

# College Lit

May 1-2, '14

# Agenda

- TMMWLYGATCW/O #5
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Poetry Results
- Postmodernism
- For Next Time...

# TMMWLYGATCW/O #5

- Seems
- May/might
- Perhaps
- Suggests

# Poetry Madness Results!

- In the lead:
  - 1<sup>st</sup>: Horrible Phoenix Tears (M1)—43 pts.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Magical Unicorns (M1)—40 pts.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup>: Wave 08 (G2) and The Anti-Carls (G2)—39 points

# Poetry Madness: Fantastic Fourteen

- 2 “Acquainted with the Night” vs. 5 “When You Are Old”
- 10 “Taken Up” vs. 13 “When I Am Dead, My Dearest”
- 18 “Meaning” vs. 22 “Compulsively Allergic to the Truth”
- 26 (By) “Bless Their Hearts”
- 30 “Do Not Go Gentle into that Goodnight” vs. 33 “If In America”
- 38 “Childhood Is the Kingdom Where Nobody Dies” vs. 42 “Deer Hit”
- 45 “The School Where I Studied” vs. 52 “On Turning 10”
- 56 (By) “My Papa’s Waltz”
  
- CAST YOUR VOTES!!

I feel like having a nice conversation about...



POST-MODERNISM!!



Speaking of whom, do you know why Derrida won't be remembered among philosophers in the future?



Who?

Because he didnt' have anything constructive to add!!



Deconstruct \*that\*!  
Ha!

I notice that you are \*destroying\* things as you speak.



Your argument is self-referentially incoherent!

Ah, but you've set up the false dichotomy of action and argument!

The very criterion for criticism seems not to have the foundation that it's use presupposes!



You just used deconstruction to say that!

There is nothing outside the text!!!



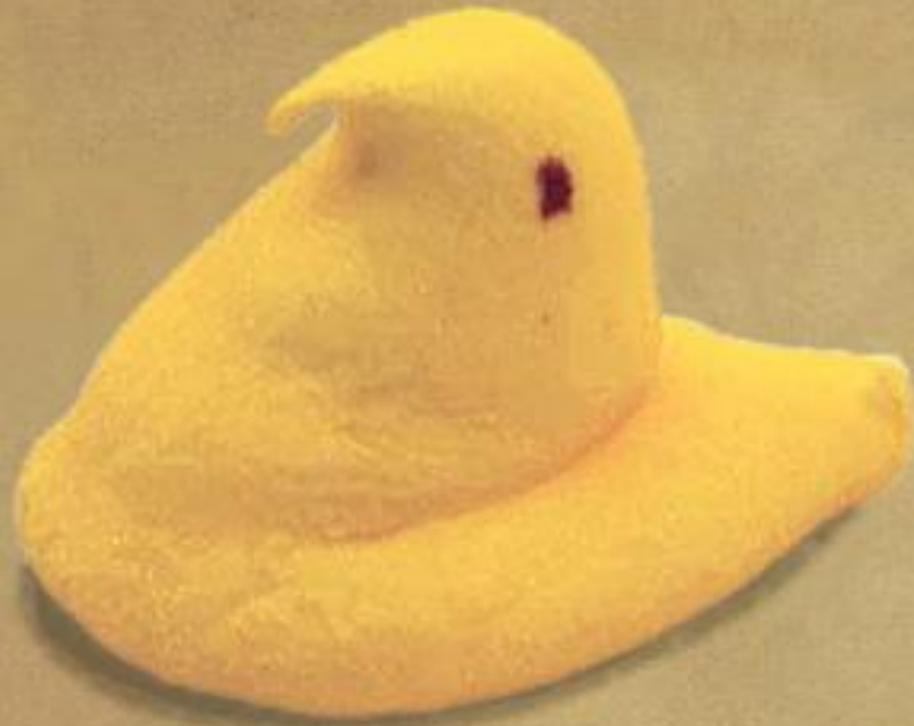
# Common characteristics of postmodern literature and art

- Points out the “constructedness” of texts
  - calls attention to its own status as a production, as something constructed and consumed in particular ways
  - Focus on SURFACE rather than depth, reflecting the process of its own creation rather than some greater truth-purpose
- Dissolves borders—between “high” and “low” culture (pop culture); between genres; between “truth” and “fiction”

- Focuses on PLAY—with language; with “reality”; with the reader/viewer
- Tends toward fragmentation rather than unity—narratives are often disrupted or split in some way (extension of modernism here)
- Hyper-acknowledgement of INTERTEXTUALITY: “Nothing new under the sun”
  - The idea is that we can’t possibly say something without ripping somebody off/plagiarizing, so let’s play with that instead—let’s make blatant how OUR work rips off, comments on, or otherwise makes use of other texts.
  - Modernists started this with all their allusions...postmodern writers take it to the next level.

