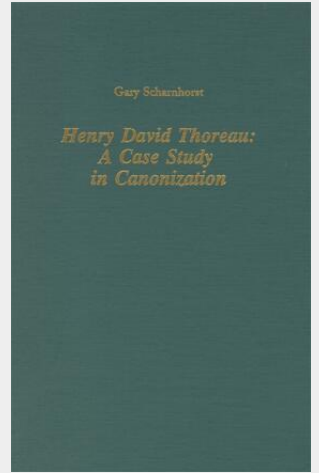


Scharnhorst

Henry David Thoreau

A Case Study in Canonization

A reception history of the writings of Henry David Thoreau, author of Walden. Professor Scharnhorst's survey of trends in Thoreau criticism over the past century and a half shows that Thoreau's elevation to literary sainthood was the result of a distinct, if not wholly conscious, process of critical resurrection and revival. Each of Scharnhorst's five chapters covers approximately thirty years of critical commentary on Thoreau's works, including his contemporary reputation, his posthumous revival at the end of the century, his 'packaging' as a literary property early in the 20th century, and his vogue since the Great Depression as a darling of both formalist and political critics. Scharnhorst comments on the enduring division of critical opinion over Thoreau and his work, attributing it to the different audiences attracted by his subject matter - issues such as war, racial justice and environmental ethics - and the refinement of his literary achievement.



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