandum listed pro-life and Evangelical Christian groups as threats to national security. In 2013, during the Obama administration, members of the Atheist movement set up a monument attesting to their faith explicitly in rebuttal to a Christian monument and started demanding Atheist chaplains in the military. Christians in the military have been punished for expressing their faith: An Air Force combat veteran was relieved of duty and threatened with court martial because he did not agree with his lesbian commander on gay marriage. Other military officers warned troops they could face discipline and possible court martial if they expressed their faith or donated to a popular ministry. The Veterans Administration banned the words “God” and “God bless you” at military funerals at a national cemetery and the Air Force Academy removed “so help me God” from a sign that had offered inspiration to cadets. Recent Army briefings listed Catholicism, Evangelical Christianity, and pro-life organizations as extremist groups. The Air Force censored a video made by a chaplain because it included the word “God” and might offend Muslims and Atheists.



Today a single Atheist in a public gathering can by intimidation and litigation deny the majority their Constitutional rights to religious expression and free speech. Currently the liberal elites, under 10% of the population, are depriving over 70% of their Constitutional rights. Our government does not accommodate different religions as it accommodates different races. Liberal elites are minorities who have increased their power since the 1960s by promoting minority rights over majority rights, taking away basic American liberties—*freedom of association, freedom of speech, and freedom of religious expression*. Liberals inverted Democracy. “The minority of a country is never known to agree, except in its efforts to reduce and oppress the majority.” (James Fenimore Cooper)

The most popular countercultural novelist of the 1960s was the Atheist fantasy writer Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.: “Say what you will about the sweet miracle of unquestioning faith, I consider a capacity for it terrifying and absolutely vile.” Vile? Vonnegut is typical of Atheists who hate religious people. Greg Gutfield: “In the high school that is America, God is, like, such a nerd.... But that’s not what gets me. There are plenty of atheists who find better uses of their time than denigrating the religious. My targets are those who trash religion to elevate their coolness. For them, bragging that they’re a ‘lapsed Catholic’ in order to nervously score cool points in a public setting shows me how desperate they are for approval...The only thing you’re ‘lapsed’ in is your ability to discern a level of interest in your stupid, predictable asides about how dumb your religious family is. You’re ‘lapsed’ in an ability to put your family before feeling cool.... Fact is, the cool, who are almost entirely liberal by default, are also anti-religious to a fault. You cannot be religious and cool. According to the purveyors of cool, God cannot be cool because He replaces badass, existential, beret-wearing, clove-smoking nihilism. And religion competes with the artificial charity of government, which exists to support you in your existentialism. And so liberals...have replaced God with government.” (*Not Cool*, 2014)

Atheism is now Politically Correct. Feminists enforce it. The liberal sophist professor Stanley Fish declared on television that he had set out to destroy T. S. Eliot. Elite liberal critics have punished writers with religious faith—Gordon and O’Connor for example: Irving Howe called O’Connor “smug,” Harold Bloom dismissed “her pious admirers” while declaring that O’Connor would have been a better writer if she had restrained her “spiritual tendentiousness,” and John Burt rejected the entire spiritual tradition of western literature as politically incorrect: “To claim transcendence is to leap outside of the [secular] rules which govern the conventional discourse of unbelievers [atheists] and to speak a language which from without must be indistinguishable from nonsense [making] interpretation, or even appreciation... impossible” [This rejects Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, Hawthorne, Dickinson, and most of American literature.] John Updike belittled O’Connor for her “pinpoint tunnel to Jesus at the end of all perspectives.” Liberals insist on a pinpoint tunnel to themselves at the end of all perspectives.

Since the 1960s writers have been subjected to a literary publishing culture monopolized by secular liberals who consider religious faith a conservative superstition—outside “the rules.” *The Language Police* (2003) by Diane Ravitch (a Democrat) documents censorship by the Feminist editors who took control of literary publishing in the 1980s. The word *God* is among the hundreds of words they banned. In effect overall, religious faith has been censored. Writers know it. No one goes to church in a Postmodernist novel. In Tim O’Brien’s novel *Going After Cacciato* (1979) he gives the impression that no American soldiers in the Vietnam War were religious. “After the death of God, proclaimed by Nietzsche, the dissolution of society was inevitable. Only the Self remained. And the Void all around it... This is the song [Postmodernist] American literature sings.” (Ihab Hassan, *Radical Innocence*, 1961: 326)

## SOCIALISM

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. is a representative liberal in declaring that “Karl Marx got a bum rap.” Postmodern liberals overall inverted the main traditional ideals of American literature: Affirmation of (1) the spirit over the flesh in the individual; (2) idealism over materialism in society; (3) self-reliance over collectivism in government; (4) spiritual and legal equality. In opposition, Atheists are materialists who do not believe in the spirit; Postmodernists affirm the flesh rather than the spirit; liberals replaced the ideals of equality and merit with prejudices in favor of select groups (themselves); Socialists are group thinkers whose U.S. congressional representatives unanimously passed a massive health care bill without reading it (2010). “It covers the surface of society with a network of small complicated rules...and stupefies a people...reduced

to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.... I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America.” (Tocqueville, 1835)

Modernists (1909-1962) were politically diverse and tolerant of dissent, from William Carlos Williams on the far left to Ezra Pound on the far right. Williams and Pound were good friends. Though they were innovators in aesthetics, most Modernists were conservatives in politics--Republicans even, including Gertrude Stein. Postmodernists are all secular liberals inclined to Socialism and contempt for dissenters, as exemplified by the most elitist Postmodernist novelist, John Barth: “Distressing as the fact is to us liberal Democrats, the commonality, alas, will *always* lose their way and their souls.” Cormac McCarthy counters: “Those who are afflicted with this notion are the first ones to give up their souls, their freedom.” Currently academic liberals refer to “late capitalism” as if Socialism is a foregone conclusion. In 2014 during the Obama administration, a national poll revealed that 82 percent feared our own federal government more than any external threat. In 2015, according to Gallup, 49 percent considered the federal government “an *immediate threat* to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens.”

Puritans at Plymouth: “And for men’s wives to be commanded to do service for other men, as dressing their meat, washing their clothes, etc., they deemed it a kind of slavery, neither could many husbands well brook it.” (William Bradford on failure of communism, 1623). “The worst wheel of the cart makes the most noise.” (Franklin) “Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition.” (Jefferson) “The disposition of all power is to abuses.” (Cooper) “The less government we have, the better—the fewer laws, and the less confided power.” (Emerson) “[Socialism] steals from the people, without its knowledge, the power of choosing its own rulers.” (Hawthorne) “I saw that the State was half-witted...and I lost all my remaining respect for it.... The character of the American people has done all that has been accomplished, and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way.” (Thoreau) “Today it is not big business that we have to fear. It is big government.” (Wendell Phillips)

“I was a Socialist for two weeks but when a couple of Socialists assured me I had no right to think differently from any other Socialist and then quarreled with each other about what Socialism meant, I ran away.” (Stephen Crane) “Don’t go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first.” (Twain) “You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich.... You cannot further the brotherhood of man by practicing class hatred.” (Abraham Lincoln) “One thing is sure until there are rich again everybody will be poor.” (Gertrude Stein) “Socialism never took root in America because the poor see themselves not as an exploited proletariat, but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires.” (Steinbeck) “The kind of person who can persuade himself that the world would be completely happy if everyone denied himself a vast number of free decisions, is the same kind of person who could persuade himself that in early life he had been thwarted and denied all free decisions.” (Wilder) “Things in our country run in spite of the government not by aid of it.” (Will Rogers) “The best things and best people arise out of their separateness; I’m against a homogenized society because I want the cream to rise.” (Frost) “For every ill in human life God made a cure, and it would all work out right some day if the reformer will only let it.” (Cather)

“All working political systems, even those professing to originate in moral grandeur, are based upon and operate by contempt of human life and the individual fate.” (Porter) “What you wanted was the minimum of government, always less government.” (Hemingway) “It seems to me that the totalitarian people use people...just for their own power.” (Faulkner) “Only men who confuse themselves with God would dare to pretend in this anguished and bloody era that they know the exact road to the promised land.” (Adlai Stevenson) “You can fool too many of the people too much of the time.” (Thurber) “There is, I believe, a threat when industrialism is linked to a political doctrine which has as its goal the subjugation of the world.” (Ellison) “I’m pro-American and the radical political involvements seem to tend elsewhere.” (Kerouac) “The Young Communist League, particularly, of which I attended three or four meetings ...struck me as being quite insane.” (Stegner) “Communism is the opiate of the intellectuals, no cure except as a guillotine might be called a cure for dandruff.” (Clare Boothe Luce) “You cannot observe people through an ideology. Your ideology observes for you.” (Philip Roth)

“Life is unfair.” (John F. Kennedy) “Nowadays I’m certainly not ready to advocate a tightly organized planned economy.... I’m in deadly fear of people with too much power.” (Arthur Miller) “Anything important is never left to the vote of the people.” (Rogers) “Never underestimate the power of the State to act out its own massive fantasies” (DeLillo) “When fanatics are on top there is no limit to oppression.” (Mencken) “Invariably the most dangerous people seek the power.” (Bellow) “It’s leveling everything by decimating what works.” (John Irving) “I am hard-pressed to see an instance where the intervention of government led to much beyond sorrow.” (David Mamet) “It is capitalist America that produced the modern independent woman.” (Camille Paglia) “Are we total pussies?” (David Foster Wallace)

### “EQUALITY”

“Americans are so enamored of equality that they would rather be equal in slavery than unequal in freedom”; “While democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude.” (Tocqueville, 1835) “The egalitarianism that [Jesus] preached was anything but the political egalitarianism that we know today, and it is thus absurd to call Him, as many do, the Father of Socialism. What He had in mind was not political or economic equality, but simply the equality of man before God.” (Mencken) In *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) Sherwood Anderson defines the monomania of secular liberals: “The moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.” By demanding equality of outcomes, imposing double standards, privileging some while demonizing others, suppressing merit, censoring dissent, and institutionalizing sexism and racism, liberals have turned the ideal of Equality into a falsehood and made themselves grotesque. “Not all horses are equal. A few were born to win.” (Twain) “No one enjoys being equal.” (David Mamet) “Nothing is equal.” (John Irving)

### REALISM

After the 1960s, Realism continued to be the mainstream tradition in American fiction. Realism is the mode of fiction most valuable to society, for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, after 1970 academic and New York critics elevated Academic Expressionism to the most elite literary status—Gaddis, Pynchon, Barth, Barthelme and others—while creative writing programs continued for the most part to sustain the tradition of Realism. The academic critics identified disruptive radical form in fiction with their own “progressive” politics while identifying traditional literary form with conservative politics, as when Frederick R. Karl of NYU faults Saul Bellow in *American Fictions 1940-1980* and when a current professor online blames the dullness of contemporary fiction from writing programs not on the Politically Correct liberal instructors but on conservatives during the Cold War that ended over a quarter century ago!

In contrast to Academic Expressionists, most Realists transcend politics because they try to: (1) be objective; (2) report facts; (3) create the illusion of real life; (4) choose representative characters, situations, and themes; (5) transcend race, gender, class, political party and sexual orientation; (6) reveal universal truths of human nature and society; (7) debunk Romanticism, illusions, propaganda, hypocrisies, and lies.

Academic Expressionists such as Pynchon, Hawkes, Barth and Barthelme invert Realism to the extreme of rejecting objective reality: “Reality is a nice place to visit but you wouldn’t want to live there... Reality is a drag.” (Barth) Alexis de Tocqueville predicted Postmodernist decadence in *Democracy in America* (1835), that the liberal trend toward Socialism would make literature increasingly unrealistic: “I rather apprehend that it will be forever losing itself in the clouds, and that it will range at last to purely imaginary regions.... Style will frequently be fantastic...overburdened, and loose...there will be more...imagination than profundity... The objects of authors will be to astonish rather than to please.”

The great diversity of fiction after the 1960s may be sorted along a spectrum between the poles of Realism to Fantasy, which includes science fiction and forms of Academic Expressionism such as cyberfiction, metafiction, and fabulation--mostly the same fiction variously defined by different academics. Realists write about the world around them, Academic Expressionists about the worlds in their own heads. Realism is egalitarian in being about and accessible to common people, whereas Academic Expressionism is elitist in content and accessibility, though written by liberals who claim to be egalitarian.

Short story writers in particular carried on the tradition of mainstream Realism. The most numerous writers of the Realist movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were regionalist local colorists like Mary Wilkins Freeman and Hamlin Garland. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century also some writers are identified with geographical regions—Bobbie Ann Mason with Kentucky, Stuart Dybeck with Chicago, the Catholic J. F. Powers with the Midwest, and so on—but “regionalism” is sociological as well. Joy Williams renders middle-class failures and colorful quirky characters. Grace Paley, Tillie Olson, and Laurie Moore represent the “region” of women, the friendly black Realist James Alan McPherson writes from the place where blacks and whites meet and Ann Beattie has been said to be “the voice of her generation.” For a writer to be identified with a generation has usually meant that subsequent generations do not find the writer to be as pertinent anymore, with the exception of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who wrote a masterpiece. Raymond Carver got stereotyped as a “Minimalist,” a literary fashion instigated by his editor, who edited Carver to death except in a few stories—especially “Cathedral.” Minimalism is a form of escapist pseudo-Realism so reductive and simplistic and barren it is unreal.

