

Canons by Consensus: Critical Trends and American Literature Anthologies (Amer Lit Realism & Naturalism)

Professor Joseph Thomas Csicsila



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Scholars have long noted the role that college literary anthologies play in the rising and falling reputations of American authors. *Canons by Consensus* examines this classroom fixture in detail to challenge and correct a number of assumptions about the development of the literary canon throughout the 20th century.

Joseph Csicsila analyzes more than 80 anthologies published since 1919 and traces not only the critical fortunes of individual authors, but also the treatment of entire genres and groupings of authors by race, region, gender, and formal approach. In doing so, he calls into question accusations of deliberate or inadvertent sexism and racism. Selections by anthology editors, Csicsila demonstrates, have always been governed far more by prevailing trends in academic criticism than by personal bias.

Academic anthologies are found to constitute a rich and often overlooked resource for studying American literature, as well as an irrefutable record of the academy's changing literary tastes throughout the last century.

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