



# **Hard Sayings: The Rhetoric of Christian Orthodoxy in Late Modern Fiction (Literature, Religion, & Postsecular Stud)**

*Thomas F. Haddox*

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*Hard Sayings: The Rhetoric of Christian Orthodoxy in Late Modern Fiction* by Thomas F. Haddox examines the work of six avowedly Christian writers of fiction in the period from World War II to the present. This period is often characterized in western societies by such catchphrases as “postmodernism” and “secularization,” with the frequent implication that orthodox belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become untenable among educated readers. How, then, do we account for the continued existence of writers of self-consciously literary fiction who attempt to persuade readers of the truth, desirability, and utility of the dogmas of Christianity? Is it possible to take these writers’ efforts on their own terms and to understand and evaluate the rhetorical strategies that this kind of persuasion might entail?

Informed by the school of rhetorical narratology that includes such critics as Wayne Booth, James Phelan, and Richard Walsh, *Hard Sayings* offers fresh new readings of fictive works by Flannery O’Connor, Muriel Spark, John Updike, Walker Percy, Mary Gordon, and Marilynne Robinson. In its argument that orthodox Christianity, as represented in fiction, still has the power to persuade and to trouble, it contributes to ongoing debates about the nature and scope of modernity, postmodernity, and secularization.

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