

Anything Can Happen Interviews With Contemporary American Novelists

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The Next Thing - Pablo Baler 2013-06-12
The Next Thing: Art in the Twenty-first Century is an illustrated collection of commissioned essays that attempt to anticipate, through current artistic productions, the aesthetic sensibility that will define our times.

The Bloomsbury Handbook of World Theory
- Jeffrey R. Di Leo 2021-11-18

Disciplines from literary studies to environmentalism have recently undergone a spectacular reorientation that has refocused entire fields, methodologies, and vocabularies on the world and its sister terms such as globe, planet, and earth. The Bloomsbury Handbook of World Theory examines what "world" means and what it accomplishes in different zones of academic study. The contributors raise questions such as: What happens when "world" is appended to a particular form of humanistic or scientific inquiry? How exactly does "worlding" bear on the theoretical operating system and the history of that field? What is the theory or theoretical model that allows "world" to function in a meaningful way in coordination with that knowledge domain? With contributions from 38 leading theorists from a vast range of fields, including queer studies, religion, and pop culture, this is the first large reference work to consider the profound effect, both within and outside the academy, of the worlding of discourse in the 21st century.

Don DeLillo - David Cowart 2012-08-15

Don DeLillo, author of twelve novels and winner of the National Book Award, the PEN/Faulkner

Award, the William Dean Howells Medal, and the Jerusalem Prize, has begun to rival Thomas Pynchon as the definitive postmodern novelist. Always thought-provoking and occasionally controversial, DeLillo has become the voice of the bimillennial moment. Charting DeLillo's emergence as a contemporary novelist of major stature, David Cowart discusses each of DeLillo's twelve novels, including his most recent work, *The Body Artist* (2001). Rejecting the idea that DeLillo lacks affinities across the cultural spectrum, Cowart argues that DeLillo's work invites comparison with that of wide range of antecedents, including Dunbar, Whitman, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Freud, Lacan, Derrida, Hemingway, Joyce, Rilke, and Eliot. At the same time, Cowart explores the ways in which DeLillo's art anticipates, parallels, and contests ideas that have become the common currency of poststructuralist theory. The major site of DeLillo's engagement with postmodernism, Cowart argues, is language, which DeLillo represents as more mysterious--numinous even--than current theory allows. For DeLillo, language remains what Cowart calls "the ground of all making." *Don DeLillo: The Physics of Language* is a provocative investigation of the most compelling issues of contemporary fiction.

[Understanding Diane Johnson](#) - Carolyn A. Durham 2012-08-27

Understanding Diane Johnson is a biographical and critical study of a quintessential American novelist who has devoted forty-five years to writing about French and American culture.

Johnson, who was nominated for the National Book Award three times and the Pulitzer Prize twice, has been a regular contributor to the New York Review of Books since the 1970s and is the author of more than a dozen fiction and nonfiction volumes. Carolyn A. Durham explores Johnson's fiction and nonfiction works, emphasizing that setting is key to the construction of Johnson's literary world, a theme displayed throughout her eleven novels. Johnson is well known as a comic novelist who addresses serious social problems. Durham outlines Johnson's continued exploration of women's lives and her experimentation with varied forms of narrative technique and genre parody in the detective novels *The Shadow Knows* and *Lying Low*, both award-winning novels. Durham examines Johnson's reinvention of the international novel of manners—inherited from Henry James and Edith Wharton—in her best-selling Franco-American trilogy: *Le Divorce*, *Le Mariage*, and *L'Affaire*. As the first book-length study of this distinguished American writer, *Understanding Diane Johnson* surveys an extensive body of work and draws critical attention to a well-published, widely read author who was the winner of the California Book Awards Gold Medal for Fiction in 1997.

The A to Z of Postmodernist Literature and Theater - Fran Mason 2009

The A to Z of Postmodernist Literature and Theater examines the different areas of postmodernist literature and theater and the variety of forms that have been produced. It contains a list of acronyms, a chronology, an introductory essay, a bibliography, and several hundred cross-referenced dictionary entries on individual writers, important aesthetic practices, significant texts, and important movements and ideas that have created a variety of literary approaches within the form. By placing these concerns within the historical, philosophical, and cultural contexts of postmodernism, this reference explores the frameworks within which postmodernist literature of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries operates.