The accessible novels of Anne Tyler and Richard Ford carry on the tradition of commonplace Realism originated by William Dean Howells. The fiction of Tobias Wolfe illustrates how powerful reportorial Realism can be in works such as “In the Garden of the North American Martyrs” and *The Barracks Thief*. Since the innovations of the Modernists, most Realists have adopted some Modernist techniques to enhance their Realism. For example, two of the most anthologized short stories in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson and “The Enormous Radio” by John Cheever, both establish a ground of convincing detailed Realism that gives credibility to the powerful surrealist metaphor in the title.

John Irving’s career took off only after he abandoned commonplace Realism. In subsequent novels, like Jackson and Cheever he establishes a ground of detailed concrete Realism through narrative and dialogue that lead to bizarre and often very coincidental events in the modes of liberal parable and fairy tale. T. Coraghessan Boyle is a Realist at least in that he often bases his many novels and over 100 short stories on research in pursuit of truth, but he is very diverse in modes and styles and is more precisely a “magical realist.” John Updike lays a bed of realistic details for his fantasies of adultery in suburbia and decorates his amours with metaphors like strewing flower petals on the bedsheets. He got rich exploiting the sexual revolution, as did Philip Roth without the metaphors. The explicit sex common in Postmodernist fiction after the 1960s is intended to shock and titillate and sell, often giving it an adolescent tone.

Robert Stone and Russell Banks wrote ambitious Realist novels with some Modernist characteristics. Stone’s *A Hall of Mirrors* (1966) is enhanced by effective Expressionism, *Dog Soldiers* (1974) renders well the post-Vietnam War drug culture, whereas *Children of Light* (1986) dramatizes a filming of Chopin’s *The Awakening* with accurate interpretation and repulsive Hollywood characters. William Styron is an important Realist for his two historical novels *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), depicting the famous slave revolt of 1831, and *Sophie’s Choice* (1979), a poignant dramatization of the Holocaust. *Nat Turner* provoked such a firestorm of angry reactions from some black critics that the backlash experienced by Styron combined with ongoing criticism of *Huckleberry Finn* discouraged white fiction writers afterward from depicting black characters except as idealized victims, contributed to the rise of Political Correctness, and encouraged the replacement of objective Realism by liberal Fantasy as the most characteristic literary mode of Postmodernism.

The major Realist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, staunch defender of the Realist tradition--is Wallace Stegner--the prolific novelist, short story writer, historian, critic, mentor of other novelists, and conservationist. In his shortest stories, Stegner resembles the subtle Chekhov, whereas in his longer fictions he carries on the Realist tradition of psychological analysis originating with Henry James and Edith Wharton. His novel *All the Little Live Things* (1967) is a suburban reply to *Walden*, a rebuttal to Thoreau, a critique of the 1960s counterculture, an analysis of 6 different relationships to Nature, and a poignant celebration of an heroic young woman. Stegner’s major contribution to the development of narrative technique, especially in this novel and in *The Angle of Repose* (1971), is maintaining the continuity and momentum of a linear storyline while integrating Modernist techniques including the violation of chronology, stream of consciousness, multiple points of view, and the mythic method.

## ETHNIC FICTION

Ethnic fiction is about an ethnic group, usually in the traditions of Realism and Naturalism, dramatizing problems of loss, identity, inequality, adaptation, assimilation, and retention of heritage. “The literature that seems important...is being written mainly by members of minority groups.” (Stegner) Ethnic is arguably the most socially valuable form of literary Realism because it gives voices to minorities and increases racial understanding, even when the voice is hotly polarized, such as David Bradley in *The Chaneyville Incident* (1981) and John Edgar Wideman in *Philadelphia Fire* (1990), sermons against racism based upon true historical events.

Less censored by *white* Political Correctness, ethnic minority writers are more likely than white writers to include the spiritual dimension—religious faith, ghosts, visions, myths—giving their works a greater depth and resonance, often in the international mode of Expressionism called “magical realism.” Carlos Castaneda from Peru became a guru of the 1960s drug culture in America with his series of anti-social self-help books, supposedly anthropology but actually paranormal fiction celebrating hallucinatory drug experiences and his apprenticeship with the Yaqui Indian sorcerer Don Juan—the best is *Journey to Ixtlan* (1972). The distinguished Oscar Hijuelas is not overtly political in *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989), in the genre of immigrant assimilation stories.

After the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s ethnic fiction became widely popular as exemplified by the television miniseries *Roots* in 1977, attracting 130 million viewers. Perhaps the most deeply moving ethnic fiction of the period is *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971), by Ernest J. Gaines, black history told through the memories of a former slave woman 110 years old—adapted on television in 1974. Also outstanding is *Middle Passage* (1990) by Charles R. Johnson, dramatizing the final voyage of an illegal American slave ship in 1830, winner of the National Book Award. Usually an ethnic fiction is so universally human it transcends race through archetypal experience, “To Hell with Dying” (1968) for example, by Alice Walker. Toni Morrison insists on her feminist Afrocentricity yet likewise often transcends identity through her art, especially in *Song of Solomon* (1977). Ishmael Reed, another black Postmodernist, is a male counter to Morrison in the gender war, as in *Reckless Eyeballing* (1986).

Unlike the Postmodernism of elite white Academic Expressionists such as Barth, who are just playing intellectual games, the Postmodernism of many black and other multicultural writers is a serious authentic expression of their deepest experience—invisibility, alienation, double consciousness, discontinuity, fragmentation, and so on—fundamentally Realistic in the sense of being true to their real lives. Black writers such as Morrison are popular because they have heart and soul, in contrast to white academics like Barth who seem to have none. In this respect, ethnic minority Postmodernists are exceptions to some of the generalizations here about white Postmodernists, especially in their spirituality.

*The Joy Luck Club* (1987) by Amy Tan, portraying the Chinese-American experience, became such a popular novel it got translated into 35 languages and was adapted into a successful movie in 1993. Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1976), rendering the girlhood and adaptation of a Chinese girl to American life, is widely taught in universities. Kingston has a Postmodernist sensibility and aesthetics that sometimes distance the common reader.

The most transcendent of all the ethnic novels from this period is *Love Medicine* (1984) by Louise Erdrich, about relationships of Chippewa Indian families on their reservation. Indian pastoralism is contrasted to the puritanism of local Catholic nuns. The best historical American Indian novel dramatizes the last stand of the southern Blackfeet, *Fools Crow* (1986), by James Welch, culminating in the Marias Massacre of Blackfoot women and children by the U.S. Cavalry in 1870. As the first western tribe to acquire rifles, from British fur traders, the Blackfeet had driven other western tribes out of their former hunting grounds and were trying to drive out the whites. *The Open Hearth* (2000) by Thomas Doulis is an historical novel of Greek immigrants in the steel industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, masterful Realism with colorful characters, warm humanity, and humor.

The major Jewish novelists transcend ethnicity. Their context is usually the world, as in *Catch-22* (1961) by Joseph Heller, whose later subjects became more Jewish, and in *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* (1970) by

Bellow, who was criticized by some Jewish critics for not being Jewish enough. His most Jewish novel is probably *Herzog* (1964), while his transcendence of ethnicity is greatest in his novella *The Victim* (1947) and in his Modernist novel *Henderson the Rain King* (1959). So far as I have seen there is no evidence of his ethnicity in the fiction of Norman Mailer. Bernard Malamud tends to write fables transcending race even in his short story "The Jewbird" (1963), but especially in his baseball novel *The Natural* (1952), though in *A New Life* (1961) his professor is a hero for being a Jewish radical in a conservative college. Malamud is most Jewish in his prizewinning historical novel *The Fixer* (1966) about the persecution of a Jew in Russia. Philip Roth writes about being Jewish as a critic rather than an advocate, alienating many Jews from the start with his debut collection *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959).

#### MODERNIST TRADITION

Toni Morrison uses Modernist techniques including archetypal symbolism and the mythic method, yet she rejects universality and common humanity—a contradiction. Her *Tar Baby* (1981) in particular, though beautifully written, is bitterly Afrocentric, reducing her vision to identity politics. The ending is also Postmodernist in being escapist, as the hero runs away from reality—into a fantasy of the past—as does the mythic ancestor in *Song of Solomon* (1977) who flies back to Africa.

Marilynne Robinson, author of 4 of the best novels published since 1980, is the opposite of Morrison in being what she calls a Christian realist, resisting Postmodernism and affirming universality, redemption and the Spirit. Though she is a humanistic Calvinist, her aesthetic values are Modernist in the tradition of T. S. Eliot, Porter, Gordon, and O'Connor. Also like Jonathan Edwards and Emily Dickinson, she is able to evoke transcendent consciousness. At the same time, like Wallace Stegner, she is a disciplined Realist in not allowing artfulness to distort the illusion of reality for the reader, maintaining Neoclassical control over Expressionism.

Cormac McCarthy is one of the most powerful American novelists, alongside Hemingway and Melville, especially in *Blood Meridian* (1985) and *The Road* (2006). He is Gothic in his apocalyptic tone and emphasis on horror, violence, and death; a Naturalist in his emphasis on deterministic forces and his depiction of beastly human nature; a Realist in his ferocious rebuttals to the naïve counterculture, liberals, political correctness, and cerebral Academic Expressionism. Transcending his Gothic vision of Godless people, McCarthy is a Modernist in his evocative prose styles, archetypal symbolism, affirmation of the transcendent human spirit and belief in God.

Don DeLillo is a would-be Modernist who wrote the best satire of Postmodernist consciousness, *White Noise* (1985). Yet he himself is mostly a Postmodernist. He lost his faith and has been wandering around in the wasteland trying to recover it: "I feel this immensity in my soul every second of my life"; "I think there is a sense of last things in my work that probably comes from a Catholic childhood"; "I couldn't make the leap out of my own soul into the soul of the universe."

#### 1960s COUNTERCULTURAL FICTION

Jack Kerouac had soul, as well as love of God and country. His *On the Road* (1958)—in the bohemian tradition of Whitman's "Song of the Open Road" (1855)—became a model of countercultural rebellion to later generations. By 1961, however, Postmodernists were rejecting God and country. *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller, a satire of WWII military bureaucracy, introduced the Postmodernist pose of ironic distance and themes of Atheism, alienation, absurdity and angst. *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) by Vonnegut uses the allied bombing of Dresden, where he was a prisoner of war, as a basis for pacifism even though he later acknowledged in interviews that the bombing might have been necessary. Vonnegut embodies the self-righteous liberal hypocrisy that led to Political Correctness. *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) by Pynchon, the epic of a penis exalted as a great novel by Postmodernists with bad taste, likewise blames America for defending itself. *Going After Cacciato* (1979) by O'Brien gives the impression that America fought the Vietnam War not to help an ally resist totalitarian Communism, but to murder peasants and machinegun their water buffaloes. All these countercultural war novels are escapist. All the protagonists run away from reality and from America—to Sweden, France, Nazi Germany, and outer space.

Pynchon saw himself as the literary bridge between the Beatniks of the 1950s and the hippies of the 1960s, which he accomplished with both *V.* (1963) and *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966): “When the hippie resurgence came along... Beat prophets were resurrected”; “Kerouac and the Beat writers.” After the 1960s Pynchon became the primary model for younger writers such as DeLillo and Wallace and *Lot 49* became the usual novel used in courses to illustrate elite intellectual Postmodernism.

More representative of the 1960s counterculture as a whole is *Trout Fishing in America* (1967): (1) youthful rejection of all authority and convention; (2) following the anarchistic example of Thoreau in withdrawing from conformist society and in becoming more spontaneous and natural; (3) freewheeling, impulsive and unpredictable in form and style; (4) continuing the elegiac *Gatsby* theme of the supposed end of the American Dream; (5) nostalgic for a pastoral innocent young America uncorrupted by adult modern society--on the cover Brautigan is dressed like a frontiersman; and (6) clinging to a utopian dream of combining personal anarchism with communalism in society as a whole—a contradiction. The book is a collection of fragments, as Brautigan himself rejects the ideal of harmonious unity, or is incapable of it. Brautigan shot himself in the head at the age of 49 and Wallace hung himself at the age of 46.

