



A Historical Guide to Ralph Ellison (Historical Guides to American Authors)

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Ralph Ellison has been a controversial figure, both lionized and vilified, since he seemed to burst onto the national literary scene in 1952 with the publication of *Invisible Man*. In this volume Steven C. Tracy has gathered a broad range of critics who look not only at Ellison's seminal novel but also at the fiction and nonfiction work that both preceded and followed it, focusing on important historical and cultural influences that help contextualize Ellison's thematic concerns and artistic aesthetic. These essays, all previously unpublished, explore how Ellison's various apprenticeships--in politics as a Black radical; in music as an admirer and practitioner of European, American, and African-American music; and in literature as heir to his realist, naturalist, and modernist forebears--affected his mature literary productions, including his own careful molding of his literary reputation. They present us with a man negotiating the difficult sociopolitical, intellectual, and artistic terrain facing African Americans as America was increasingly forced to confront its own failures with regard to the promise of the American dream to its diverse populations. These wide-ranging historical essays, along with a brief biography and an illustrated chronology, provide a concise yet authoritative discussion of a twentieth-century American writer whose continued presence on the stage of American and world literature and culture is now assured.

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