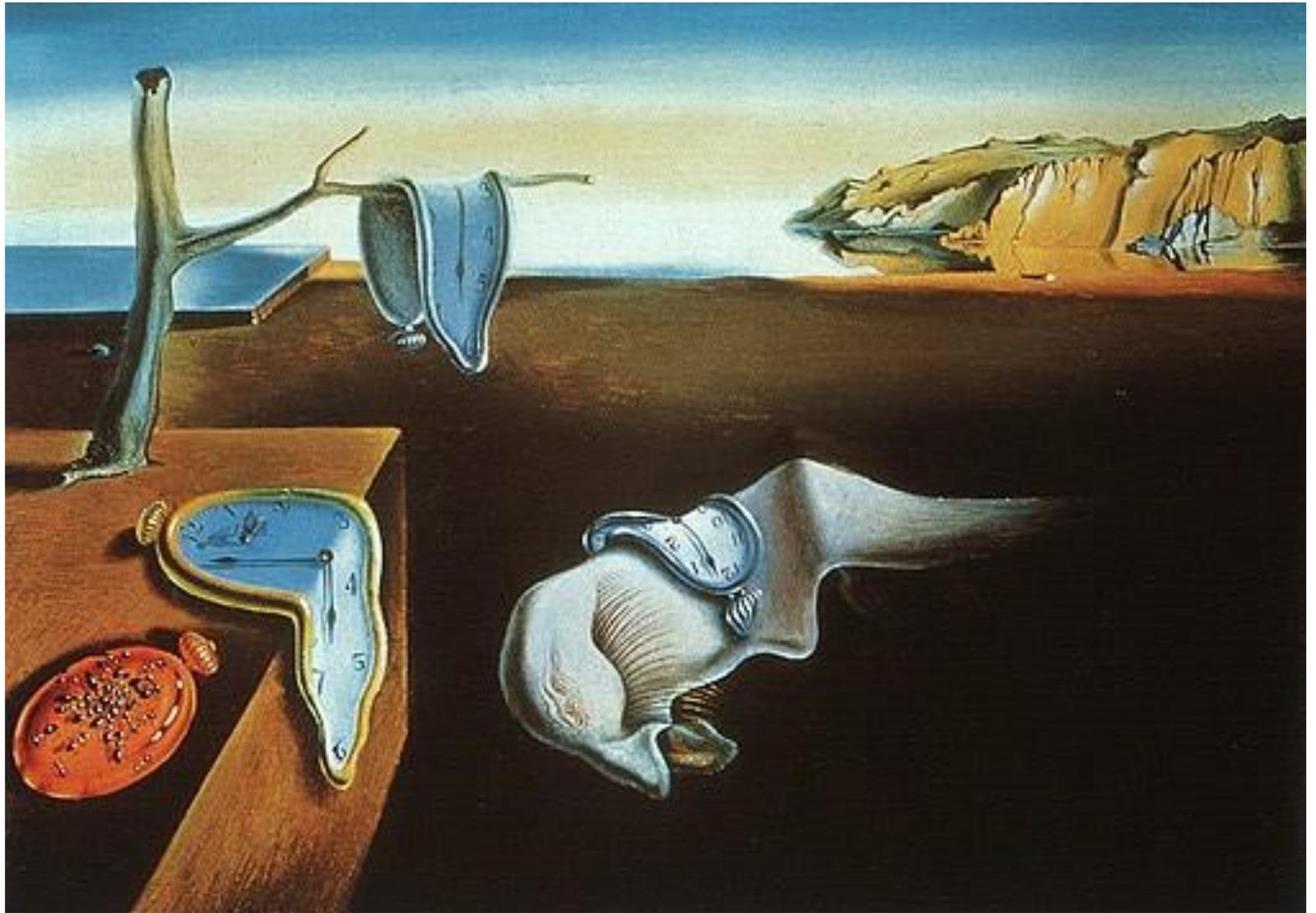


*Ceci n'est pas une pipe.*



*Ceci n'est pas une peep.*

*Clade*





# “Continuity of Parks”

- What’s going on here?
- How is this postmodern?
- Have I given you the “Postmodernism in a Very Tiny Nutshell” handout yet? Oh! Well, let me do that, then!

# In addition to your homework...

- Read and annotate this really difficult essay on postmodernity/postmodernism!
  - I borrowed a lot of the text from online, but didn't cite my sources last year and can't find them now. I AM SORRY/GRATEFUL, ANONYMOUS CONTENT DONOR!

