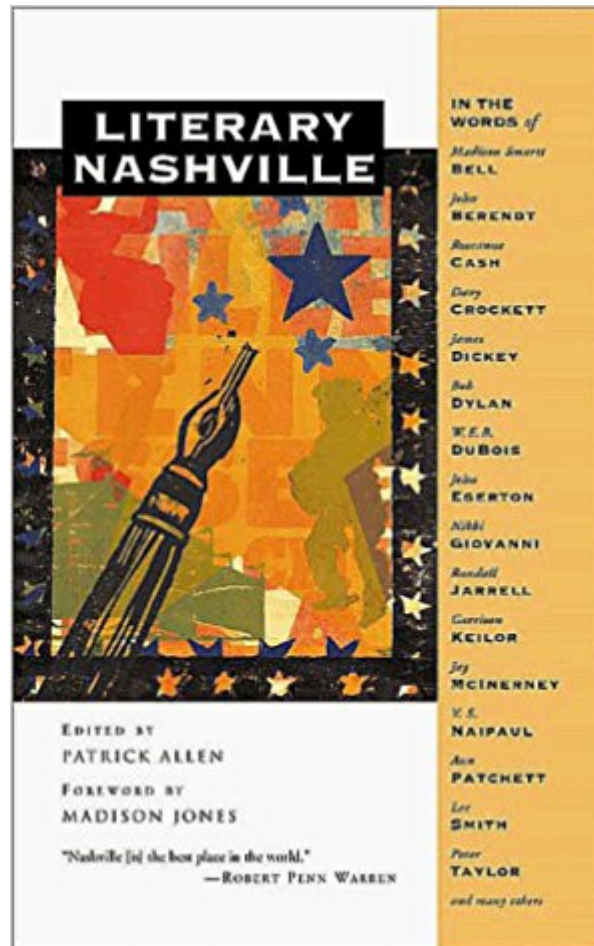




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Literary Nashville



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Synopsis

An anthology of fiction and nonfiction about Nashville

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Customer Reviews

It would be difficult to overstate the influence of the manifesto-issuing, Vanderbilt University-based writers who called themselves the Agrarians on the social and belletristic evolution of Nashville, but Patrick Allen, editor of this third in a series of literary anthologies for Hill Street Press (two preceding collections are *Literary Savannah* and *Literary New Orleans*, and *Literary Washington, D.C.* is forthcoming), comes perilously close. Of the 32 entries here, eight are of, by or about the writers also called the Fugitives: John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Lytle, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Merrill Moore. Ralph McGill's essay "Formaldehyde and Poetry" offers an up-close but impersonal view of the youthful poets. The anthology is balanced by a host of familiar contemporary voices, including Madison Smartt Bell, V.S. Naipaul and Jay McInerney. Madison Jones frames the collection with an introductory foreword and an excerpt from his novel *Nashville, 1864*, which describes a 10-year-old boy left to care for home, farm and family when his father joins the Confederate army. A selection from the 1834 book *Narrative*, attributed to Davy Crockett, is a consummate example of the folk-tale tradition, generous with homespun humor and hyperbolic anecdotes. The chronologically arranged pieces then turn to the long intellectual ferment of the '30s, as distilled by the various Fugitives, offering gory recollections of the ante-bellum South. Langston Hughes's memories of the Jim Crow era, the touching provincial innocence of a youthful Julius

Lester and a disquieting poem by Robert Hayden reveal Nashville in another light. Gradually, a picture emerges of a city that, like most urban areas, has been losing its individuality to the interstates, the national chains and tract housing. The multiplicity of literary styles and voices provides valuable contrast to such encroaching national homogenization by reminding readers of the history and evolution of Nashville. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

I was hoping for more "local color" after enjoying six months living in the area this year, but I still enjoyed it and learned a lot, especially some surprising things about the Fugitive Poets. The final bit by Madison Jones from *Nashville 1864: The Dying of the Light* is a beautiful resonant bookend to an early entry about the first settlers from "back east," and the material about Jarman and the "New Formalist" poets set me off on a little research. I think this is an interesting conceit for a book series and look forward to others from other places I've lived and known

I picked this book up while trolling through the library, and what a find! I have been to Nashville once, and the history didn't really stand out to me during my visit. I wish I had read this book first, as it paints a rich picture of Nashville's role in American history and the South. It hadn't dawned on me that Nashville was a frontier town until I read the early passages. As a new fan of old-time country music, there are some pretty interesting passages. My favorite, however, must be the excellent passages on race and racial issues in Nashville, particularly the Langston Hughes excerpt. Gives this book a shot if you are a fan of cultural history, especially in regards to the South and race.

I am a recent transplant to Nashville (yeah, I play the guitar) and I was eager to read about the literary history of Nashville. There is so much more to the history of this city than Garth Brooks and Vandy fever. The editor has done a great job in seeking out "high" and "low"--the Fugitives to John Berendt--to present a well-balanced picture of this city. Funny, serious, old, and new--this is probably the definitive history of Nash Vegas' literary scene.

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