

POSTWAR AMERICAN FICTION AND THE RISE OF MODERN CONSERVATISM

Bryan M. Santin examines over a half-century of intersection between American fiction and postwar conservatism. He traces the shifting racial politics of movement conservatism to argue that contemporary perceptions of literary form and aesthetic value are intrinsically connected to the rise of the American Right. Instead of casting postwar conservatives as cynical hustlers or ideological fanatics, Santin shows how the long-term rhetorical shift in conservative notions of literary value and prestige reveal an aesthetic antinomy between high culture and low culture. This shift, he argues, registered and mediated the deeper foundational antinomy structuring postwar conservatism itself: the stable social order of traditionalism and the creative destruction of free-market capitalism. Postwar conservatives produced, in effect, an ambivalent double register in the discourse of conservative literary taste that sought to celebrate neo-aristocratic manifestations of cultural capital while condemning newer, more progressive manifestations revolving around racial and ethnic diversity.

BRYAN M. SANTIN obtained his PhD in English from the University of Notre Dame in 2017. He is Assistant Professor of English at Concordia University Irvine, where he teaches courses in American literature, world literature, and composition.

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A Literary History, 1945–2008

BRYAN M. SANTIN

Concordia University Irvine



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For my wife, Julianne

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