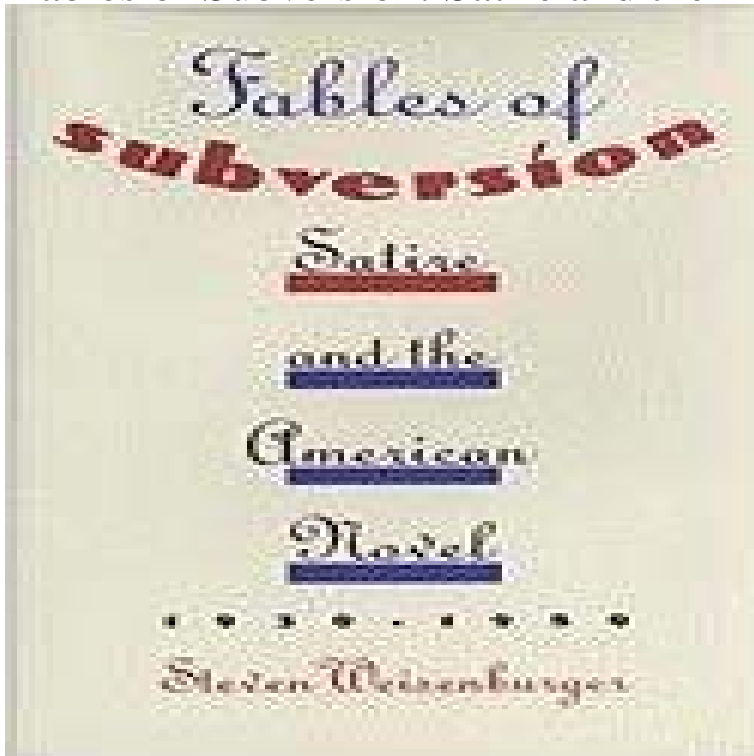


Fables of Subversion: Satire and the American Novel



Drawing on more than thirty novels by nineteen writers, *Fables of Subversion* is both a survey of mid-twentieth century American fiction and a study of how these novels challenged the conventions of satire. Steven Weisenburger focuses on the rise of a radically subversive mode of satire from 1930 to 1980. This postmodern satire, says Weisenburger, stands in crucial opposition to corrective, normative satire, which has served a legitimizing function by generating, through ridicule, a consensus on values. Weisenburger argues that satire in this generative mode does not participate in the oppositional, subversive work of much twentieth-century art. Chapters focus on theories of satire, early subversions of satiric conventions by Nathanael West, Flannery O'Connor, and John Hawkes, the flowering of Black Humor fictions of the sixties, and the forms of political and encyclopedic satire prominent throughout the period. Many of the writers included here, such as Vladimir Nabokov, William Gaddis, Kurt Vonnegut, Robert Coover, and Thomas Pynchon, are acknowledged masters of contemporary humor. Others, such as Mary McCarthy, Chester Himes, James Purdy, Charles Wright, and Ishmael Reed, have not previously been considered in this context. Posing a seminal challenge to existing theories of satire, *Fables of Subversion* explores the iconoclastic energies of the new satires as a driving force in late modern and post-modern novel writing.

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