# Pomo Architecture

- Revealing constructedness
- Mixing high and low culture
- Pastiche and collage
- Intertextuality
- Architecture as *signifiers* that we can play with (focus on surface here = play with form)

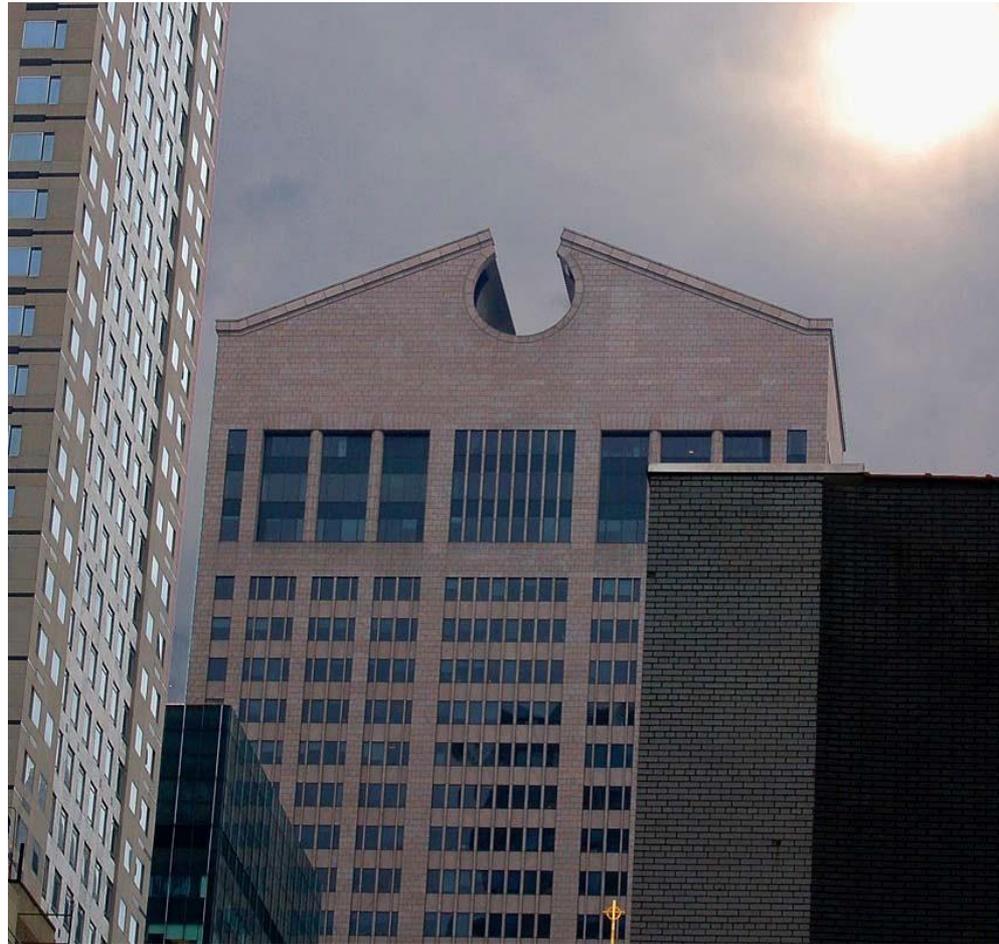
# Stuttgart: Mercedes-Benz Museum



# Michael Graves: Post Office



# Philip Johnson's AT&T Headquarters



# Seattle Public Library



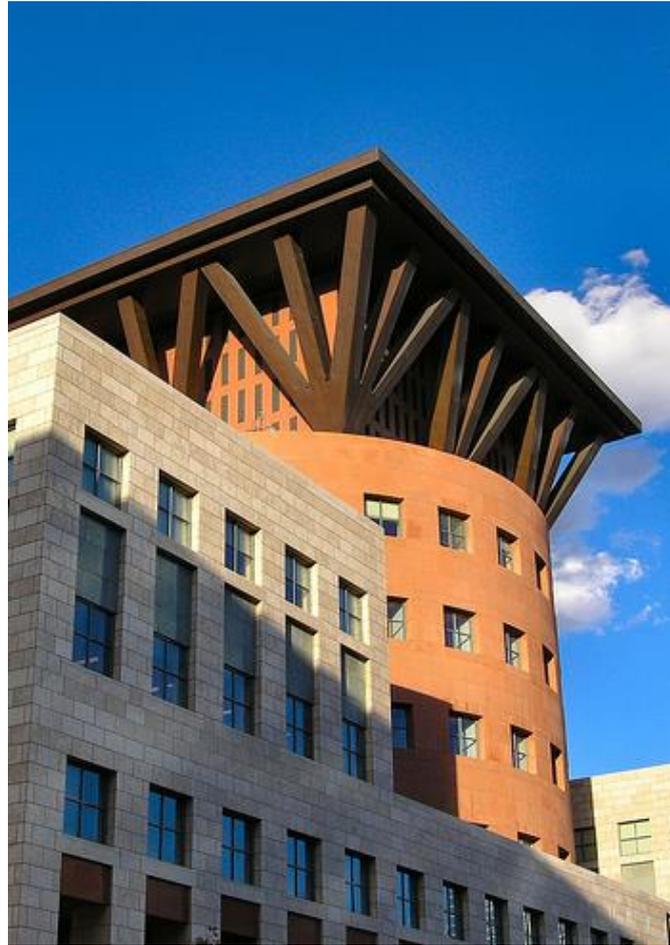
# High-tech Centre Pompidou



# Frank Gehry



# Denver Central Library



I...don't know the name or architect here.



# Amoreiras Shopping Center



# Some other pomo stuff

- <http://samepicofdavecoulier.tumblr.com/>
- <http://slaughterhouse90210.tumblr.com/>

# CONSTRUCTIONISM

- Constructivism? Social constructionism?
- There are lots of related theories that go by some version of this title.
- The basic theory goes like this:
  - Things don't exist, really, as things, until we give them a name.
  - We CONSTRUCT our reality by naming it; our language CREATES our world.
  - Thus, SIGNIFIERS (words) become much more important than what they signify (meaning), because, well, the SIGNIFIER came first!

# Think of it this way:

- We define things by what they're not—by giving them boundaries (this is part of the chair, but that is not)
- We could define those boundaries differently, and then? Well, we'd have a different thing in front of us.
- One thing that makes me buy this theory somewhat: The newly sighted. (I'll explain this one.)

# Anyway...

- As part of this idea, some postmodernists (Jacques Derrida, in particular) saw a pattern in western cultures:
  - We construct our reality by using BINARIES.
    - Up vs. down
    - Hot vs. cold
    - Man vs. woman
    - Life vs. death
  - Derrida thought that, generally, we set up that binary, and then privilege one of its elements as better than the other. “It’s a key element of our meaning-making process!” says Derrida.
    - That’s not actually a direct quotation. He didn’t say that. He mostly spoke in French, in fact!

# So deconstruction is a theory...

- That basically looks at those binaries and points out that they are JUST CONSTRUCTIONS...we made them up. They're not stable, and they're not fact, and they're not to be take as Reality with a Capital R.
