



# Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion since 1960 (20/21)

*Amy Hungerford*

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How can intense religious beliefs coexist with pluralism in America today? Examining the role of the religious imagination in contemporary religious practice and in some of the best-known works of American literature from the past fifty years, *Postmodern Belief* shows how belief for its own sake--a belief absent of doctrine--has become an answer to pluralism in a secular age. Amy Hungerford reveals how imaginative literature and religious practices together allow novelists, poets, and critics to express the formal elements of language in transcendent terms, conferring upon words a religious value independent of meaning.

Hungerford explores the work of major American writers, including Allen Ginsberg, Don DeLillo, Cormac McCarthy, Toni Morrison, and Marilynne Robinson, and links their unique visions to the religious worlds they touch. She illustrates how Ginsberg's chant-infused 1960s poetry echoes the tongue-speaking of Charismatic Christians, how DeLillo reimagines the novel and the Latin Mass, why McCarthy's prose imitates the Bible, and why Morrison's fiction needs the supernatural. Uncovering how literature and religion conceive of a world where religious belief can escape confrontations with other worldviews, Hungerford corrects recent efforts to discard the importance of belief in understanding religious life, and argues that belief in belief itself can transform secular reading and writing into a religious act.

Honoring the ways in which people talk about and practice religion, *Postmodern Belief* highlights the claims of the religious imagination in twentieth-century American culture.

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