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Budd, Cady, and Anderson, Toward a New American Literary History: Essays in Honor of Arlin Turner

James E. Rocks
Loyola University of Chicago

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Reviews

Louis J. Budd, Edwin H. Cady, Carl L. Anderson. eds. *Toward a New American Literary History: Essays in Honor of Arlin Turner*. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1980. viii, 279 pp. \$14.75.

Arlin Turner's career as scholar and teacher was devoted to the study of American literature in the context of its history, and so, fittingly, the essays gathered in his honor are concerned with explorations into American literary history, which, as the editors of this *Festschrift* tell us, is ready for a new and major reassessment in this generation. The seventeen essays of this collection approach, for the most part, large historical and critical questions in a learned, articulate and gracious manner — qualities, it should be noted, that marked Arlin Turner's style as a writer, teacher and colleague. Moreover, the varied interests represented in this group of essays reflect the many concerns of his own long scholarly career. They honor our late colleague, one of the most warmly respected individuals in the profession of American literary studies.

Essays worthy of special mention are these: Robert E. Spiller's "The Cycle and the Roots: National Identity in American Literature" ranges widely over colonial and early national literature to draw some principles of our cultural development. Lewis P. Simpson's essay, "The Southern Literary Vocation," characterizes the effect of history upon the artistic vocation of Southern writers. Richard Beale Davis focuses more specifically on the South of Jamestown under the Virginia company from 1607 to 1624 and argues that the early Tidewater culture was far more literate, varied and erudite than is generally realized. Among the best essays in the collection is Sacvan Bercovitch's "Rhetoric and History in Early New England: The Puritan Errand Reassessed." He contends that Perry Miller's definition of the ambiguity of the Puritan concept of errand was incorrect, for the sermon writers, in their jeremiads, were celebrating a culture whose faith was in the future. Walter Sullivan contrasts the Puritan and Enlightenment conceptions of history in the epic visions of Mather

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and Barlow. In a fine piece of folklore research John Seelye discusses the Davy Crockett almanacs, and Gay Wilson Allen looks again at the frontier as viewed by Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. Bernard Duffey argues convincingly that Ezra Pound's Imagism can be discerned in his early critical writings and Terence Martin, in "The Negative Character in American Fiction," writes and illustrates an excellent definition and characterization of the negative character, "whose function it is to measure the world in which we live by the worlds in which they are unable to live" (p. 232). Russel B. Nye discusses the history of photography in America from 1839 to 1890 and how it influenced America's image of itself.

In addition, there are good essays on Franklin (by Walter Blair), Hawthorne (Richard Harter Fogle), William Vaughn Moody (George Arms), Ellen Glasgow (C. Hugh Holman), Upton Sinclair (L. S. Dembo), Carl Van Vechten (Donald Pizer) and the Harlem Renaissance (Darwin Turner). The book concludes with the vita and bibliography of Arlin Turner; both are impressive listings of a distinguished professional life. *Toward a New American Literary History* memorializes that life with a fine harvest of the scholar's vocation.

James E. Rocks

Loyola University of Chicago