*Trout Fishing* also has aesthetic characteristics of Academic Expressionism such as rejection of literary traditions and conventions, disconnection, fragmentation, unpredictability, playfulness, unreal characters, lack of closure. Another novel that displays attitudes popular in the 1960s counterculture is *Another Roadside Attraction* (1968) by Tom Robbins, as simple as a comic book. Other countercultural novelists including Pynchon and Ken Kesey stated that adolescent comic books were a major influence on their writing. Like Brautigan, this *Roadside* dreamer craves “the luxury of being simultaneously involved and detached”—both communal and independent. He thinks “The governments of the U.S. and [Communist] Russia are practically the same.” One character in the novel is named Marx, but readers should not expect this book to mean anything: “To look for meaning—or the lack of it—in things is a game played by beings of limited consciousness.” Nevertheless, Jesus is portrayed as “betrayed” by his religion and is not in Heaven but is a mummy hidden in the Vatican, wrapped in linens “as if the Messiah were an immense overcooked weenie in a tattered bun.” Christianity is a lie. “There is no limit to the nonsense some people expect you to swallow.” Instead of God, Robbins believes in Tarzan. But this was before the onset of feminist Political Correctness when Jane got really mad.

The countercultural novel most likely to endure is *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) by Ken Kesey, because it dramatizes the archetypal conflict between freedom and control, the individual and the State, with the simplicity of a comic book and the power of a nightmare. *Lot 49* is complex, obscure, and undramatic. There are no characters in it, only ideas. *Going After Cacciato* has a more significant structure and chapters of brilliant writing, but the vision is wimpy. Kesey easily pins O'Brien to the mat. Kesey is a Libertarian, not a hippie. He fights restrictions on freedom, in this case represented by Big Nurse, who is essentially a Feminist with an animus against men under her control. The mental hospital that performs lobotomies on men who offend the women in control is a metaphor of American society as a whole. The Feminist movement of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century made *Cuckoo's Nest* more pertinent. The indoctrination of students to be Politically Correct is a form of psychological lobotomy.

Nostalgic liberals still portray the 1960s counterculture as upbeat about peace and love and brotherhood. But the writers they liked most were not flower children. Carlos Castaneda became their guru for a succession of 5 paranormal fiction books about a sorcerer's apprentice that pretended to be science. Liberals believed his hoax of course. Liberal professors at UCLA awarded him a Ph.D. in Anthropology. Young people experimenting with drugs felt validated by Castaneda's view that civilized people *need* to take drugs to liberate themselves from convention and rational consciousness. This guru preaches total disengagement from society, escape from all responsibility, contempt for ordinary people, anarchistic individualism, cynicism, solipsism, hedonism, deception, Atheism, and being a warrior in relation to other people: “It's better to get something worthwhile done using deception than to fail to get something worthwhile done using truth.” The end justifies the means as Hitler said. “What determines the way one does anything is personal power”; “A warrior doesn't know remorse for anything he has done”; “All paths are the same: they lead nowhere”; “A warrior acts as if he knows what he is doing, when in effect he knows nothing.”

Kurt Vonnegut was even more popular with the counterculture: "If adultery is wickedness then so is food"; "There aren't any [women in my books]. No real women, no love"; "What makes you think a writer isn't a drug salesman?"; "Being alive is a crock of shit"; "There is not a chance in hell of America becoming humane and reasonable"; "You realize, of course, that everything I say is horseshit." Pynchon: "You can't win, things are going to get worse before they get better, who says they're going to get better"; "A pose I found congenial in those days...was that of somber glee at any idea of mass destruction or decline"; "Might as well trust somebody evil once in awhile"; "I was hugely tickled by all forms of marijuana humor"; "It is difficult to perceive just what the fuck is happening here."

The best literary critiques of the counterculture and its literature are: "Squeal" (1957) by Louis Simpson, parody of the poem "Howl" (1955) by Allen Ginsberg; "On the Sidewalk" (1959) by John Updike, parody of *On the Road* by Kerouac; *All the Little Live Things* (1967), the complex novel by Wallace Stegner in rebuttal to Thoreau and the likes of Ken Kesey; *Slouching toward Bethlehem* (1968), essays by Joan Didion; *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test* (1968), the satire of Kesey and his Merry Pranksters on their hip-critical bus trip by Tom Wolfe in a dazzling prose style; *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), the somber novel by Saul Bellow. "The Sixties produced no enduring innovation in aesthetics." (Charles Newman, *The Post-Modern Aura*, Northwestern U 1985: 6)

### POSTMODERNIST AESTHETICS

"Where there is no belief in the soul, there is very little drama." (Flannery O'Connor)

"The time for Beauty is over." (Newman, *The Post-Modern Aura*, 24)

Modernists with few exceptions studied the classics. The most influential Postmodernists, though very academic, were poorly educated in the art of fiction: "I rarely read fiction and generally don't enjoy it." (William Gass, professor of philosophy) "I have trouble reading... I would rather drink, talk, or listen to music." (Donald Barthelme, graphic designer) The most elite theorist of Postmodernist aesthetics John Barth dismisses all fiction that differs from his: "It's dismaying to see so many of our writers following Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy or Flaubert or Balzac" [instead of me]. Barth belonged in the fashion industry. Thomas Pynchon: "I had grown up reading a lot of spy fiction... Against the undeniable power of tradition, we were attracted by such centrifugal lures as Norman Mailer's 'The White Negro,' the wide availability of recorded jazz, and a book I still believe is one of the great American novels, *On the Road*, by Jack Kerouac." The countercultural novelists were even less educated than the academics. Ken Kesey actually opposed studying the classics, read *On the Road* three times and little else. Tom Robbins read *Tarzan* comic books. The most popular countercultural novelist, Kurt Vonnegut said, "I couldn't play games with my literary ancestors, since I had never studied them systematically"; "I wrote without having made a systematic study of great literature." And Don DeLillo: "I didn't study much of anything"; "I was too much of a Bronx kid to read Emerson or Hawthorne."

"All modern [Postmodern] art is unpopular.... It is antipopular... When we analyze the new style we find that it contains certain closely connected tendencies. It tends (1) to dehumanize art, (2) to avoid living forms, (3) to see to it that the work of art is nothing but a work of art, (4) to consider art as play and nothing else, (5) to be essentially ironical, (6) to beware of sham and hence to aspire to a scrupulous realization, (7) to regard art as a thing of no transcending consequence.... To stylize means to deform reality, to derealize; style involves dehumanization.... There is no other means of stylizing except by dehumanization. Whereas Realism, exhorting the artist faithfully to follow reality, exhorts him to abandon style.... It may be said that the new art has so far produced nothing worth while, and I am inclined to think the same." (Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art*, Doubleday/Anchor 1956: 4-5, 13, 50)

"The aesthetic concept of literature, the very concept of literature as an art, has been under attack most insistently in recent decades.... The political attack, which makes literature a reactionary force though it obviously can be and has been the opposite; the linguistic attack, which despairs of the very possibility of speech; and the anti-aesthetic attack, which revolts against quality and form in favor of sub-literature or the impersonal permutations of the computer.... The dissolution of the concept of literature proceeds thus in two opposite directions: toward impersonal technology or toward subliterate, toward kitsch....



The artist has become too big for art: he regards anything he makes or does as art... We can't distinguish between a masterpiece and junk.... The inclusion in art of the ugly, the formless, the disorderly, the outrageous and obscene... Even the hospital urinal submitted by Marcel Duchamp or the grocery boxes of Andy Warhol are, somehow, works of art... A 'sculptor,' Christo, wrapped a million square feet of Australian coastline in plastic.... The new barbarism, the know-nothingism, the mindless repudiation of the past in favor of so-called 'relevance'—one trusts that these are only a passing mood dominating in the United States at this moment. We may reflect that this crisis of the concept of literature is confined to small, largely academic circles in France and the United States." (Rene Wellek, *The Attack on Literature*, U North Carolina 1982: 9-11, 17-18)

#### ACADEMIC EXPRESSIONISM

Academic Expressionism is academic in that it is written mostly by academics for other academics, is unpopular outside the academic bubble, and requires reading academic criticism to understand.

The Postmodernist inversion of Modernist aesthetics manifest in Academic Expressionism may be seen in the following polarities: Generally, elite Postmodernist writers—Pynchon, Barth, Hawkes, Barthelme--replaced (1) organic with artificial; (2) form with anti-form; (3) design with chance; (4) determinacy with indeterminacy; (5) purpose with play; (6) aesthetic distance with participation; (7) semantics with rhetoric; (8) narrative with anti-narrative; (9) depth with surface; (10) metaphysics with irony; (11) centering with dispersal; (12) creation/totalization/synthesis with deconstruction and antithesis; (13) finished work/art object with process/performance/happening. Some of these and other polarities are listed by Ihab Hassan in "The Culture of Postmodernism," *Theory, Culture and Society* 2 (1985): 119-32.

"Literature is constitutionally reactionary." (Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques*, Paris, 1964: 254) "The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending on where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost. Oedipa did not know where she was"; "Why should things be easy to understand?" (Pynchon) "We have passed the point in civilization where we can ever look at anything as an art work." (Mailer) "I began to write fiction on the assumption that the true enemies of the novel were plot, character, setting and theme, and having once abandoned these familiar ways of thinking about fiction, totality of vision or structure was really all that remained.... For me, everything depends on language." (Hawkes) "The principle of collage is the central principle of all art in the twentieth century in all media." (Donald Barthelme) "I always felt that it was a bad idea...to write a more or less realistic fiction"; "The very idea of the controlling artist has been condemned as politically reactionary, even fascist"; "The possibility of constructing a fantastically baroque plot appealed to me most"; "[I] tell complicated stories simply for the aesthetic pleasure of complexity." (Barth) "Just fuck it, it doesn't really matter what their names are." (Vonnegut)

"The relation between the literary world and the academic world was closer than ever [1970], so close, in fact, that it was affecting the history of American literature. Signs of inbreeding had begun to appear. Among the productive novelists attached to faculties were John Barth, Saul Bellow, Vance Bourjaily, Kay Boyle, George P. Elliott, John Gardner, Mark Harris, John Hawkes, and Hortense Calisher, to mention only a few, and I shan't even try to list the poets, critics, and biographers who were tenured professors." (Malcolm Cowley, *Portable*, 561n.)

Other writers in academe have included Morrison, Gordon, Allen Tate, Stegner, Robinson, Roth, Robert Stone, Tobias Wolfe, T. C. Boyle, Russell Banks, Albert Guerard, John L'Heureux, Gilbert Sorrentino, Tim O'Brien, James B. Hall, Joyce Carol Oates, Robert Coover, Walker Percy, Reynolds Price, Ann Beattie, Richard Ford, Speer Morgan, Donald Barthelme, Frederick Barthelme, A. B. Paulson, Thomas Doulis, John Edgar Wideman, David Bradley, Jayne Anne Phillips, Jay Parini, Barry Hannah, Stuart Dybeck, Joy Williams, Richard Bausch, Mary Gaitskill, Ron Hansen, Jamaica Kincaid, Edward P. Jones, Mona Simpson, Amy Bloom, Peter Ho Davies, Aimee Bender, Gary Lutz, Mary Caponegro. And many more. These writers are very diverse of course, ranging along a wide spectrum from Realism to Academic Expressionism, from Stegner to Barth. Writers who strike it rich can avoid the classroom—Roth, Updike, Pynchon, Vonnegut, Irving, Larry McMurtry.

Gertrude Stein initiated the tradition of experimental writing. In "Picasso" (1909) she excludes all concrete words in a pure example of Abstract Expressionism, the opposite of Imagism. This was called "art

for art's sake" and was the credo of Vladimir Nabokov, the refined Russian exile whose sensational *Lolita*, about an amoral pedophile, shocked the country in 1955. Academics and later writers such as T. C. Boyle remain in awe: "Nabokov's playfulness and the ravishing beauty of his prose are ongoing influences." Also influential was the example he set that a writer could achieve critical stature and even get rich by combining sex and style. Nabokov is a Postmodernist also in his elitist sense of superiority. Most readers care about sex but not style.

Realists tend to avoid calling attention to style in order not to break the illusion of reality, whereas Postmodernists give the highest priority to their stylistic performance, as epitomized by William Gass, who published an analysis of Gertrude Stein's style. Gass is likewise an artist for the sake of art, lavishing all his attention on writing pretty sentences and evoking atmospheres without plot. As a professor of philosophy Gass believes that philosophy is the exclusive province of ideas and he excludes ideas from his stories with even more rigor than Nabokov, making his fiction vacuous. The opposite of Nabokov and Gass, Norman Mailer burdens his turgid novels with ideas so adolescent that his flamboyant prose style is all he has to offer—Hipster Expressionism. Thomas McGuane is among the few novelists worth reading for style alone. "University Life" (1997) by A. B. Paulson is Academic Expressionism at its best—allegorical, economical, ironic, satirical, humorous, transcendental, and richly informed by literary history.

