



Sitting in Darkness: New South Fiction, Education, and the Rise of Jim Crow Colonialism, 1865-1920

Peter Schmidt

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Sitting in Darkness explores how fiction of the Reconstruction and the New South intervenes in debates over black schools, citizen-building, Jim Crow discrimination, and U.S. foreign policy towards its territories and dependencies. The author urges a reexamination not only of the contents and formal innovations of New South literature but also its importance in U.S. literary history.

Many rarely studied fiction authors (such as Ellwood Griest, Ellen Ingraham, George Marion McClellan, and Walter Hines Page) receive generous attention here, and well-known figures such as Albion Tourgée, Frances E. W. Harper, Sutton Griggs, George Washington Cable, Mark Twain, Thomas Dixon, Owen Wister, and W. E. B. Du Bois are illuminated in significant new ways. The book's readings seek to synthesize developments in literary and cultural studies, ranging through New Criticism, New Historicism, postcolonial studies, black studies, and "whiteness" studies.

This volume posits and answers significant questions. In what ways did the "uplift" projects of Reconstruction—their ideals and their contradictions—affect U.S. colonial policies in the new territories after 1898? How can fiction that treated these historical changes help us understand them? What relevance does this period have for us in the present, during a moment of great literary innovation and strong debate over how well the most powerful country in the world uses its resources?

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