



# The Contemporary American Novel in Context (Texts and Contexts)

By Andrew Dix, Brian Jarvis, Paul Jenner

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Adventurous, engaging and politically urgent, contemporary American novels have come to enjoy a particular prestige and, through university courses, film adaptations and cultural controversies, a global circulation. This book provides a critical introduction to novels produced in the United States between 1980 and the present. Compact yet wide-ranging, and written in vivid, accessible prose, it registers the diversity of contemporary American fiction and carefully situates this work in historical contexts that include Reaganomics, the Clinton years and the post-9/11 'War on Terror'. Detailed attention is given throughout to how America's current novelists have responded to shifting gender politics, changes in the nation's racial configuration, the increasing dominance of a commodity culture and to adjustments in the United States' place in the world following the end of the Cold War and the increased pace of globalisation. Complete with detailed lists of secondary sources both in print and on the web, and suggestions for students' own research projects, this is the ideal resource for anyone beginning study of this vibrant literature.

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"The concluding argument of Dix, Jarvis and Jenner's fine book is "that to engage keenly with current American fiction is not a dry-as-dust academic exercise but itself an act charged with political significance." The authors make their case well, presenting strong and well-judged readings of nine recent American novels, indicating their representative function in terms of consumer capitalism, race, hemispheric transnationalism and globalisation. If this sounds disconcertingly abstract, this book is far from that, giving an immensely readable, bang up-to-date and skilled introduction to the American novel at this point in our history, and the reasons for its continued vitality and importance. Aimed at a student audience, it will bring the subject alive for them, but will also offer many stimulating insights to any scholar or general reader interested in this topic. The book takes a complicated and contentious field and charts a way through it with authority and verve: a real achievement.' (Professor Peter Messent, School of American and Canadian Studies, University of Nottingham, UK)

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### **About the Author**

Andrew Dix is Lecturer in American Studies at Loughborough University, UK. He is the author of *Beginning Film Studies* (Manchester University Press, 2008) and co-editor of *Figures of Heresy: Radical Theology in English and American Writing, 1800-2000* (Sussex Academic Press, 2006); his other published work includes book chapters on Mark Twain, John Steinbeck and Native American fiction. Brian Jarvis is Senior Lecturer in American Literature and Film at Loughborough University, UK. He is the author of *Postmodern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture* (Pluto, 1998) and *Cruel and Unusual: A Cultural History of Punishment in America* (Pluto, 2004) and of essays on topics including 'dirty realism', Vietnam War fiction, the literature and cinema of 9/11, and contemporary horror film. Paul Jenner is Lecturer in American Studies at Loughborough University, UK. He is currently working on a full-length study of the American philosopher Stanley Cavell, and his other research interests include American noir fiction, and theories and fictions of postmodernity.

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