One of the novels most admired by Postmodernists is *How German Is It?* (1980) by Walter Abish, who deliberately flattens his prose, eliminating feelings and moral perspective so totally that his narration evokes the consciousness of a sociopath commanding a death camp during WWII: "In my writing I try to strip language of its power to create verisimilitude that in turn shields the reader from the printed words on the page that are deployed as signifiers." The term *signifiers* is current in literary theory, as is the shift in focus from the real world to academic abstractions—"signifiers." As Wallace Stegner put it, "The moment you begin to conceptualize you have lost touch with reality, and...literary theory is all about conceptualizing." The novel is about how Germany has tried to efface its Nazi past and uses Postmodernist techniques including irony, rapid cutting from one scene to another, disruption of sequence, disconnection, and fragmentation. Postmodernists in general are like the Germans in trying to escape the past (and themselves), with pathological results. Abish's short stories have been compared to abstract paintings. In this novel his Postmodernist aesthetics, in particular the cold flat emotionless tone of narration, identifies him with the coldhearted radicals who are bombing and destroying everything built in the New Germany. The radicals are nihilistic in attacking materialism and the style of Abish himself is materialistic--without spirituality, heart or soul.

Likewise without heart or soul is the fiction of John Barth, the leading theorist of Postmodernist fiction. In his story "Lost in the Funhouse" (1968), far from being a poet, the fiction writer is an engineer operating the machinery of a funhouse, Barth's metaphor for a work of fiction--merely "fun." The creative process is entirely rational, mechanical, calculated, and manipulative. The operator controls all the moving figures in his funhouse like puppets. They have no life of their own as characters do in Realism. As revealed in their fiction liberals are disposed to totalitarian control in literature as well as in politics. Liberals incline to Academic Expressionism as an escape from reality—freedom without accountability (anarchism). But because he does not believe in the soul, Barth is not inspired, he has no access to the imaginative resources of the unconscious mind. Nor can he find any sanction for writing in social history, nor in his own limited life experience. The best he can do is belittle traditions with parodies and subvert the conventions of the art. He turns "Lost in the Funhouse" into a mock fiction writing course, making all the conventions trite by explaining them as he goes along like a magician explaining how he does his tricks while he performs them—a display of decadence intended to illustrate Barth's contention that literature is "exhausted." He applies his metaphor to himself with disappointment: "He wishes he had never entered the funhouse. But he has.... He will construct funhouses for others and be their secret operator—though he would rather be among the lovers for whom funhouses are designed."

Barth's major work is *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966), his Atheist alternative to the Bible. At the end, after 750 pages of complicated narrative, Barth adds an end note that questions the authenticity of his own text. Ha, ha, ha. He was just fooling around in his funhouse. His story is a farcical fantasy and his tone of parody throughout the book makes it impossible to take it any more seriously than he does. He tries to escape responsibility for his nonsense by denying that he meant anything by it. Barth is responding to the chaotic

social upheavals of the 1960s, especially on campuses. He makes the University a metaphor not just of society but of the universe, reflecting the sense of liberal professors that they are the center of the universe. The universe is controlled not by God but by a computer. This begs the question, Who built the computer? Barth conceives of the natural world as a machine like the Deists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but they believed in a God who created it. The programmer of Barth's universe is a confidence man named Harold Bray, a conservative of course. Called the Grand Tutor, he brays a lot and does bad things that hurt people. Since the university is the universe/world/ society, it must contain both the United States (West Campus) and the Soviet Union (East Campus) under the same administration, implying that they are compatible systems—and compatible also with all the other governments throughout the universe. In the universe of a pacifist liberal professor there are no real wars, only student demonstrations.

Barth replaces God with a computer that can be manipulated by men, the New Testament with the "New Syllabus," and Jesus Christ with a Goat-Boy. His new messiah was fathered by a computer and raised as a goat, a sort of mechanical Pan. What is lost here most obviously is humanity—heart and soul. Barth thinks human beings should become both more programmed (Socialism) and more animalistic (anarchism)—a contradiction. Like a horny adolescent who has just read some Freud, he thinks the salvation of humankind is free sex—not loving sex, but down and dirty "barnyard sex." To the Atheist without a heart, the only purpose in life is the gratification of lusts. Giles the goat-boy tries to save the world for hedonists by fornicating in the big computer to reprogram the universe into the wet dream of John Barth. *Giles Goat-Boy* is a pointed rejection of Christ, since the goat is traditionally identified with Satan.

Likewise without heart or soul is the fiction of Pynchon, who became the only Academic Expressionist since Nabokov to gain a wide popular audience. All of Pynchon's first three novels depend on the quest and other myths, yet mock and subvert them. He also relies on the conventions of detective fiction and science fiction, yet parodies them. With respect to structure, Pynchon is a parasite. His first novel *V.* (1963) attracted young readers with its mysterious paperback cover—like in outer space. Like, *far out*. "Every weirdo in the world is on my wavelength," Pynchon said. *V.* manifests a vertical consciousness dissociated from the unconscious, displaying why Pynchon does not know whether to believe in his own metaphors and is out of touch with spirituality. His protagonist Stencil spends the whole novel searching not for a white whale or anything alive but for an abstraction—anything beginning with the letter V. This is the letter V, children. Can you think of things that begin with V? Only a Postmodernist would so devote himself to pursuing a "signifier." *V.* is a succession of disconnected episodes that vary from hunting alligators in the sewers under New York to whites slaughtering blacks in South Africa, all without moral perspective, but with exotic locales, bizarre situations, and haunting atmospheres.

*The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) is much shorter, linear, economical, vivid, and funny—animated by cartoon characters with funny names. Most impressive to critics, *it contains metaphors from science!* The plot parallels the countercultural Trystero quest for social justice to the religious quest for salvation, pretending to be noncommittal but implying by the cynical tone, consistent irony and an obscene joke at the end that both quests are futile. *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) makes a penis the hero, turns the WWII ruins of Nazi Germany into a set for musical comedy, laughs over the death camp ovens, and gleefully drops a Rocket on the head of President Nixon. This is war in the funhouse of Postmodernist fiction.

"Except for *The Recognitions*, the Mega-Novel is a 60s and after development...immensely long novels...written mainly (not solely) by white Protestant males.... Its aim posits disorder, messiness, the chaos of our existence... The Mega-Novel approximates in verbal patterns what line and color provided earlier in abstract painting.... The clear line of Mega-Novel as a literary genre runs from Gaddis's *The Recognitions* and his *J R* through John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* and, of course, his *Letters*, Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, Joseph McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge* and his more recent *Women and Men*, to...Brodkey's *The Runaway Soul*, Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, DeLillo's *Underworld*, Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*, and...Helprin's *A Soldier of the Great War* and Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost*, perhaps even Alexander Theroux's *Darconville's Cat* and David Bradley's *The Chaneyville Incident*....

Characters are caricatures.... Content is atomic, not coherent.... Confusion and uncertainty accrue; they do not resolve.... It evades closure. It is all middles, often with little or no beginning, and...no resolution.... Without any inside, there is no ending, only process, a continuum...incomplete... The Mega-Novel has

forsaken inclusivity for indeterminacy...randomness...self-oriented...elliptical...opaque.” (Frederick Karl, *American Fictions 1980-2000*, 2001: 155-62) The artificiality of this fiction is acknowledged by Pynchon when he makes plastics a model for the “cellular structure” of *Gravity’s Rainbow*. Such works are often compared to *Ulysses* (1922) by Joyce, but as a Modernist Joyce believed in God, Truth, beauty, epiphanies, spirituality, archetypal symbolism, enduring myths, classic literature, Neoclassical values, Nature, coherent organic form, and definite endings. That is why *Ulysses* is great and Mega-Novels are trivial. Liberals think Big is Good, in literature as well as in government.

Consider the irony of Barth calling Joyce out of date: “Works like *Finnegans Wake* strike some of us as being, after all, the monumental last cry of a certain variety of modernism and not terribly *consequential*, though impressive in themselves.” (Barth) “The indulgent 800-page books that were written a hundred years ago are just not going to be written anymore and people need to get used to that. If you think you’re going to write something like *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Moby-Dick*, go ahead. Nobody will read it. I don’t care how good it is, or how smart the readers are. Their intentions, their brains are different.” (Cormac McCarthy) The audience for Postmodernist Mega-Novels is shrinking with the graduate schools.

### CRITICISM OF ACADEMIC EXPRESSIONISM

“‘The new fiction is interested in language and in f-f-form, I guess,’ Tinch said. ‘But I don’t understand what it’s really about. Sometimes it’s about it-it-itself, I think... It’s sort of fiction about fi-fi-fiction.’” (John Irving, *The World According to Garp*, 1978: 181-82)

“A literary generation that appears to specialize in despair, hostility, hypersexuality, and disgust.... Our novelists are the declared enemies of their society.... The principles of restraint, proportion, and a wide representation of all kinds of life—the principles I have tried to live and write by—have all been overtaken and overwhelmed.... I don’t really aspire to write a novel which can be read backwards as well as forward, which turns chronology on its head and has no continuity and no narrative, which, in effect, tries to create a novel by throwing all the pieces in the bag and shaking the bag. It doesn’t seem to me worth doing.... I would deny that technical innovation or experimentation amounts to originality.... There is something ultimately self-pitying in a lot of the inward novels... It’s kind of a disease: attempting to be clever, sexy, or violent. It’s a way of showing off.” (Wallace Stegner)

“The fact that there are so many weak, poor and boring stories and novels written and published in America has been ascribed by our rebels to the horrible squareness of our institutions...and the failure of writers to be alienated enough.... Their radicalism... is contentless.... Some of our most respected novels have a purely mental inspiration.... The ideas in them generally have more substance than the characters who hold them.” (Bellow) “Story as such as been neglected by today’s introverted writers.” (Styron) “This technique for the sake of technique—Catatonic Expressionism. Or parodies of what someone else had already done.... This sort of arranging and rearranging was Decadence.” (Pynchon) “Anyone who’s really tried to write strenuously knows that it’s *much* more difficult to be clear than it is to be hard to understand; *anybody* can be hard to understand”; “Think of the reduction in the pleasures that the novel can give us if we have to say that Barth and Gass and Barthelme are the only people who are doing it right, and everybody else should get off the ship.” (John Irving)

“In novels lately the only real love, the unconditional love I ever come across is what people feel for animals.... Before pop art, there was such a thing as bad taste....This is the last avant-garde. Bold new forms. The power to shock.” (DeLillo) “What do you say to a man that by his own admission has no soul?” (Cormac McCarthy) “I did not want my books to be one more tributary to the sea of nonsense that really is what most conventional wisdom amounts to.” (Marilynne Robinson) “Perhaps we should accept the fact that writing and reading are essentially linear activities and devote our attention as writers to those aspects of experience that can best be rendered linearly...instead of trying to force the medium into things that are not congenial to it. I say this with all sorts of reservations, because I *am* interested in formal experimentation.” (Barth) “In post-modern fiction there seems to be a return to the idea of control as an end in itself. In the post-modern novel, control is often a question of individual cunning against conspiracy, of learning from the clues which will permit the stalemate, the survival which must stand for victory (Murdoch, Barth, Pynchon). What of feminist writers? Transcendence in a traditional sense is no more

possible for them than for other contemporary writers.” (Donna Gerstenberger, “Women Writers,” *Novel*, Winter 1976: 149)

“Writers like Faulkner and Hemingway proclaimed themselves truth seekers; how do post-modernists differ?... Some contemporary writers--the hardest ones to read and thus the easiest to teach—claim to be not very interested in ‘truth.’ ‘Aha!’ the critic cries. ‘Post modern!’” (53-4) “Fiction as pure language (texture over structure) is *in*. It is one common manifestation of what is being called ‘post-modernism’.” (69) “The term ‘post-modernism’ not only isolates a few writers and praises them, beyond their due, depressing the stock of others or willfully misreading them; it judges cynical or nihilistic writers as characteristic of the age, and therefore significant, and thus supports even celebrates ideas no father would wittingly teach his children. Some critics deny this...but the writers they then talk about are invariably the ‘postmodern’ ones--the writers the new term was invented to explain; moreover, in a world which values progress, ‘post-modern’ in fact means *New! Improved!* When a contemporary writer, however young, and vigorous, however wildly experimental, is identified because of his stodgy Faulknerian values as ‘modern’ --that is, ‘old-fashioned’--not only that writer but the morality he defends is removed from serious consideration.” (55-6) (John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction*, 1978: 53-56, 69)

“‘Solipsism binds us together’; ‘It’s like a fugue of evaded responsibility’; ‘Metafiction is...the act of a lonely solipsist’s self-love’; ‘Robbe-Grillet and McElroy and Barthelme can fuck themselves awfully well’; ‘It’s increasingly hard to find valid art that is about stuff that is real’; ‘It doesn’t engage anybody’; ‘Postmodern irony and cynicism’s become an end in itself, a measure of hip sophistication and literary savvy’; ‘Most likely, I think, today’s irony ends up saying, ‘How totally banal of you to ask what I really mean’; ‘If what’s always distinguished bad writing—flat characters, a narrative world that’s cliched and not recognizably human, etc.—is also a description of today’s world, then bad writing becomes an ingenious mimesis of a bad world’; ‘Look man, we’d probably most of us agree that these are dark times, and stupid ones, but do we need fiction that does nothing but dramatize how dark and stupid it is?’” (David Foster Wallace, hanged himself in 2008)

