



American Literary Minimalism

By Robert C. Clark

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Although a handful of books and articles have been written about American literary Minimalism during the last forty years, the mode remains misunderstood. When in a 2011 interview in *The Paris Review* author Ann Beattie was asked how she felt about being “classed as a minimalist,” she began her answer: “none of us have ever known what that means.” Her response brings into focus the lack of agreement or clarity about the sources and definitions of literary Minimalism. Robert C. Clark’s *American Literary Minimalism* fills this significant gap.

Clark demonstrates that, despite assertions by many scholars to the contrary, the movement originated in the aesthetic programs of the Imagists and literary Impressionists active at the turn of the twentieth century. The genre reflects the philosophy that “form is thought,” and that style alone dictates whether a poem, story, or novel falls within the parameters of the tradition. The characteristics of Minimalist fiction are efficiency, frequent use of allusion, and implication through omission.

Organizing his analysis both chronologically and according to lines of influence, Clark offers a definition of the mode, describes its early stages, and then explores six works that reflect its core characteristics: Ernest Hemingway’s *In Our Time*; Raymond Carver’s *Cathedral*; Jay McInerney’s *Bright Lights, Big City*; Susan Minot’s *Monkeys*; Sandra Cisneros’s *Caramelo*; and Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*. In his conclusion, Clark discusses the ongoing evolution of the category.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Robert Clark’s *American Literary Minimalism* is an excellent, rich, and long overdue study because it takes the reader through what Clark sees as the nexus that creates the style, past Ernest Hemingway and then into Carver, and on through McInerney, Minot, Cisneros, and McCarthy. It gives the reader a bevy of ideas to pull from in any subjective definition of ‘minimalism,’ and makes clear what Clark himself finds important.”
—Linda Wagner-Martin, author of *A History of American Literature: 1950 to the Present*

“More of a literary mode than a movement, minimalism has always gotten short shrift, for reasons that are obvious enough: there seems something deceptively paradoxical about going into depth into a style that prides itself on brevity and concision. Robert Clark’s *American Literary Minimalism* goes a long way toward redressing that presumption while also correcting the prejudices that proliferated against the mode throughout the 1980s. Clark makes an important argument about the tradition of minimalism, linking Raymond Carver in particular to the ‘no scrollwork’ school of Hemingway and demonstrating, through accompanying readings of Susan Minot, Sandra Cisneros, and Cormac McCarthy, that notions of omission, precision, and economy are expressed through a far wider variety of means and themes than the stereotype of Kmart realism or dirty realism or any other reductive term critics could conjure up.”
—Kirk Curnutt, author of *The Cambridge Introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald* and *Wise Economies: Brevity and Storytelling in American Short Stories*

".... Clark’s showcase of minimalism in American fiction holds much value for those enrolled in creative writing courses, who will benefit from the foundation in minimalism Clark provides, and those in American literature courses that cover the works critiqued. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates."
—CHOICE

About the Author

Robert C. Clark received his PhD in English from the University of Georgia. His recent publications include articles on Ernest Hemingway, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, María Cristina Mena, and Raymond Carver. His current research deals with transpacific minimalism, naturalism, and fiction of the twenty-first-century global financial crisis. He teaches at the University of West Alabama.

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Well, probably you will require this American Literary Minimalism.

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