John Barth (Routledge Revivals) - Heide Ziegler 2014-10-10

John Barth represents most completely what has been termed postmodernism, not because his work comprises more postmodernist features

than other contemporary writers but because, for Barth, "life" and "art" are two sides of the same coin. In this brief study, first published in 1987, Heide Ziegler examines all Barth's novels. She argues that each pair of novels first "exhausts" and then "replenishes" those literary genres that hinge on a particular world view: the existentialist novel, the Bildungsroman, the Künstlerroman, or the realistic novel. Through the division of labour between character and author Barth manages to develop a new mode of literary parody which projects itself beyond the mocked literary model and even self-parody into the realm of future fiction. This book is ideal for students of literature and postmodern studies.

Facing Texts - Heide Ziegler 2013-07-22

This selection of fiction by many of America's best writers, each coupled with a distinguished critic's response, is designed to defy the chronological secondariness of critical interpretation. During the creation of this book the majority of the contributions, chosen by the writers themselves, were as yet unpublished, providing an unmediated encounter between author and critic. Every reader extends what editors, authors, and critics have begun by adding to the imaginary space in which all texts may be woven together. This process serves as metaphor for the changing nature of any latter-day encounter with one's own literary tradition. The interfacing of texts not only illuminates the fiction, and the relationship of fiction to critics, but also informs our conceptions of text, criticism, and fiction itself.

A Jury of Her Peers - Elaine Showalter 2010-01-12

An unprecedented literary landmark: the first comprehensive history of American women writers from 1650 to the present. In a narrative of immense scope and fascination, here are more than 250 female writers, including the famous—Harriet Beecher Stowe, Dorothy Parker, Flannery O'Connor, and Toni Morrison, among others—and the little known, from the early American bestselling novelist Catherine Sedgwick to the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Susan Glaspell. Showalter integrates women's contributions into our nation's literary heritage with brilliance and flair, making the case for the unfairly overlooked and putting the overrated firmly in their place.

Samuel Beckett's Legacies in American Fiction - James Baxter 2021-11-30

Samuel Beckett's Legacies in American Fiction provides an overdue investigation into Beckett's rich influences over American writing. Through in-depth readings of postmodern authors such as Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, Paul Auster and Lydia Davis, this book situates Beckett's post-war writing of exhaustion and generation in relation to the emergence of an explosive American avant-garde. In turn, this study provides a valuable insight into the practical realities of Beckett's dissemination in America, following the author's long-standing relationship with the countercultural magazine *Evergreen Review* and its dramatic role in redrawing the possibilities of American culture in the 1960s. While Beckett would be largely removed from his American context, this book follows his vigorous, albeit sometimes awkward, reception alongside the authors and institutions central to shaping his legacies in 20th and 21st century America.

Contemporary American Women Fiction Writers - Bella Vivante 2002

Covers more than sixty women who published significant fiction after 1945, with a brief biography, exposition of major works and themes, survey of critical reception, and references to primary and secondary sources for each.

An Introduction to Contemporary American Fiction - Alan Bilton 2003-03

Don DeLillo, Paul Auster, Cormac McCarthy, Rolando Hinojosa, E. Annie Proulx, Bret Easton Ellis, Douglas Coupland, and Thomas Pynchon: *An Introduction to Contemporary American Fiction* introduces the work of a range of key American authors, all of whom can be said to engage with postmodernism. Exploring the vitality and energy of contemporary writing in light of pessimistic proclamations on the state of postmodern American culture, Bilton highlights the tension between "realistic" description and linguistic self-consciousness in contemporary fiction. In addition, by addressing a central problem in literary theory—its neglect of literary discussion and the practice of reading—*An Introduction to Contemporary American Fiction* is able to present a working model for reading a text theoretically. As an introductory text, it

assumes no prior knowledge of the authors of the novels discussed. To encourage understanding and aid further study, the following features are included: * GLOSSARY OF CRITICAL AND LITERARY TERMS * BIBLIOGRAPHY OF EACH AUTHOR'S WORKS * BIOGRAPHY OF EACH AUTHOR * GUIDE TO FURTHER READING * THEMATIC AND AUTHOR INDICES

Authority and the Historical Document in Late Twentieth-Century Literature - Elizabeth Rich 2021-08-23

After the Fact: Authority and the Historical Document in Late Twentieth-Century Literature examines six historiographic metafiction novels that critically employ archival documents. The writers endeavor ethical and critical projects that reveal how authority is constructed in historical records, comprised of an array of genres that perform ideological work.

