



# The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature

*Ihab Hassan*

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## **The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature** Ihab Hassan

In this book, the first edition of which was published in 1971 by Oxford University Press, Ihab Hassan takes Orphic dismemberment and regeneration as his metaphor for a radical crisis in art and language, culture and consciousness, which prefigures postmodern literature. The modern Orpheus, he writes, “sings on a lyre without strings.” Thus, his sensitive critique traces a hypothetical line from Sade through four modern authors—Hemingway, Kafka, Genet, and Beckett—to a literature still to come. But the line also breaks into two Interludes, one concerning 'Pataphysics, Dada, and Surrealism, and the other concerning Existentialism and Aliterature.

Combining literary history, brief biography, and critical analysis, Hassan surrounds these authors with a complement of avant-garde writers whose works also foreshadow the postmodern temper. These include Jarry, Apollinaire, Tzara, Breton, Sartre, Camus, Nathalie Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet, and in America, Cage, Salinger, Ginsberg, Barth, and Burroughs. Hassan takes account also of related contemporary developments in art, music, and philosophy, and of many works of literary theory and criticism.

For this new edition, Hassan has added a new preface and postface on the developing character of postmodernism, a concept which has gained currency since the first edition of this work, and which he himself has done much to theorize.

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