



The Columbia Literary History of the United States

By Emory Elliott

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The Columbia Literary History of the United States By Emory Elliott

For the first time in four decades, there exists an authoritative and up-to-date survey of the literature of the United States, from prehistoric cave narratives to the radical movements of the sixties and the experimentation of the eighties.

This comprehensive volume—one of the century's most important books in American studies—extensively treats Hawthorne, Melville, Dickinson, Hemingway, and other long-cherished writers, while also giving considerable attention to recently discovered writers such as Kate Chopin and to literary movements and forms of writing not studied amply in the past. Informed by the most current critical and theoretical ideas, it sets forth a generation's interpretation of the rise of American civilization and culture.

The *Columbia Literary History of the United States* contains essays by today's foremost scholars and critics, overseen by a board of distinguished editors headed by Emory Elliott of Princeton University. These contributors reexamine in contemporary terms traditional subjects such as the importance of Puritanism, Romanticism, and frontier humor in American life and writing, but they also fully explore themes and materials that have only begun to receive deserved attention in the last two decades. Among these are the role of women as writers, readers, and literary subjects and the impact of writers from minority groups, both inside and outside the literary establishment.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Given the publisher's prestige and the numerous contributors, most libraries will regard this new literary history as a necessary purchase. And it probably is necessary. One regrets, however, certain editorial decisions. For example, there is no bibliography other than what is found in the essays themselves; in precision and number, these citations are not what one would expect of such histories. The decision to represent a "variety of viewpoints" and to permit "considerable variation in approach, tone, and style" caused huge variations in the value of the various essays. Most are standard scholarly fare, but some are simply too personal and subjective. This new history will replace Spiller's 40-year-old Literary History of the United States, since Spiller does not reflect new critical emphases that have emerged in the past 20 years. Peter Dollard, Alma Coll. Lib., Mich.

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Review

"Thoroughly up-to-date in understanding and attitude, this new literary history is refreshingly contentious and crammed with bright and bold reevaluations. It is intellectually challenging and socially and politically provocative." -- "Paul Fussell"

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This literature is surveyed in the *Columbia Literary History* at such length, and with such skill, that it defeats the reviewer's duty to seek faults...

(Anthony Burgess *The Atlantic*)

This history summarizes where we are now and opens to us the many riches of the past, without attempting to present its findings for a single critical or dogmatic perspective or to establish a canon. Indeed a signal contribution to literary history.

(Murray S. Martin, University Librarian, Tufts University)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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