Some Other Frequency - Larry McCaffery 1996
McCaffery converses with the young, recklessly daring, and furiously productive William Vollmann and with Marianne Hauser, who published her first novel nearly sixty years ago ... with Native American trickster novelist Gerald Vizenor and "guerrilla writer" Harold Jaffe (whose literary technique is to "plant a bomb, sneak away") ... with stark minimalist Lydia Davis and text-and-collage artist Derek Pell ... with muscular pop icon Mark Leyner and proto-punk diva Kathy Acker. They are a diverse lot, shaped by very different literary and personal influences, and addressing divergent readerships.

Beyond Grief and Nothing - Joseph Dewey 2006

Beginning in 1982 with *The Names* and continuing with *White Noise* and *Underworld*, DeLillo defined himself as a provocative, articulate anatomist of American culture. Dewey offers an astute assessment of this daunting yet important writer's four-decade cultural critique. Dewey finds DeLillo's concerns to be organized around three rubrics that mark the writer's own creative evolution: the love of the street, the embrace of the word, and the celebration of the soul.

Historical Dictionary of Postmodernist Literature and Theater - Fran Mason 2016-12-12

This second edition of *Historical Dictionary of*

Postmodernist Literature and Theater contains a chronology, an introduction, and a bibliography. The dictionary section has over 400 cross-referenced entries on postmodernist writers, the important postmodernist aesthetic practices.

Fiction in the Quantum Universe - Susan Strehle 2000-11-09

In this outstanding book Susan Strehle argues that a new fiction has developed from the influence of modern physics. She calls this new fiction actualism, and within that framework she offers a critical analysis of major novels by Thomas Pynchon, Robert Coover, William Gaddis, John Barth, Margaret Atwood, and Donald Barthelme. According to Strehle, the actualists balance attention to questions of art with an engaged meditation on the external, actual world. While these actualist novels diverge markedly from realistic practice, Strehle claims that they do so in order to reflect more acutely what we now understand as real. Reality is no longer "realistic"; in the new physical or quantum universe, reality is discontinuous, energetic, relative, statistical, subjectively seen, and uncertainly known -- all terms taken from new physics. Actualist fiction is characterized by incompletions, indeterminacy, and "open" endings unsatisfying to the readerly wish for fulfilled promises and completed patterns. *Gravity's Rainbow*, for example, ends not with a period but with a dash. Strehle argues that such innovations in narrative reflect on twentieth-century history, politics, science, and discourse.

The American Mystery - Tony Tanner 2000-03-16

A collection of essays by the late Tony Tanner on a wide range of key American authors.

The American Writer and the University - Alber J. Rivero 1989

The Self-Conscious Novel - Brian Stonehill 2016-11-11

This book is a volume in the Penn Press Anniversary Collection. To mark its 125th anniversary in 2015, the University of Pennsylvania Press rereleased more than 1,100 titles from Penn Press's distinguished backlist from 1899-1999 that had fallen out of print. Spanning an entire century, the Anniversary Collection offers peer-reviewed scholarship in a wide range of subject areas.

Storying the World - Rita Irwin 2019-03-22
Bringing together Carl Leggo's most significant contributions over the past 30 years, this book celebrates his work in curriculum studies, English language arts, literacy and life writing, poetry, and arts education. Organized around three thematic sections—Loving Language, Narrating Ruminations, and Storying the World—the volume highlights his efforts across interrelated fields of inquiry, including narrative and poetic inquiry, contemplative inquiry, and social fiction. The text extends the discussion and conversation of curriculum studies and is greatly enhanced with a selection of original poetry by this incomparable poet, scholar, and teacher. Carl Leggo is renowned not only for his ground-breaking work at the University of British Columbia, but also for his tremendous influence on graduate education across the English-speaking world. This volume honours that immense contribution in today's time of academic change and development.

Authors on Writing - B. Tomlinson 2005-03-01
Drawing on some 3,000 published interviews with contemporary authors, *Authors on Writing: Metaphors and Intellectual Labor* reveals new ways of conceiving of writing as intellectual labor. Authors' metaphorical stories about composing highlight not interior worlds but socially situated cultures of composing and apparatuses of authorship. Through an original method of interpreting metaphorical stories, Tomlinson argues that writing is both an individual activity and a collective practice, a solitary activity that depends upon rich, sustained, and complex social networks, institutions, and beliefs. This new book draws upon interviews with writers including: Seamus Heaney, Roald Dahl, Samuel Beckett, Bret Easton Ellis, John Fowles, Allen Ginsburg, Alice Walker and Gore Vidal.

