



After the End of History: American Fiction in the 1990s

Samuel Cohen

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In this bold book, Samuel Cohen asserts the literary and historical importance of the period between the fall of the Berlin wall and that of the Twin Towers in New York. With refreshing clarity, he examines six 1990s novels and two post-9/11 novels that explore the impact of the end of the Cold War: Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*, Roth's *American Pastoral*, Morrison's *Paradise*, O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*, Didion's *The Last Thing He Wanted*, Eugenides's *Middlesex*, Lethem's *Fortress of Solitude*, and DeLillo's *Underworld*. Cohen emphasizes how these works reconnect the past to a present that is ironically keen on denying that connection. Exploring the ways ideas about paradise and pastoral, difference and exclusion, innocence and righteousness, triumph and trauma deform the stories Americans tell themselves about their nation's past, *After the End of History* challenges us to reconsider these works in a new light, offering fresh, insightful readings of what are destined to be classic works of literature.

At the same time, Cohen enters into the theoretical discussion about postmodern historical understanding. Throwing his hat in the ring with force and style, he confronts not only Francis Fukuyama's triumphalist response to the fall of the Soviet Union but also the other literary and political "end of history" claims put forth by such theorists as Fredric Jameson and Walter Benn Michaels. In a straightforward, affecting style, *After the End of History* offers us a new vision for the capabilities and confines of contemporary fiction.

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