#### AMERICAN “HIGHER” EDUCATION SINCE THE 1960s:

##### POSTMODERN EDUCATION IN GENERAL

“Our society and its educational institutions have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them.... For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents.” (*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, April 1983: 6, 23, National Commission on Excellence in Education)

“Anti-intellectualism has been...nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that ‘my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge’.” (Issac Asimov)

##### “HIGHER” EDUCATION

“The point is that when we look at Western civilization critically, we don’t have all that much to be proud of. It’s essentially a long history of murder.” (Prof. Rodger Kamenetz, English Department, LSU, quoted in *Heterodoxy*, September 1992) “The canon of great literature was created by high Anglican assholes to underwrite their social class.” (Prof. Stanley Hauerwas, Theological Ethics, Duke University, quoted by Pam Kelley, “For Duke Profs, the Hot Debate is What to Teach,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 28 September 1990) “An overwhelming proportion of our courses are taught by people who really hate the system.” (Prof. David Littlejohn, Graduate School of Literature, UC Berkeley)

The liberal arts were corrupted, gutted, and repackaged to serve the ideological interests of the postmodern, multicultural Left.” (C. Bradley Thompson, “On the Decline and Fall of the Liberal Arts,” *Academic Questions*, Winter 2015: 28.4)

“When tracked longitudinally in core competencies—analyzing, writing, and reading—students make almost *no* improvement during their years in college.... Because of the supposed right not to be offended, universities have become ‘echo chambers’ of what students want to hear, and of what faculty wish them to imbibe.... Narcissism is off the charts.” (Daniel Asia, review of *The State of the American Mind: 16 Leading Critics on the New Anti-Intellectualism*, 2015, in *Academic Questions*, Winter 2015)

“Educating yourself was something you had to do in spite of school, not because of it.” (David Foster Wallace, a product of American higher education who hanged himself in 2008)

“Post-Modernism opposes the nationalist literary traditions institutionalized by the Academy.” (Charles Newman, *The Post-Modern Aura*, 87)

“Portland State University — Building a Model for Comprehensive Reform: ...What this means is abandoning the university’s traditional mission of discovering and transmitting knowledge.” (Carolyn M. Buan, “The Humanities: Alive, Well, and Breaking New Ground [Wind] on Oregon Campuses,” *Oregon Humanities*, Summer 1997)

“Louis Kampf, who was President of the Modern Language Association in 1971, has charged that ‘the very category of art has become one more instrument of class oppression.’ The concept of culture ‘is rooted in social elitism.’ It can be ‘little else but an instrument of class oppression.’... The logical deduction from Kampf’s argument would be that people should be denied access to great literature and art in the name of their political advancement.” (Louis Kampf, “Notes Toward a Radical Culture,” *The New Left*, ed. Priscilla Long, 1969: 422, 424, 426, 431, quoted by Rene Wellek, *The Attack on Literature*, UNC 1982: 3)

“The American university in the sixties was experiencing the same dismantling of the structure of rational inquiry as had the German university in the thirties [the rise of Nazism].... The major student activity in social science was to identify heretics.... It is the humanities that have suffered the most as a result of the sixties. The lack of student interest...the vanishing of jobs for Ph.D.s, the lack of public sympathy, came from the overturning of the old order, where their place was assured. They have gotten what they deserved, but we have unfortunately all lost.... The professors of humanities are in an impossible situation and do not believe in themselves or what they do.... Humanists ran like lemmings into the sea, thinking they would refresh and revitalize themselves in it. They drowned.” (Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (Simon & Schuster 1987: 313, 355, 352-53)

“If in principle, the danger to liberal education could come from the right, it now (as opposed to thirty years ago) comes primarily from the self-styled left.... Bromwich understands that those who profess and enforce such groupthink ‘want no single person ever to survive as singular...The caring groups are really hard as nails: They want to destroy us, and always for the sake of all...The new fundamentalists who enforce a rigid, left-wing moralism on the university that makes real *thinking* impossible.” (Saul Morson, Review of *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education and Group Thinking* by David Bromwich, Yale 1992, *Heterodoxy* 1992)

“The public would be horrified if it knew what is happening in college literature programs...The direction that humanist professors have taken seems to negate...every reason that society might have to support their work.... The academy has degenerated so much that it in some respects has become a social liability rather than an asset....Whereas affirmative action ostensibly asks for some admissions and appointments, the race-gender-class transformation wants the entire curriculum. The intellectual catastrophe that has overtaken the humanities is not just a by-product of affirmative action. It *is* affirmative action.... A concern with exceptional minds and excellence is now dismissed as elitism, and many prefer to concern themselves with Madonna videos or gay pornography. Fine writing is no longer valued; English professors now write in a style that they would formerly have denounced as clumsy and full of jargon. Many, it would seem, no longer even like the field that once so delighted them.... Elaine Marks, the 1993 president of the Modern Language Association of America...celebrated in the President’s Column of an *MLA Newsletter* ‘the dominance of the social and political over the ontological and the poetical, the dominance of cultural studies over literary studies’...

Literature professors now denigrate literature and replace it with theory, for that new emphasis shifts the professor from secondary to primary status.... Respect for the essential underpinnings of academic life—knowledge, argument, evidence, logic—is at an astonishingly low level.... The extraordinary degree of reliance on *ad hominem* rather than logical argument is also in effect a rejection of academic knowledge.... Feminists...now think that they can brush aside objections simply by identifying a critic as sexist or conservative.... Academic feminism drives up the level of hysteria with all kinds of unrealistic fantasies about patriarchal conspiracies against women.... Many have imagined civilization to be the cause of the evil in us, not a restraint on it.” (John M. Ellis, *Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities*, Yale 1997: 204-05, 213-19, 222)

“We are told, there is no such thing as intrinsic literary greatness, there are only works called great because they serve oppressive elites (not including college professors)...‘Literary texts, like other artworks, are neither more nor less important than any other cultural artifact or practice’.... Art is an industrial product like any other and supports the rule of capital no less, but more insidiously, than the futures market.... The public is told that the humanities teach ‘critical analysis,’ but what is meant by this term is the opposite of disinterested examination of facts or the habit of questioning one’s own assumptions. It means the critique of *others*.... Essays are selected not to shed light on different aspects of [a] novel (character, psychology, authorial voice, aesthetic wholeness) but to illustrate schools of criticism: gender criticism, Marxist criticism, cultural criticism, new historicism, and feminist criticism... No wonder college presidents have to defend the humanities! And no wonder enrollments in literature courses decline. If English professors don’t believe in great literature, why should students?” (Saul Morson, Review of *Literary Criticism from Plato to Postmodernism* in *The New Criterion*, October 2014)

“Numerous studies of both the UC system and of higher education nationwide demonstrate that students who graduate from college are increasingly ignorant of history and literature. They are unfamiliar with the principles of American constitutional government. And they are bereft of the skills necessary to comprehend serious books and effectively marshal evidence and argument in written work.... The hollowing of the curriculum stems from too many professors’ preference for promoting a partisan political agenda.... A recent study by UCLA’s prestigious Higher Education Research Institute found that more faculty now believe that they should teach their students to be agents of social change than believe that it is important to teach them the classics of Western civilization.” (*The Wall Street Journal*, 31 March-1 April 2012: A13)

“Growing numbers of students are sent to college at increasingly higher costs, but for a large proportion of them the gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning and written communication are either exceedingly small or empirically nonexistent. At least 45 percent of students in our sample did not demonstrate any statistically significant improvement in CLA performance during the first two years of college.... Large numbers of U.S. college students can be accurately described as academically adrift. They might graduate, but they are failing to develop the higher-order cognitive skills that it is widely assumed college students should master.” (Richard Arum & Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, U Chicago 2011: 120) “The quality of higher education is questionable. Students study fewer hours than prior generations of students, and independent tests show little to no increase in learning after several years of study, even at highly rated private colleges.” (Daniel Bonevac, *Academic Questions* 28.3, Fall 2015: 357)

“J. Scott Armstrong, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School and Editor of the *Journal of Forecasting*, conducted his own analysis of academic writing and concluded that professors who wished to be published in the academic press must: ‘(1) *not* pick an important problem, (2) *not* challenge existing beliefs, (3) *not* obtain surprising results, (4) *not* use simple methods, (5) *not* provide full disclosure of methodology, sources and findings, and (6) *not* write clearly.’” (Charles J. Sykes, *ProfScam: Professors and the Demise of Higher Education*, Regnery Gateway 1988: 105-06)

Liberal academics in the humanities claim that they nearly all belong to the same political party because they are all “more intelligent” than everybody who disagrees with them. On the contrary: (1) intelligent people are not conformists, they think for themselves; (2) intelligent people consider more than one point of view; (3) intelligent teachers do not preach; (4) intelligent professors are intellectuals, not ideologues; (5)

intelligent Americans do not need to rely on decadent Frenchmen to think for them; (6) intelligent people are not dung beetles deluded by a totalitarian economic theory that has failed repeatedly and is destroying Europe; (7) intelligent academics are able to teach their students something, whereas studies including *Academically Adrift* (2011) have shown that most liberal academics have not been able to teach students much of anything; (8) intelligent literature teachers know how to explicate a text objectively; liberals do not teach the classics because they are not intelligent enough; (9) intelligent public servants do not rant, call names and spew contempt for taxpayers and legislators who fund them; (10) intelligent people do not demonize half the human race for their gender; (11) intelligent Americans do not betray their country; (12) intelligent animals do not foul their own nests. “*Teach – your children well...*” (Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young at the Woodstock Festival, 1969)

“The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of civil government in the next.” (Abraham Lincoln)

#### “SOCIAL JUSTICE”

In the 30 years after 1978, while Feminists were taking over, the cost of a college education rose 1,120 percent. (*Bloomberg Business*, 5 August 2012) Nationally, from 1971 to 2011 bachelor’s degrees in English fell from 7.6 percent to 3.1 percent. (U.S. National Digest for Education Statistics) Feminist priorities and political correctness are primarily responsible for the current national trend of eliminating much of the liberal arts and reducing English departments to composition and rhetoric taught by adjuncts.

Liberal professors try to justify not teaching many traditional subjects anymore by claiming that they have an obligation to change society by promoting “social justice.” They pretend to honor Dr. Martin Luther King while practicing the opposite of what he preached, scorning his dream--ignoring character and dividing everyone against each other on the basis of race, gender, class, sexual orientation and beliefs. They have waged a culture war against Dr. King and the majority of Americans.

Liberal administrators advanced their careers by raising money and catering to radicals. They increased tuitions as fast as the liberal politicians they supported increased guaranteed federal student loans and grants. They fed on the Fed. Much of that money went to pump up their own enormous salaries and to hire more liberal faculty and ever more liberal administrators. They “needed” all those extra high-paid liberal administrators to raise still more money, to establish and administer Women’s Studies and all the other new “studies” programs and departments and positions that advocate for liberals, to promote monocultural “diversity” and enforce the tyranny of political correctness. “Colleges now employ more administrators than faculty members...charging more and spending the additional funds on everything but teaching and learning.” (Daniel Bonevac, *Academic Questions* 28.3, Fall 2015: 356-57)

While calling their institutions “non-profit,” fat cat liberal administrators and tenured faculty have enriched themselves at the expense of students. They pushed up the average cost of tuition at more than 4 times the rate of inflation. They are monopoly capitalists who drove out the competition of ideas and kept raising their prices. Obsessed with getting money rather than educating and preparing students for the future, they duped young people about their prospects. As a result, 50 percent of college graduates aged 25 or younger are today (2016) unemployed or holding down jobs that don’t require a college degree. Almost half of them start their adult lives with an average of \$30,000 in college loans. Of those who cannot find jobs, 85% of college graduates move back in with their parents after they graduate. The ramp-up in student loans has driven up costs, undermined the value of a college degree, and held back economic recovery, especially the housing and auto markets.

