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Foreword

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Foreword

Introducing this series in its first volume, covering 1963, James Woodress identified the idea for *American Literary Scholarship* with being overwhelmed on his return from a year in Europe by the quantity of scholarship produced during his absence—more than 1,500 items in American literature listed in the latest MLA bibliography. “It seemed to me that there was a real need for an annual review in which various scholars would survey the past year’s work in American literature within their particular areas of competence.” He also noted that contributors had no obligation to comprehensively address MLA coverage; they could be “selective or inclusive,” and could cover many items briefly or discuss the most important few in greater detail.

The conditions of scholarship that prompted *AmLS* are today more daunting, with the number of items in American literature published annually exceeding 6,000. Woodress’s guidelines for coverage increase in value commensurately, and users of this volume and of the series as a whole should be reminded of the implications of those guidelines for the contents of the essays. Our contributors, chosen for their expertise in specific areas, are charged to review items they feel are vital to the scholarly work in those areas; they are not obliged to discuss everything identified in the MLA bibliography for the year. They are free to treat as many items as they wish and to organize the discussion in any way they think appropriate to the demands of the field and of the material. However, their special charge is to speak as much as possible to an audience of generalists, people outside their own fields but interested in them.

The citation system employed in these volumes generally follows that of MLA, but with some space-saving refinements. Books frequently discussed are given short titles, periodicals are identified by their MLA-

assigned abbreviations, and publishers are identified by truncated names. Full identification of the items in each of these categories is provided in the front-matter lists following this foreword. All publications discussed are presumed to have been published in the year of coverage, 1998, unless another date is given.

For the first time in several years no changes in chapter coverage have been introduced; the table of contents for this year and for the next remains as it was in the 1997 volume. The roster of contributors, though it inevitably alters as institutional demands and scholarly projects make their claims, also remains relatively stable. New to this volume are M. Jimmie Killingsworth, who assumes the Whitman portion of the "Whitman and Dickinson" chapter; Ben Lockerd, who takes on T. S. Eliot in the "Pound and Eliot" chapter; Terry Oggel, who takes on "Late-19th-Century Literature"; Joycelyn Moody and Caroline Chung Simpson, covering "Themes, Topics, Criticism"; and Andrea Mariani, surveying "Italian Contributions." Keiko Beppu, a former coauthor of "Japanese Contributions," offers that section again after a three-year hiatus. (This section will appear biennially, alternating with "Spanish Language Contributions," which returns next year.) New contributors for next year include Thomas Wortham, UCLA, a former contributor (he prepared the 19th-century chapter more than 20 years ago), who replaces Kevin J. Hayes in "Early-19th-Century Literature"; Suzanne Clark, University of Oregon, who succeeds Timothy Materer in "Poetry: 1900 to the 1940s"; and Gary Lee Stonum, Case Western Reserve University, a recent former contributor, who resumes the demanding task of "Themes, Topics, Criticism," replacing Professors Moody and Simpson. My sincere thanks for their effort and dedication to departing, continuing, and arriving participants.

Authors and publishers can assist us in assuring the thoroughness of *AmLS* coverage by directing offprints and review copies to me at the Department of English, Indiana University, 1020 E. Kirkwood Ave., Bloomington, IN 47405.

Professor Scharnhorst and I are grateful for the support given this enterprise by our colleagues at Indiana University, the University of New Mexico, and the Modern Language Association. I especially appreciate the timely assistance of Ann Bristow and the staff of the Reference Department in the Indiana University Library, Bloomington, in the constant battle for accuracy, and of Terence Ford and the staff of the

MLA Center for Bibliographical Services, who provide a pre-print of the MLA bibliography for our use. Last and most, I thank Pam Morrison and Bob Mirandon of Duke University Press for their professionalism and their patience in overseeing this project year after persistent year.

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