Postmodern Humanism in Contemporary Literature and Culture - T. Davis 2016-01-23
Davis and Womack investigate the emerging gaps between literary scholarship and the reading experience. The idea of reconciling the void - the locus of our sociocultural disillusionment and despair in an uncertain world - concerns explicit artistic attempts to represent the ways in which human beings seek out meaning, hope and community.

American Fiction Since 1940 - Tony Hilfer
2014-09-25

In this remarkable book, Tony Hilfer provides a major survey of the wealth of post-war American fiction. He analyses the major modes and genres of writing, from realist to postmodernist metafiction and black humour, the fiction of social protest, women's writing, and the traditions of African-American, Southern and Jewish-American fiction. Key writers discussed include William Faulkner, Norman Mailer, Ralph Ellison, Saul Bellow, Joseph Heller, Vladimir Nabokov and Joyce Carol Oates. The book concludes by exploring contemporary trends through detailed case-studies of Donald Barthelme and Toni Morrison.

On History and Memory in Arab Literature and Western Poetics - Bootheina Majoul 2020-10-06

Texts act like receptacles for an ever-present remembered past, or what the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur calls "the present representation of an absent thing". They might embody an efficient remedy to forgetting but could also become a vivid testimony for exorcised traumas. This volume focuses on Ricoeur's phenomenology of memory, epistemology of history, and hermeneutics of forgetting. A special emphasis is laid on the dissension between individual and collective institutional memory.

Reading Stanley Elkin - Peter J. Bailey 1985

The 1970s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction - Nick Hubble 2014-02-27

How did social, cultural and political events in Britain during the 1970s shape Contemporary British Fiction? Exploring the impact of events like the Cold War, miners' strikes and Winter of Discontent, this volume charts the transition of British fiction from post-war to contemporary. Chapters outline the decade's diversity of writing, showing how the literature of Ian McEwan and Ian Sinclair interacted with the experimental work of B.S. Johnson. Close contextual readings of Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish and English novels map the steady break-up of Britain. Tying the popularity of Angela Carter and Fay Weldon to the growth of the Women's Liberation Movement and calling attention to a new interest in documentary modes of autobiographical writing, this volume

also examines the rising resonance of the marginal voices: the world of 1970s British Feminist fiction and postcolonial and diasporic writers. Against a backdrop of social tensions, this major critical reassessment of the 1970s defines, explores and better understands the criticism and fiction of a decade marked by the sense of endings.

The Routledge Encyclopedia of Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century - Sorrel Kerbel

2004-11-23

Now available in paperback for the first time, *Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century* is both a comprehensive reference resource and a springboard for further study. This volume: examines canonical Jewish writers, less well-known authors of Yiddish and Hebrew, and emerging Israeli writers includes entries on figures as diverse as Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, Tristan Tzara, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Arthur Miller, Saul Bellow, Nadine Gordimer, and Woody Allen contains introductory essays on Jewish-American writing, Holocaust literature and memoirs, Yiddish writing, and Anglo-Jewish literature provides a chronology of twentieth-century Jewish writers. Compiled by expert contributors, this book contains over 330 entries on individual authors, each consisting of a biography, a list of selected publications, a scholarly essay on their work and suggestions for further reading.

Aesthetics and contemporary discourse - Herbert Grabes 1994

The Hero in Contemporary American Fiction - S. Halldorson 2007-12-09

This book sets out to write nothing short of a new theory of the heroic for today's world. It delves into the "why" of the hero as a natural companion piece to the "how" of the hero as written by Northrop Frye and Joseph Campbell over half a century ago. The novels of Saul Bellow and Don DeLillo serve as an anchor to the theory as it challenges our notions of what is heroic about nymphomaniacs, Holocaust survivors, spurious academics, cult followers, terrorists, celebrities, photographers and writers of novels who all attempt to claim the right to be "hero."