English departments nationwide also exploit graduate students by collectively awarding about three times more Ph.D.s every year than there are job openings, enlarging the pool of unemployed Ph.D.s in English every year while the number of jobs continues to decline. English department faculty in particular are inclined to posture as anti-capitalist advocates of the common people, even Marxists. Yet they are notorious for avoiding student advising and advance their careers by avoiding teaching. Today about 75% of instruction in literature courses is by adjuncts, most of whom are exploited in every way and avoided by the tenured faculty. English departments are feudal: Tenured faculty are the nobility, adjuncts the many serfs. “Everyone wonders why Marxist thought has permeated literature departments while Marxist regimes



are collapsing everywhere, and the puzzle is only increased by the fact that these literature professors do not behave like Marxists in their daily lives.... This anti-bourgeois sentiment...has more in common with its origin in aristocratic disdain for the lower orders than with egalitarianism.” (John M. Ellis, *Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities*, Yale 1997: 210)

“Real ‘60s radicals rarely went to grad school and never became big-wheel humanities professors, with their fat salaries and perks. The proof of the vacuity of academic leftism for the past forty years is the complete silence of leftist professors about the rise of the corporate structure of the contemporary university—their total failure to denounce the gross expansion of the administrator class and the obscene rise in tuition costs. The leading academic leftists are such frauds—they’ve played the system and are retiring as millionaires!” (Camille Paglia, *Salon*, 30 July 2015)

#### WOMEN’S STUDIES

“All men are rapists.” (Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 1975)

“The institution of sexual intercourse is anti-feminist.” (Ti-Grace Atkinson)

“All feminists can and should be lesbians.” (Revolutionary Feminists, *Love Your Enemy?*, 1981)

“I feel that ‘man hating’ is an honorable and viable political act.” (Robin Morgan, *Ms.* editor)

“To call a man an animal is to flatter him; he’s a machine, a walking dildo.” (Valerie Salanas)

“Men who are unjustly accused of rape can sometimes gain from the experience.” (Catherine Comin, Assistant Dean, Vassar College)

“All sex, even consensual sex between a married couple, is an act of violence perpetrated against a woman.” (Catherine MacKinnon)

Feminists have made higher education hostile to heterosexuals. Males are demonized. On their websites, Feminist academics express contempt toward any male colleague who tries to be complimentary or friendly or to treat them as equals. Half of all universities and colleges are expected to go bankrupt within the next ten years due to declining enrollments.

“Women’s Studies is institutionalized sexism...a comfy, chummy morass of unchallenged groupthink. It is, with rare exceptions, totally unscholarly. Academic feminists have silenced men and dissenting women. Our best women students are being force-fed an appalling diet of cant, drivel, and malarkey.” (Camille Paglia, *Heterodoxy*, September 1992)

#### POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Marxists have always divided people against each other based on class. After the 1960s a liberal elite monopolized higher education, rejected the traditional ideal of the “melting pot” and divided Americans against each other based on class, gender, race, and sexual orientation. They divided in order to conquer. For decades they have enforced a nationwide regime of “Political Correctness”—sexist, racist, and fascist. Identity trumps merit in the liberal police state. Liberals lowered academic standards through the floor. They harass dissenters and demonize scapegoats—white males, conservatives, Christians, dissenters of any kind. They censor and bully them. Liberal academics teach people to hate, inciting violence--riots and mass shootings. PC bullying by liberal faculties produced crybully students who are now bullying them back. Live by radicalism, die by radicalism.

PC liberals enforce “seven types of suppression of free speech”: “*Ostracize* those who dissent from political orthodoxy; *usurp* the curriculum; *train* students to be activists; *repress* topics that are ruled unfit for discussion; *aggress* against anyone and any custom that embodies the old order; *group* people by race, sex, and ethnicity into categories stigmatized as privileged or celebrated as oppressed; and *exalt* certain

ideas and beliefs so that they are exempt from questioning or critical examination, while expressions of dissent can be suppressed as acts of malignity.” (Peter Wood, President, National Association of Scholars, *The New Criterion* 35.5, January 2017: 19)

Feminists set an example of absolute narcissism. They impose strict rules against “hate speech” by others while routinely using hate speech in their own classrooms. While claiming to oppose stereotypes, they stereotype everyone different from themselves. They suppress free speech by everyone and deprive males of due process. Liberal academics institutionalized evils they claimed to oppose and have fostered a nationwide pandemic of grievance, entitlement, and intolerance. Feminists and male “theorists” have taught students that *truth* is relative, that absolute truth does not exist, and that *objectivity* is a myth—even a patriarchal ideology. Yet they themselves claim to be speaking the truth. Their denial that objectivity is possible disqualifies them from grading students, but they are not fired for incompetence because the administrators are just as corrupt as the faculties.

By denying that objectivity is possible PC liberal academics give themselves permission to lie and propagandize. Insofar as they are successful, they disqualify their students from serving on a jury or entering the medical profession or the military as well as many other professions that require objectivity. Since the justice system depends on objectivity, PC liberals foster social *injustice* rather than social justice. Inevitably their journalism schools have produced propagandists for their corrupt Big Government political party rather than reporters, their law schools have produced judges who have ruled according to prejudices rather than the law, their schools of education have produced indoctrinators, and their “climate scientists” falsified data to get federal grants and are now demanding federal prosecution of the real scientists who are disproving their lies. “Over half of psychology studies fail reproducibility tests... Two thirds...should probably be distrusted.” (Monya Baker, *nature.com*, 27 August 2015) “The overwhelming amount of current sociology is simply nonsense... Agreement is more akin to the beliefs that bind the members of a religion.” (Steven Goldberg, Chair, Sociology Dept., City College, CUNY, November 2009) Anthropology is a religion worshipping the goddess Margaret Mead, whose fanciful doctrines were founded on a hoax by two Samoan girls. Anthropologists are such subjective liberals they cannot distinguish fiction from fact, most notably in the cases of Mead and Carlos Castaneda.

Politically Correct liberals are often shocked by election losses because their liberal pollsters are just as dishonest as they are and tell them what they want to hear. In 2012 their political party took over the U.S. government through massive fraud in the presidential election and use of the Internal Revenue Service and other agencies of government to suppress the other party. Currently a majority of their party are declared Socialists and the platform of their party is virtually the same as that of the Communist Party. In 2016 they nominated for President the most corrupt national politician in American history, a Feminist. This and the tyranny of Political Correctness contributed to the populist rebellion that elected President Donald Trump, turning the political direction of the United States from the Left to the Right.

#### ANTI-AMERICANISM

The Feminist editors of school textbooks who monopolize the industry are sexist, racist, and anti-American according to Diane Ravitch [a Democrat] in *The Language Police* (2003): “Truth and historical accuracy...are not important... Everything written before 1970 was either gender biased or racially biased.... Women...must be depicted only in a positive light....Women should not be portrayed as wives and mothers.... Guidelines express barely concealed rage against people of European ancestry.... European Americans, the guidelines suggest, were uniquely responsible for bigotry and exploitation in all human history.... The texts treat the Black Panthers as a beneficent social service organization.... Some texts present Mao as a friendly inclusive leader.... While admitting that he was responsible for the deaths of millions of people, they...[point] to the great progress that China made during his reign....Test developers are told to avoid value judgments that favor the society in which we live.... Every world culture is wonderful except for the United States.... None of the textbooks written in the 1990s expresses... appreciation for American institutions, values, and ideals.... Textbooks like Democratic presidents; textbooks don’t like Republican presidents.”

During the presidency of George Bush, Jr. and beginning immediately after the election of Donald Trump in 2016, many Democrats have called for the killing of Republican presidents. One of them settled for shooting a Republican congressman while he was playing softball.

## FEMINAZISM

In 2014 the Modern Language Association (MLA) got compared to the Nazi Party in the national press when it banned a journalist from the conservative *Daily Caller* from covering its annual convention while admitting Communist journalists. Communists are estimated to have murdered over 110 million people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and have been identified with Nazism since Stalin's pact with Hitler in 1939. Feminists have been called Feminazis since the 1980s. One of the elite literary critics most often cited by members of the MLA in their publications is Paul de Mann of Yale, who wrote propaganda for the Nazis during World War II. His biographers have revealed that he was also an amoral bigamist, embezzler, and deadbeat who got one of his students pregnant—a liberal exemplar in the pursuit of social justice.

## POLITICIZED LITERARY CRITICISM

Literary criticism first became intensely political during the 1930s when Communists harassed major American writers for not being Communists. Marxist political correctness became an expanding coalition in higher education, informing "Theory"--Feminist, Afro-American, and "Queer" criticism in particular. The topics of Political Correctness and the Feminist Period (1970-present) are discussed elsewhere on this website. By the 1980s, when Feminists took over higher education, virtually all academic literary criticism had to be Politically Correct. An example illustrating male Political Correctness is *American Fictions 1940-1980* (1983) by Frederick R. Karl, a professor of English at New York University:

Professor Karl exhibits the major characteristics of academic Political Correctness: (1) He has a political agenda, the victory of politically correct liberalism over traditional values: "The political liberalism of most novelists does not vitiate their attraction to agrarian ideals, which are reactionary, even paranoid, certainly anti-intellectual (in the urban sense), and anti-twentieth century." Karl sees literary history as "progressive" politics led by urban liberals like himself. This professor seems never to have ventured outside the city limits of New York, whereas (2) a majority of the American population was rural until 1919. Karl in effect dismisses the canon of traditional American literature by rejecting "agrarian ideals," accommodating the agenda of Feminists. "We might as well omit to study Nature because she is old." (Thoreau) (3) Karl panders to mediocre Feminist writers while ignoring major traditionalist writers such as Caroline Gordon, Wallace Stegner and Marilynne Robinson. (4) He defends the sadistic Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) by Ken Kesey and accuses Kesey of hating women. (5) He disapproves of John Irving's satire of Feminist excesses in *The World According to Garp* (1978), is too biased to recognize the obvious satire, sees nothing funny in the book and sounds like Pooh Percy.

(6) Agrarian ideals express the values of the heart, whereas Karl the urbanite is all dissociated head, with no respect for Jefferson, Thoreau, Twain, Dickinson, Frost, Cather, or Faulkner. (7) As a secular Postmodernist, he does not understand spirituality, reducing it disparagingly to "mysticism" and "pastoral fantasies." (8) Karl is also philistine in reducing T. S. Eliot to an "esthete." (9) He smears Hemingway with the lie that he was a "racist." (10) Karl is a bigot who accuses innocent people of bigotry. (11) He accommodates Black critics in their unjust attack on William Styron for his novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967). (12) He hates the 1950s, loves the 1960s; (13) he really *really* hates Richard Nixon; (14) and he has contempt for all Republicans, especially Senator Joe McCarthy: "What occurred in the fifties was a reversal of values so that those who were perceived as 'saving' us—McCarthy, Nixon, MacArthur, a cabinet of car dealers, even Eisenhower... a semiliterate folk hero as President."

(15) Karl is a propagandist for the Left, most obviously in demonizing Senator McCarthy, who exposed Communist spies hired by liberals like Karl in the U.S. government, claiming falsely that McCarthy "created an imaginary world of names and lists, induced not by drugs but by alcohol." Liberal defamation of McCarthy was entirely discredited in the 1990s when hundreds of secret Soviet cables were translated proving that McCarthy was right all along and that he underestimated liberal treason. (16) Incredibly, Karl does not even admit that Communists were a threat to the United States: "America may or may not have

been betrayed by Communists and their sympathizers in the fifties.” (17) Karl is surprisingly adolescent for a professor, as in praising Robert Coover’s puerile satire of Nixon, *The Public Burning* (1977): “‘Uncle Sam gives his approval to Nixon by screwing him in the ass, pushing in his seemingly endless weapon until Nixon is writhing in agony.’ For once Nixon has ingested Uncle Sam’s prick and jism, he has been knighted...” (18) In his comprehensive 2-volume survey of American fictions from 1940 to 2000, Karl devotes many pages of discussion to Politically Correct minor writers and to unpopular cerebral academic novels by Barth and others while ignoring conservatives.

Likewise another Politically Correct liberal critic, Lawrence Buell in *The Dream of the Great American Novel* (2014): “He tends to equate novels’ strategies with their political valences, to evaluate novels either as contributions or impediments to a multicultural society, to gender equality and to a society accepting of alternative sexualities.” (Review by Michael Kimmage, *New Republic*, 22 February 2014) “Buell’s book tells us a good great deal about American fiction. What it also tells us, in its every line, is what is wrong with academic criticism.... The one kind of standard that Buell will not permit himself is an aesthetic one.” (Review by William Deresiewicz, *theatlantic.com*, June 2014) As contenders for the “Great American Novel,” Buell puts *Gone with the Wind* alongside *Moby-Dick*.

“*The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism* is a pointer to the abysmal state of mind that prevails in so many of our universities. In another unconsciously funny entry, on the Kenyan Marxist Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Nicholas Brown appears to praise his subject for a postcolonial essay entitled ‘On the Abolition of the English Department.’... The prospect of such an abolition, at least in the United States, becomes more appetizing by the minute.” (Christopher Hitchens, “Literary Scholars Embrace an Elite Language, yet Imagine Themselves Subversives,” Review, *NYT*, 22 May 2005: 18-19)

For detailed examples of how since 1970 Politically Correct interpretations—mostly by Feminists--have falsified literature, see the review of *Hawthorne: Calvin’s Ironic Stepchild*; analysis of *The Blithedale Romance*; how Feminists revised *Little Women*; analysis of Cather’s *The Professor’s House*; analysis of Hemingway’s “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife”; the Introduction to Porter and analyses of her stories “Holiday” and “The Cracked Looking-Glass”; the analysis of O’Connor’s *The Violent Bear It Away*; how Feminists censored Hemingway’s last novel; analysis of DeLillo’s *White Noise*; and Feminist misreading of *White Noise* debunked.