- By applying deconstruction to texts, we can point out the instability of its meaning...we can show how an argument is weak...we can call an author out on relying upon constructions of reality that Just. Aren't. Very. Useful.

# ***Critical Lens the Fifth (and Last): DECONSTRUCTION!***

- "Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air." -- J. Hillis Miller

# So deconstruction does a few things...

- Blurs the boundaries (or points out that they're already blurry) between binaries
- Points out that a binary is faulty: that is, that the two things being juxtaposed AREN'T opposites
- Questions the relationship between elements on one side of the binary (this will make sense after we do our first example, so hang on)

# As a response to New Criticism...

- New Critics assume that a work of literature is a freestanding, self-contained object whose meaning can be found in the complex network of relations between its parts (allusions, images, rhythms, sounds, etc.).
- Deconstructionists, by contrast, see works in terms of their *undecidability*. They reject the view that a work of literary art is demonstrably unified from beginning to end, in one certain way, or that it is organized around a single center that ultimately can be identified.
- New Critics ultimately **MAKE SENSE** of the ambiguities they find in a given text, arguing that every ambiguity serves a definite, meaningful, and demonstrable literary function. Undecidability, by contrast, is never reduced, let alone mastered. Though a deconstructive reading can reveal the incompatible possibilities generated by the text, it is impossible for the reader to decide among them.

# The handout...

- Tells you how to do this one step at a time. DON'T LOSE IT, PLEASE!

# And More Fun with Deconstruction!

- As you watch/listen (for those of you at home, go watch the Taylor Swift video “You Belong to Me”), make a list of all the binaries this song and video relies upon!
- Let’s deconstruct them! Woouoooo!

# EVEN MORE DECONSTRUCTION-Y FUN.

- *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss
- What's the chief binary that the story sets up?
- How can we deconstruct this binary? Or does the text already deconstruct it?

# Do we have more time?

- If so, get with your lit circles.
- Do the thing it says to do on the sheet!

## For Next Time:

- Read and annotate that essay about postmodernity.
- Get  $\frac{3}{4}$  the way through your lit circle book.