Diseases and Disorders in Contemporary Fiction - James Peacock 2013-04-17

The essays in this collection address the current preoccupation with neurological conditions and disorders in contemporary literature by British and American writers. The book places these fictional treatments within a broader cultural and historical context, exploring such topics as the two cultures debate, the neurological turn, postmodernism and the post-postmodern, and responses to September 11th. Considering a variety of materials including mainstream literary fiction, the graphic novel, popular fiction, autobiographical writing, film, and television, contributors consider the contemporary dimensions of the interface between the sciences and humanities, developing the debate about the post-postmodern as a new humanism or a return to realism and investigating questions of form and genre, and of literary continuities and discontinuities. Further, the essays discuss contemporary writers' attempts to engage the relation between the individual and the social, looking at the relation between the "syndrome syndrome" (referring to the prevalence in contemporary literature of neurological phenomena evident at the biological level) and existing work in the field of trauma studies (where explanations tend to have taken a psychoanalytical form), allowing for perspectives that question some of the assumptions that have marked both these fields. The current literary preoccupation with neurological conditions presents us with a new and distinctive form of trauma literature, one concerned less with psychoanalysis than with the physical and evolutionary status of human beings.

[Designs of Darkness in Contemporary American Fiction](#) - Arthur M. Saltzman 2016-11-11

In *Designs of Darkness*, Arthur M. Saltzman examines some of the ways in which fiction has traditionally conspired to promote a goal-oriented vision of the work of art—and explores the ways in which postmodern (or postrealist) fiction consistently and unavoidably subverts the clarity of this vision. Offering readings of works by well-known authors, including Barthelme, Doctorow, DeLillo, and Hakes, as well as works by lesser-known writers (Auster, Gangemi), Saltzman concentrates on the breakdown of epiphany in recent fiction, both as philosophical motive and as structural foundation. In

contemporary fiction, Saltzman contends, ambiguities blossom far beyond our capacities to stabilize, summarize, or restore them to sense. The old rules of the game—in which a reader looking for truth can expect some sort of satisfactory resolution—no longer apply.

Literature now comes out of the answerless. *Designs of Darkness in Contemporary American Fiction* is a valuable new resource for scholars and students of contemporary literature.

Contemporary American Fiction - Kenneth Millard 2000-09-21

Contemporary American Fiction provides an introduction to American fiction since 1970. Offering substantial and detailed interpretations of more than thirty texts by thirty different writers, Millard combines them in an innovative critical structure designed to promote debates on cultural politics and aesthetic value. The book is the first of its kind to offer a wide-ranging survey of recent developments in the fiction of the United States. Recent novels by established writers such as John Updike and Philip Roth are analysed alongside the fiction of younger writers such as Gish Jen and Sherman Alexie. The book's innovative structure encourages new ways of thinking about how American writers might be configured in relation to each other, while providing an analysis of how contemporary fiction has responded to changes in central areas of American life such as the family, the media, technology, and consumerism. *Contemporary American Fiction* is a substantial critical introduction to some of the most exciting fiction of the last thirty years, an eclectic and thorough advertisement for the extraordinary vitality of American fiction at the end of the twentieth century. This is an excellent introduction to the subject for undergraduate students of modern American literature.

American Postmodernist Fiction and the Past - T. Savvas 2011-10-24

Through a close-reading of the work of five prominent American postmodernist writers, this book re-evaluates the role of the past in recent American fiction, outlines the development of the postmodernist historical novel and considers the waning influence of postmodernism in contemporary American literature.

Romantic Postmodernism in American Fiction - Eberhard Alsen 1996

Intended for teachers and students of American Literature, this book is the first comprehensive analysis of romantic tendencies in postmodernist American fiction. The book challenges the opinion expressed in the Columbia History of the American Novel (1991) and propagated by many influential scholars that the mainstream of postmodernist fiction is represented by the disjunctive and nihilistic work of such writers as Kathy Acker, Donald Barthelme, and Robert Coover. Professor Alsen disagrees. He contends that this kind of fiction is not read and taught much outside an isolated but powerful circle in the academic community. It is the two-part thesis of Professor Alsen's book that the mainstream of postmodernist fiction consists of the widely read work of the Nobel Prize laureates Saul Bellow and Toni Morrison and other similar writers and that this mainstream fiction is essentially romantic. To support his argument, Professor Alsen analyzes representative novels by Saul Bellow, J.D. Salinger, Norman Mailer, Flannery O'Connor, John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, Philip Roth, Thomas Pynchon, Toni Morrison, the later John Barth, Alice Walker, William Kennedy, and Paul Auster. Professor Alsen demonstrates that the traits which distinguish the fiction of the romantic postmodernists from the fiction of their disjunctive and nihilist colleagues include a vision of life that is a form of philosophical idealism, an organic view of art, modes of storytelling that are reminiscent of the nineteenth-century romance, and such themes as the nature of sin or evil, the negative effects of technology on the soul, and the quest for transcendence.