#### NAZIS AT YALE

“Late in 1987 an extraordinary literary, intellectual and political scandal broke in a place we would least expect it: among the solemn deconstructionists of the humanities faculty at Yale University, the Sorbonne of Connecticut. One of the leading deconstructionists, the former Sterling Professor of the Humanities, Paul de Man, who died four years before, proved to have pulled the curtain on a dark stage in his wartime history. As a young man in his native Belgium, influenced by a powerful uncle who became a leading supporter of the Nazis, de Man had contributed some 170 articles to collaborationist newspapers. Though largely literary, they celebrated the historical justice and destiny of Nazism and, to put it at its least, colluded with its anti-Semitic philosophies....

[de Man] was made a member of the Society of Fellows at Harvard. He became a distinguished teacher at Cornell, Johns Hopkins and the University of Zurich... He joined Yale, to become what a standard textbook describes as ‘the most powerful and profound mind in the group of critics who, inspired in part by the work of Jacques Derrida, made Yale a center of deconstruction in the 1970’s’.... Above all, he stood for a new age of literary theory.... In his most famous essay, ‘The Resistance to Theory,’ he argued that the age of esthetic and ethical criticism [objective New Criticism] was over and that new rhetorical criticism gave the basis for a universal theory... In a time his own theory defined as the Age of the Death of the Author, de Man was an authority.

Deconstruction, crudely; is a paradox about a paradox: It assumes that all discourse, even all historical narrative, is essentially rhetoric. Rhetoric slips and is ‘undecidable,’ has no fixed meaning, so when we read, we invariably misread. It came out of Paris and, for all its claim to universality, has an evident history. It was born in the aftermath of existential anxieties about presence and absence, the there and the not-there. It developed via structuralism and its emphasis on linguistics and semiotics. From these sources

it derived its fundamental premise: the endless slippage of the referent, the unfixity of our attempt to name existence. It grew from two major collapses in late 20<sup>th</sup>-century European thought: the metaphysical decline of humanism and the dialectical decline of Marxism. For all that, it found its own best home in the United States, that...post-culture of multiplied signs and random meanings. ('America is deconstruction,' said the leading proponent, Jacques Derrida... In the 60's and 70's, deconstruction filled—perhaps better, emptied—the gap left in the American humanities by the demise of the Old New Criticism.... [objectivity])

Throughout the 70's the seminar rooms on American campuses—and then campuses worldwide—became workshops in deconstructionist practice. Junior misreaders worked away, becoming ever more like C.I.A. operatives, decoding false signals sent by a distant enemy, the writer. Deconstruction lifted itself with ever higher pretensions. As Jonathan Culler of Cornell exulted, 'The history of literature is part of the history of criticism.' Deconstruction transformed everything into a text ready to be studied (deconstructed, if you will)...and so easily made affinities with radical Feminism and latter-day Marxism, two other philosophies that also seek to challenge the sanctity of the text....

If deconstruction encountered resistance, that was often seen as censorious ignorance. Gangs of neo-deconstructionists would now come to town with their critical services and descend on the library. One would demythologize, another decanonize, another dephallicize, another dehegemonize, another defame.... Soon all that would be left would be a few bare bones of undecidable discourse and some tattered leather bindings. This would be called a conference of the Modern Language Association.... [After he was exposed as a former Nazi], from a great variety of reasons...[including] the need to sustain the critical enterprise, but perhaps above all dependence on the intellectual mindset formed by deconstruction itself--many of [the deconstructionists] set to work to reconstruct Paul de Man.

The ironies grew clear. The discourse...of deconstruction was put to use to canonize and re-fame the master of deconstruction. More significantly, the vacancies of his theory—it is avowedly not esthetic, moral or ethical [BEING A NAZI DOES NOT MATTER!], and submits creation to the eternal condition of pure discourse—became a way to pronounce de Man's early writings [advocating Nazism] undecidable, slipping away from their apparent meaning and their crucial historical location. Since a text has no existential author, no absolute historical occasion, the 170 articles [advocating Nazism] could become texts in the construction of the discourse called Paul de Man.... This is surely the contemporary meaning of the story of Paul de Man; it calls neither for the simple exultation some might take from [his being exposed as a former Nazi] nor for the arcane circularity of Mr. Derrida's recent defenses. You might say it calls for reconstruction—or the Birth of the Author." (Malcolm Bradbury, Review of *Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* by David Lehman, *NYTBR*, 24 February 1991)

#### POSTMODERNIST "THEORY"

"Vast sectors of the humanities and social sciences seem to have adopted a philosophy that we shall call, for want of a better term, 'Postmodernism': an intellectual current characterized by the more-or-less explicit rejection of the rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment, by theoretical discourses disconnected from any empirical test, and by a cognitive and cultural relativism that regards science as nothing more than a 'narration,' a 'myth' or a social construction among many others.... Our goal is precisely to say that the king is naked (and the queen too)....

We show that famous intellectuals such as Lacan, Kristeva, Irigaray, Baudrillard, and Deleuze have repeatedly abused scientific concepts and terminology: either using scientific ideas totally out of context, without giving the slightest justification...or throwing around scientific jargon in front of their non-scientist readers without any regard for its relevance or even its meaning.... (1) ...The most common tactic is to use scientific (or pseudo-scientific) terminology without bothering much about what the words actually *mean*. (2) Importing concepts from the natural sciences into the humanities or social sciences without giving the slightest conceptual or empirical justification.... We learn from Lacan that the structure of the neurotic subject is exactly the torus (it is no less than reality itself...), from Kristeva that poetic language can be theorized in terms of the cardinality of the continuum, and from Baudrillard that modern war takes place in a non-Euclidean space—all without explanation. (3) Displaying a superficial erudition by shamelessly throwing around technical terms in a context where they are completely irrelevant. The goal is, no doubt, to

impress and, above all, to intimidate the non-scientist reader.... (4) Manipulating phrases and sentences that are, in fact, meaningless. Some of these authors exhibit a veritable intoxication with words, combined with a superb indifference to their meaning.... Many people are simply irritated by the arrogance and empty verbiage of Postmodernist discourse and by the spectacle of an intellectual community where everyone repeats sentences that no one understands.” (Alan Sokal & Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals’ Abuse of Science*, Picador 1998: x, 1, 4-5, 204)

#### HOAX FOOLS EDITORS

“One of us [Sokal, from preceding quotation] decided to try an unorthodox...experiment: submit to a fashionable American cultural-studies journal, *Social Text*, a PARODY of the type of work that has proliferated in recent years, to see whether they would publish it. The article...‘Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity,’ is chock-full of absurdities and blatant non-sequiturs. In addition, it asserts an extreme form of cognitive relativism: After mocking the oldfashioned ‘dogma’ that ‘there exists an external world, whose properties are independent of any individual human being and indeed of humanity as a whole’, it proclaims categorically that ‘physical ‘reality,’ no less than social ‘reality,’ is at bottom a social and linguistic construct’.... [all caps added]

And yet, THE ARTICLE WAS ACCEPTED AND PUBLISHED. Worse, it was published in a special issue of *Social Text* devoted to rebutting the criticisms leveled against Postmodernism and social constructivism by several distinguished scientists. For the editors of *Social Text*, it was hard to imagine a more radical way of shooting themselves in the foot.... Finally, for all those of us who identify with the political left, Postmodernism has specific negative consequences. First of all, the extreme focus on language and the elitism linked to the use of pretentious jargon contribute to enclosing intellectuals in sterile debates and to isolating them from social movements taking place outside the ivory tower.... By attacking rationality, the Postmodern left deprives itself of a powerful instrument for criticizing the existing social order.” (Alan Sokal & Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals’ Abuse of Science*, 1998: 1-2, x, 6, 204, first published in France as *Impostures Intellectuelles*, 1997)

#### POETRY

Poetry was already unpopular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the prevailing rationalism, utilitarianism, and dissociation of sensibility in an age of increasing high technology. Postmodernist poetry is an oxymoron. Postmodernists on the whole believe in politics, not art. Feminists will not even read white males. Academic theorists declared the author dead and language meaningless while creative writing teachers in the same English departments are still trying to encourage young poets. Even the rationalists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had more respect for poetry than PC liberal Postmodernists.

Nevertheless, creative writing programs have been turning out thousands of poets since World War II. Feminist professors and other academics abandoned the social role of English departments as promoters of poetry in order to promote themselves. Consequently, there is not enough objective criticism of contemporary poetry to inform this website. As put by David Foster Wallace, “Literary fiction and poetry are real marginalized right now.” Even so, more excellent poets have emerged since 1960—as well as more bad and mediocre ones--than in any period in history anywhere, many of the best distinguishing themselves by writing in traditional verse forms rather than free verse.

#### PC POETS

“Why Don’t Schools Teach Poetry?... The poems that nearly all schoolchildren learned a century ago and many learned half a century ago are rarely studied today. One reason for this is political correctness, the view that anything by a dead white European or American male is suspect, and of course, until recently, most English language poetry fit this description. A second reason is progressive disdain for memorization ... Other culprits behind the disappearance of poetry in our schools also exist... Critics of academia [see] the bureaucratization of academia’s creative writing programs as creating a ‘superabundance of poetry within a small [academic] class and the impoverishment outside it.’ Today’s poets lack incentives to reach out beyond the academy, and within the academy, they must produce a quick quantity of publications rather

a slow quality. Bureaucratic incentives have also marginalized poetry within the broader literary culture and society.... Many blame the Common Core State Standards [for] the CCSS focus on the vocational rather than the educational aspects of schooling....

I believe that we have lost interest in and have little awareness and knowledge of most of our poetry because we have too many uneducated educators.... The early twentieth-century Progressives thought that most people are just not capable of much intellectual development. Trying to educate them would only frustrate them.... As a significant empirical literature shows, the opening of other occupations to women in the 1970s and 1980s eroded teacher quality, meaning that fewer teachers were willing and able to resist fads imposed by central administration, schools of education, and profit-seeking prophets (consultants).” (Robert Maranto, “Why Don’t Schools Teach Poetry?”, *Academic Questions* 28.2, Summer 2015)

#### PC POETRY BIAS

“The critical reaction to *The Penguin Anthology of Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, edited by Rita Dove, has been violent, silly, depressing, and symptomatic—and it hasn’t gone nearly far enough... This bewildering and myopic book is not an adequate portrait of American poetry of the late century... How ghostly this vision of the great poets seems! Robert Frost is represented by five short poems and one longer; Stevens by the same number, none of any great length.... A college student would have little idea why these...poets have been the subject of continual study since they revolutionized American verse almost a century ago. Gwendolyn Brooks gets three times as much space as Moore; Melvin B. Tolson more space than Frost, Williams, or Pound; Robert Pinsky more than Stevens, Moore, Cummings, Crane, Auden, Roethke, Bishop, Berryman, or Lowell.... Dove’s anthology is so inclusive you’re surprised everyone’s second cousin isn’t here.... It’s painful to find [so many] great poets missing and yet a horde of mediocre poets crowding the pages....

When sociology masquerades as aesthetics, your fairness seems immediately unfair to everyone left out (there’s a point where ‘balance’ is prejudice by another name). The blogs have been alight with rage over the absence of Appalachian poets, disabled poets, cyber poets, performance poets, avant-gardists of every stripe, and many other groups implicitly maligned. Once you establish ‘representation’ as a shibboleth, there’s no stopping.... No art is an equal-opportunity art. Talent is always asymmetrically distributed.... Dove has cast a massive [net] and caught a lot of flotsam and jetsam. She has made matters worse by adding four poems by herself, when most of her contemporaries are limited to one or two. To think yourself twice as good as almost every poet of your generation suggests a species of self-delusion common in poets but rare in anthologists, because an anthologist without modesty can’t be taken seriously....

Dove gushes with fresh-minted platitudes...goofy drivel...smug, idiotically phrased judgments.... What can you say when one of the most honored contemporary poets can’t write a sentence that sounds literate?.... This cliché-addled, *Time*-magazine-style rush to literary judgment is dispiriting but hilarious. Matters are made no better by an alarming number of textual errors and the complete lack of notes in what seems meant as a college textbook. Dove has built a Temple of Mediocrity, scarcely glancing at the century’s best poets while lavishing space on the harmless, the hackneyed, the humdrum.” (William Logan, “Guys and Dove,” *The New Criterion* 30.10, June 2012)

“White ‘Poet’ Plays the Game,” *The American Spectator* (9 September 2015): “If you look at who runs poetry magazines you’ll find a stultifying homogenous left-wing, obscurantist perspective, explicitly hostile to meaning and revelation.” (In RussetShadows)

#### PAINTING

Elite critics of painting like elite critics of literature considered themselves more important than artists and their own theories more important than art. The novelist Tom Wolfe documented the elitism of the Art World in *The Painted Word* (1975; Bantam, 1999): “The public plays no part in the process whatsoever.... The notion that the public scorns, ignores, fails to comprehend, allows to wither, crushes the spirit of, or commits any other crime against Art or any individual artist is merely a romantic fiction....The game is completed and the trophies distributed long before the public knows what has happened....

