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ENGL 338

Professor Milton

Final Essay Proposal

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I will be writing an essay that engages with aspects and concepts of postmodern fiction that have been pertinent in arguably every work that we have studied in class. For a more focused essay, I will only be engaging with a handful of these works. The texts I plan to explore are *The Armies of the Night* by Norman Mailer, *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon, “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath, and Ginsberg’s “Howl” and “Footnote to Howl”. I will be approaching these works in effort to discuss and explore some features of postmodern literature. Mailer, Pynchon, Ginsberg, and Plath’s works that I have mentioned here feature explicit examples of postmodernist questioning of the master narrative, in addition to criticisms of authority and claims to truth. These features being constant questioning and the undermining of truth claims. I will first explore the relationship of postmodern literature and these features, then I will divulge into a discussion of the problematics regarding authority and truth claims. To support the idea that there are problems with authority and claims to truth, I will draw on evidence from my research into postmodern literature in addition to implications from the works that I have mentioned. I selected these works because they are the best examples from the course that emphasise postmodern lines of questioning and criticisms of authoritative claims to truth. This approach that I will be engaging with is aimed at emphasising the problematic nature of authority and truth claims. Because of this, I will attempt to avoid the pitfalls of identifying objective truth and I will be focused on each author’s criticism of authority and truth claims.

Annotated Bibliography

Brandt, Joan (1994) "Questioning the Postmodern: Deguy, Jabès and Pleynet," Studies in 20th

Century Literature: Vol. 18: Iss. 2, Article 3. https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1347

This paper seeks to explore postmodernism through an analysis of French poets to posit that while postmodernist poetics “contest the modernist aesthetic” they also uphold modernist precepts. Thus, postmodernist works exist somewhat paradoxically. I will draw on these arguments to support a framework for engaging with postmodernist criticisms of authority and truth claims.

Deetz, Stanley. "Putting the Community into Organizational Science: Exploring the Construction

of Knowledge Claims." Organization Science, vol. 11, no. 6, 2000, pp. 732-738. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/putting-community-into-organizational-science/docview/213834981/se-2?accountid=14656>.

This essay by Stanley Deetz emphasises the productive nature postmodernism presents because of its inherent questioning. This is an important source because my essay depends on exploring this very feature of questioning in depth and in relation to the texts that I have chosen.

McHale, Brian, and Len Platt, editors. “The Long Sixties, 1954–1975.” The Cambridge History

of Postmodern Literature, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, pp. 83–172.

McHale and Platt’s work provides background for the meaning of postmodern literature. This is an important aspect of my essay as I will be discussing the features of postmodern literature and these features are pertinent to exploring postmodernist criticisms of authority and truth claims.

Ploeg, Andrew J. Toward a New Numinous: The Divine in Postmodern Literature, University of

Rhode Island, Ann Arbor, 2012. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/toward-new-numinous-divine-postmodern-literature/docview/1009052774/se-2?accountid=14656>.

Ploeg’s dissertation provides background for the postmodernist paradigm in relation to the concept of undermining truth claims. This is essential for building a framework for discussing postmodernist criticisms of authority and truth claims.

Straus, Nina P. "What is Or was Postmodern Fiction? Murakami After Borges." Mosaic : A

Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature, vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, pp. 87-102. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-is-was-postmodern-fiction-murakami-after/docview/2010773919/se-2?accountid=14656>.

This is perhaps my most pivotal source. It provides background context for creating a framework in which I can engage in analysis with postmodernist criticisms and styles.