



In Their Own Terms: American Literary Historiography in the United States and Italy (Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature,)

Francesco Pontuale

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In a historical period of international and global frames of literary investigation, *In Their Own Terms* is a timely and valuable contribution to cross-cultural forms of dialogue between non-American modes of analysis and US American literary studies. It is a wide-ranging and provocative look into American literary historiography that engages readers in analytical examinations of US literary histories considered landmarks in their field, from the early nineteenth-century work of Samuel L. Knapp to the newly completed Cambridge volumes. It focuses on texts that have had a decisive influence in constructing dominant understandings of American literature, its various genres, significant historical periods, and major writers, both inside and outside the United States. For the first time, this work compares and contrasts the tradition of US literary historiography with Italian histories of American literature. Characterized as they are by the particularities of the Italian cultural scene, these histories have always been conversant with US literary historiography, beginning with Gustavo Strafforello in 1884 and continuing in Agostino Lombardo's most recent series. *In Their Own Terms* cogently argues that American literary histories, regardless of the different critical and theoretical principles on which they are based, have invariably played an important role in national cohesion and in articulating an autonomy that is cultural as well as academic.

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