Theory really started to roll...toward reductionism. In this case: real art is nothing but what happens in your brain. Of course, [Clement] Greenberg [elite art theorist “involved in the Lower Manhattan Left literary politics of the 1930s”] had started it all with his demands for purity, for flatness (ever more Flatness!), for the obliteration of distinctions such as foreground and background, figure and field, line and contour, color and pattern. Now in the mid-1960s, Greenberg made a comeback.... In the beginning we got rid of nineteenth-century storybook realism. Then we got rid of representational objects. Then we got rid of the third dimension altogether and got really flat (Abstract Expressionism). Then we got rid of airiness, brushstrokes, most of the paint, and the last viruses of drawing and complicated designs.... *Enough?* Hardly, said the Minimalists, who began to come into their own about 1965. Bourgeois connotations, they argued, still hung on to Modern Art like a necktie.... Modern Art has reached the vanishing point and our old standby [leading art critic], Hilton Kramer, lets slip the admission. ‘Frankly, these days, without a theory to go with it, I can’t see a painting.’

Every art student will marvel over the fact that a whole generation of artists devoted their careers to getting the Word [the latest Theory]...and to divesting themselves of whatever there was in their imagination and technical ability that did not fit the Word...averting their eyes from whatever their predecessors, from da Vinci on, had discovered, shrinking from it, terrified, or disintegrating it with the universal solvent of the Word.... With what sniggers, laughter, and good-humored amazement they will look back upon the era of the Painted Word!”

#### DRAMA

There is no continuous literary tradition in American drama and there are few major dramatists. The first significant American dramatist, Eugene O’Neill, remains the greatest. He studied classical models—Greek, Roman, and European—and became a tragic Expressionist dominating the American theater throughout his life (1888-1953). T. S. Eliot wrote verse dramas. Thornton Wilder studied O’Neill and classical models and wrote both Realistic plays, in particular *Our Town*, and Expressionist plays, most notably *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Tennessee Williams began in the Modernist tradition, at his best in the Expressionistic *Camino Real* (1953), but after that experiment failed on Broadway he became more commercial and more Postmodernist in his vision, while retaining his Modernist humanism.

The first major Postmodern playwright is Arthur Miller, who disliked O’Neill and studied Marxism. His *The Crucible* (1953) is a powerful melodrama that makes a false analogy between the witch trials of 1692 in Salem and the hearings on Communists by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947. By analogy Miller glorifies the Communists as noble victims, shifting blame from the traitors stealing atomic secrets and trying to establish totalitarianism to Congressmen trying to preserve Democracy. Artful propaganda, the play is still regularly performed and taught in ignorance. *The Crucible* became the most successful hoax in American literary history.

In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dramatists including Miller increasingly gravitated toward movies and television. Ironically, Miller of all people said he thought the American theater died in the 1950s because thereafter plays were too “schematic.” Too doctrinaire. Plays require characterization and liberals in the arts are too politically correct to think differently, which is necessary to the creation of different characters. Actors do it but dramatists today cannot. Postmodern plays are the opposite of Shakespeare. It is possible to excerpt a passage at random from Shakespeare or from the works of other classic playwrights and the passage will have literary qualities—figurative language, vivid imagery, poetic rhythms, wit. In contrast, it is rarely possible to excerpt a passage from a Postmodern play and find literary value. The theater has become almost all theatrical as distinct from literary, as exemplified by even the best living American dramatist David Mamet, whose *Oleanna* (1993), for example, has great dramatic intensity, using techniques and a fragmented style borrowed from Harold Pinter—but the speeches are deliberately ugly.

“In America...the drama...is practically monopolized by commercial playwrights...[with] an unsavory reputation through its alliance with the market place.... Alterations almost invariably result in a work of diminished honesty and complexity.... American drama, no matter how serious in intent, is very rarely readable, for our plays are often stage mechanisms which seem oddly wan and listless on the printed page.... In the past [dramatists] apologized for literary failings—today they caution the reader to ignore them and concentrate on dramatic values.... Arthur Miller writes: ‘It is necessary to separate the drama



from what we think of today as literature'.... As a consequence, American drama often seems to be the most mindless form of legitimate culture since eighteenth-century sentimental comedy.... Most of our plays, for all the light they throw on American life, might have been written by a Visigoth in the Year 1, while the others merely parrot the liberal prejudices of the audience." (Robert Brustein, "Why American Plays Are Not Literature," 1959)

## HOLLYWOOD

Hollywood has been a fountainhead of Postmodern decadence since the 1920s. Cecil B. DeMille began by producing soft porn epics. Erich von Stroheim presided over orgies on his sets. After the movie industry established a Production Code of moral standards, DeMille switched to producing Biblical epics. Yet behind the scenes, moral standards actually declined in the 1930s due to the influx of refugees from the German movie industry fleeing the Nazis, libertines like Von Stroheim and others from decadent Berlin. Among the refugees were many Communists. The only screenwriting school in Hollywood during the 1930s was run by the Communist Party. Communist instructors served as agents who got scripts read in the studios. Communists ran the Screenwriters Guild and were taking over other unions. Their influence caught the attention of U.S. Congressmen. Democrats formed the House Committee on Un-American Activities, conducted an investigation of right-wing extremist groups, then began an investigation of the Communist Party in Hollywood, but got interrupted by WWII.

The studio heads were conservative businessmen who produced movies that appealed to the majority of Americans, respecting traditional morality, religion, and family values. They were patriotic and supported the national war effort during WWII. Bette Davis established an entertainment center for service men where they could dance with stars. Leading actresses toured the country selling war bonds and leading actors—James Stewart, Clark Gable, Gregory Peck, Robert Montgomery, Tyrone Power, Glenn Ford, Eddie Albert, Robert Ryan, Lee Marvin—joined the military and went to war in defense of America. In contrast, after the war when the House Committee resumed its investigation of Communist influence in Hollywood, over 320 people working in the industry testified that they were members of the Communist Party. They inserted propaganda into movies, conducted rallies, worked to elect a Socialist candidate as Governor of California and raised huge sums of money for the Party that went straight to Moscow. In 1947 the 10 most prominent Communists in Hollywood were called to testify before the Committee and became celebrated as heroes—"The Hollywood Ten."

Liberal movie stars flew to the hearings to protest in support of the Communists. Thousands of liberals in Hollywood proclaimed their support as well. The public backlash including boycotts of movies was so intense, however, that studio heads imposed a "Blacklist" of Communists while continuing to employ the most talented of them discretely, especially screenwriters like Dalton Trumbo and Lillian Hellman. Less talented Communists in the industry who could not find work got hired to teach in the film departments of USC and UCLA and other universities around the country. The screenwriting faculty at USC erected a monument to the Hollywood Ten on their campus, as if the Communists were not totalitarian at all but martyrs to free speech. To be blacklisted was to be a hero in Hollywood.

In *The Crucible* (1953) the Marxist playwright and screenwriter Arthur Miller implied by analogy that the Hollywood Ten were like Christ. Movies began to ignore the Production Code during the 1950s and to subvert respect for authority. Hollywood abandoned the Code in 1963, the studio system collapsed, and the floodgates opened to increasing sex, violence and treason. *Dr. Strangelove* (1963) depicts the U.S. military as insane warmongers who start a nuclear war and destroy the earth. *Fail-Safe* (1964) was made by Communists who give moral equivalence to the Soviet Union and argue for unilateral disarmament by the United States. *Che!* (1969) celebrates the murdering Communist Che Guevara. *Fidel* and *Havana* also glorify the Communists in Cuba. Barbra Streisand celebrates herself as a beautiful adorable lovable cute Communist rebel in *The Way We Were* (1973), irresistible to the handsomest dull gentile around. In *The Front* (1976) Woody Allen feels sorry for the poor Communists who had to submit their scripts through others during the horrible Blacklist. *Coming Home* (1978) is a Communist slander of the U.S. military produced by Jane Fonda and starring herself--the infamous "Hanoi Jane" who counseled soldiers to desert and had herself photographed in North Vietnam pretending to shoot down American planes. Hollywood awarded Oscars to both Fonda and her Communist screenwriter. *Guilty by Suspicion* (1990) is about one of the Hollywood Ten but absurdly turns the guilty Communist hero into an innocent liberal victim.

In 1997 the liberals of Hollywood revived the myth of the horrible “Blacklist” in a television spectacle on the scale of the Academy Awards, *Hollywood Remembers the Blacklist*. They officially “forgave” the director Elia Kazan for being loyal to the United States by naming some previously named and well known Communists in his testimony to Congress. They even gave Kazan an award, but half the audience refused to stand with the ovation. The rest of the televised program honored the Hollywood Ten and all of the glittering audience cheered and applauded when the Communist martyrs appeared on the big screen. In 2001 *The Majestic* portrayed all of Hollywood as Red and “majestic,” with a cast of leftist actors and a Communist screenwriter as the blacklisted hero, whose treason is presented as deserving a Congressional Medal of Honor. Postmodern movie actors have not risked their lives for their country like actors in the 1940s—“the greatest generation.” Hollywood today is run by the worst generations.

Many actors who liked to be directors with absolute power embraced dictators such as Stalin, Castro, Saddam Hussein, and Hugo Chavez. Elites incline to totalitarianism to avoid subjecting themselves to the will of the majority of people, as is also true in higher education. In 2005 the movie *Good Night, and Good Luck* revived the myth of the horrible “Blacklist” by dramatizing the slander of Senator Joseph McCarthy by Edward R. Murrow on CBS, reinforcing the hoax perpetrated by Arthur Miller in *The Crucible*. Senator McCarthy had nothing to do with Hollywood. He exposed Soviet spies employed in sensitive government jobs by liberals, some of whom stole atomic secrets for the Soviet Union and subjected Americans to the threat of nuclear annihilation for almost half a century. The liberals who renewed slandering Senator McCarthy on television knew that translation of secret Soviet cables had proved that McCarthy was right all along, that in fact, he had underestimated the number of Communists liberals had hired in the government. One of the Soviet spies McCarthy exposed was a friend of Edward R. Murrow.

That same year, just four years after the terrorist attack on 9/11 the same clueless actor who produced the slander of McCarthy—George Clooney—also produced *Syriana*, which supported the Islamic terrorist view of America. *Good Night, and Good Luck* was nominated for 6 Oscars including best picture. That year another movie sympathetically portraying the terrorist point of view, *Munich*, also was nominated for best picture, and *Paradise Now*, a sympathetic portrayal of suicide bombers, was nominated for best foreign film. Hollywood produces propaganda for enemies of the United States.

## ENTROPY

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the pessimistic Atheist historian Henry Adams applied the concept of entropy from the Second Law of Thermodynamics to history and disregarded the First Law, which, on the contrary, was proof to physicist Werner von Braun that there is an afterlife. Thomas Pynchon, an Atheist like Adams, dramatized entropy in his fiction and his influence on later writers made it a major theme in Postmodernist writing. See Barth’s “The Literature of Exhaustion” (1967) and the analysis of Pynchon’s “Entropy” (1960) by 13 critics. Postmodernism itself is entropic.

“People think I know more about the subject of entropy than I really do.” (Pynchon)

“According to the Entropy Law, whenever a semblance of order is created anywhere on earth or in the universe, it is done at the expense of causing an even greater disorder in the surrounding environment.... The Entropy Law destroys the notion of history as progress... The notion that science and technology create a more ordered world.... It becomes harder to maintain order and more costly to generate order. The more we try to spread technique over the culture, the more fragmented society becomes. The whole process of increased complexity, increased problems, increased entropy, and increased disorder proceeds exponentially, and that’s what makes the modern world crisis so frightening. The closer the entropy of the environment moves to a maximum, the more costly everything becomes... We in the United States continue to consume one-third of the world’s resources annually... It requires roughly one-third of the world’s annual production of mineral resources to support that 6% of the world’s population residing in the U.S.... It becomes apparent that even one America is more than the world can afford.

Overspecialization, say the biologists, is one of the most important contributing factors in a species’ becoming extinct. The more stages in the mental process, the greater complexity, abstraction, and centralization, and the greater the dissipation of energy and disorder. The history of human mental

development has been a history of removing the human mind farther and farther away from the reality of the world we live in. Each successive stage of economic and social development has only increased the physiological strains on the human being and further eroded our chances for long-range survival as a species. For example, infectious diseases were virtually unknown in the hunter-gatherer environment, where the communities were small, extremely mobile, and lived an outdoor existence. Strangely enough, it seems that the more information that is made available to us, the less well informed we become. Decisions become harder to make, and our world appears more confusing than ever.” (Jeremy Rifkin with Ted Howard, *Entropy: A New World View*, 1981: 6, 83, 126, 189, 191, 136, 93, 167, 180-81, 170)

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