

EVOLUTION OF LESLIE FIEDLER : THE POP GURU

by

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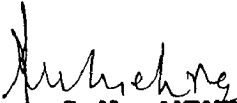
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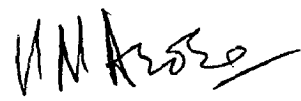
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P A P A

CERTIFICATE

We are satisfied that the thesis entitled, "Evolution of Leslie Fiedler: The Pop Guru," presented by Ms. Prem Kumari Srivastava is worthy of consideration for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and is a record of the original bonafide research work carried out by her under our guidance and supervision and that the results contained in it have not been submitted in part or full to any other university or institution for the award of any degree/diploma. We certify that she has pursued the prescribed course of research.


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CLARIFICATION

I have used American spellings in this dissertation and retained the original spellings in the quotations.

I have followed the conventions of the *MLA Style Sheet* (Second edition) and the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Second edition).

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, an attempt has been made to trace the evolution of Leslie Fiedler as a critic who has gradually moved from elite culture to popular culture. My endeavor has been to point out that though Fiedler began as a literary critic in the tradition of highbrowism and elitism, in the course of his literary career, certain preoccupations held his attention for a long time which led him toward popular culture. One of them was alienation. Initially, he perceived alienation among the Jews, later his sensibility led him to regard alienation as an all-pervading concept embracing the blacks and WASPs as well. Then he realized that American literature was basically a literature of escape in which the WASP male escaped from domesticity, women and responsibility into the primeval world of forest and water, where he found companionship with a non-white male. This, according to Fiedler is a typical American myth which pervades all classics of American literature and popular literature as well. Fiedler saw that myths join all, elite and pop. In the last phase, he plumbed for and chose to write more and more about popular culture.

I have nowhere implied that Fiedler does not and will never admire high art. My only contention is that over the years Fiedler has gradually found more support for his critical idiom and credo in popular culture than elite

culture. Of course, studied on a much broader canvas, Fiedler is to be seen as *the critic* of this age, constituting a one-man fifth column in the elitist citadel to earn the nickname of the Pop Guru.

Toward this end, Chapter I is a brief survey of the major critical studies on Fiedler and identification of the the research problem. Chapter II delineates Fiedler's early critical stance on criticism, i.e., his credo which have elitist leanings. Chapter III studies Fiedler's views on the Jew, as an alienated individual in America. He broadens the framework and within that takes up blacks too as strangers. In continuation with his preoccupation with alienation, Chapter IV deals with the growth of the theme of male-bonding in Fiedler's writings which have strong popular culture bearings. Chapter V attempts to depict Fiedler's well-defined movement into popular culture.

Chapter VI, the last chapter, is a summary of the conclusions drawn in Chapters II to V and it suggests some of the possible topics that can be taken up for further research in this area.

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