The Scar That Binds - Keith Beattie
2000-07-01

At the height of the Vietnam War, American society was so severely fragmented that it seemed that Americans may never again share common concerns. The media and other commentators represented the impact of the war through a variety of rhetorical devices, most notably the emotionally charged metaphor of "the wound that will not heal." References in various contexts to veterans' attempts to find a "voice," and to bring the war "home" were also common. Gradually, an assured and resilient American self-image and powerful impressions

of cultural collectivity transformed the Vietnam war into a device for maintaining national unity. Today, the war is portrayed as a healed wound, the once "silenced" veteran has found a voice, and the American home has accommodated the effects of Vietnam. The scar has healed, binding Americans into a union that denies the divisions, diversities, and differences exposed by the war. In this way, America is now "over" Vietnam. In *The Scar That Binds*, Keith Beattie examines the central metaphors of the Vietnam war and their manifestations in American culture and life. Blending history and cultural criticism in a lucid style, this provocative book discusses an ideology of unity that has emerged through widespread rhetorical and cultural references to the war. A critique of this ideology reveals three dominant themes structured in a range of texts: the "wound," "the voice" of the Vietnam veteran, and "home." The analysis of each theme draws on a range of sources, including film, memoir, poetry, written and oral history, journalism, and political speeches. In contrast to studies concerned with representations of the war as a combat experience, *The Scar That Binds* opens and examines an unexplored critical space through a focus on the effects of the Vietnam War on American culture. The result is a highly original and compelling interpretation of the development of an ideology of unity in our culture.

Science Fiction and the Two Cultures - Gary Westfahl
2009-05-18

Essays in this volume demonstrate how science fiction can serve as a bridge between the sciences and the humanities. The essays show how early writers like Dante and Mary Shelley revealed a gradual shift toward a genuine understanding of science; how H.G. Wells first showed the possibilities of combining scientific and humanistic perspectives; how writers influenced by Gernsback's ideas, like Isaac Asimov, illustrated the ways that literature could interact with science and assist in its progress; and how more recent writers offer critiques of science and its practitioners.

Jonathan Franzen at the End of Postmodernism - Stephen J. Burn
2011-10-27
Jonathan Franzen is one of the most influential, critically-significant and popular contemporary American novelists. This book is the first full-

length study of his work and attempts to articulate where American fiction is headed after postmodernism. Stephen Burn provides a comprehensive analysis of each of Franzen's novels - from his early work to the major success of *The Corrections* - identifying key sources, delineating important narrative strategies, and revealing how Franzen's themes are reinforced by each novel's structure. Supplementing this analysis with comparisons to key contemporaries, David Foster Wallace and Richard Powers, Burn suggests how Franzen's work is indicative of the direction of experimental American fiction in the wake of the so-called end of postmodernism.

Anything Can Happen - Tom LeClair 1983
Modern fiction writers, including John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Toni Morrison, Diane Johnson, Stanley Elkin, and E.L. Doctorow, talk about their careers, influences, and works
The Art of Excess - Tom LeClair 1989

Novel Arguments - Richard Walsh 1995-09-29
Novel arguments argues that innovative fiction -

by which is meant writing that has been variously labeled postmodern, metafictional, experimental - extends our ways of thinking about the world, and rejects the critical consensus that, under the rubrics of postmodernism and metafiction, homogenizes this fiction as autonomous and self-absorbed. Play, self-consciousness, and immanence - supposed symptoms of innovative fiction's autonomy - are here reconsidered as integral to its means of engagement. The book advances a concept of the "argument" of fiction as a construct wedding structure and content into a highly evolved and expressive experimental form. Close readings of five important innovative novels by Donald Barthelme, Ishmael Reed, Robert Coover, Walter Abish, and Kathy Acker show how they articulate matters of substance, social engagement, and ideological currency by virtue of the act of innovation. Walsh deftly argues for a new understanding of fictional cognition at the theoretical level, and, in an act of great critical creativity, discards altogether the flattening totalities of received postmodern formulations.