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Nota di bibliografia

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Nota di contenuto

Introduction: Fiction as a mirror of culture -- Exposing the divine : 1790s-1850s -- Faltering fathers and devious divines : popular images. Misfits in America ; Harsh Puritans and fanatical Calvinists ; Scoundrels in collars -- Clerics in contention : church images. Liberal challengers ; Faithful Calvinists ; Precarious pastors -- Vulnerable divines : radical images. Victims of their believing ; Perpetrators of oppression ; Exposing the divine -- Discrediting the divine : 1860s-1920s -- Compulsives and accommodators : popular images (1). Compelled believers ; Compulsive believers ; Accommodating believers ; Prudent believers -- Con men in collars and heroes of the cloth : popular images (2). Phony preachers ; Muscular ministers ; Gallant parsons -- Activist preachers and their detractors : popular images (3). Social ministers ; Entrenched reactionaries ; Social activists ; Utopian idealists -- Champions of the faith : church images. Muscular believers ; Social evangelicals -- Foundering divines : radical images. Inept contenders ; Anachronisms -- Flawed divines : radical images. Weak and impotent men ; Pretenders, deceivers, and commercial preachers -- The legacy : 1930s-2000s -- Fallen divines : some contemporary images. Deprived preachers : a radical image ; Comic Calvinists : a popular and church image ; Human divines : a popular image -- Conclusion: The legacy of the displaced divine. The displacing : a summary ; The legacy.

Sommario/riassunto

As religious leaders, ministers are often assumed to embody the faith of the institution they represent. As cultural symbols, they reflect subtle changes in society and belief--specifically people's perception of God and the evolving role of the church. For more than forty years, Douglas Alan Walrath has tracked changing patterns of belief and church participation in American society, and his research has revealed a particularly fascinating trend: portrayals of ministers in American fiction mirror changing perceptions of the Protestant church and a Protestant God. From the novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who portrays ministers as faithful Calvinists, to the works of Herman Melville, who challenges Calvinism to its very core, Walrath considers a variety of fictional ministers, including Garrison Keillor's Lake Woebegon Lutherans and Gail Godwin's women clergy. He identifies a range of types: religious misfits, harsh Puritans, incorrigible scoundrels, secular businessmen, perpetrators of oppression, victims of belief, prudent believers, phony preachers, reactionaries, and social activists. He concludes with the modern legacy of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century images of ministers, which highlights the ongoing challenges that skepticism, secularization, and science have brought to today's religious leaders and fictional counterparts. *Displacing the Divine* offers a novel encounter with social change, giving the reader access, through the intimacy and humanity of literature, to the evolving character of an American tradition.