



"A Picayune Fragment of the Possible Total": Stone Allegories in Saroyan's Life-Writing [

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text (article)

Analítica

This article explores William Saroyan's notion that life can only be grasped as a fragment of the Absolute, and that any attempt to understand one's existence is by definition a frustrated project. By applying Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's theory of the fragment, the mark of the 'incompletable incomplection' (1978), I will read Saroyan's formless autobiographical experiments (ranging from 1952 to the late 1970s) as the author's failure to endow his elusive identity with a stable meaning and order. The culmination of his concern with fragmentation finds its best expression in the finding of a stone, an object trouvé which operates either as the transcendentalist symbol of the recovery of the totality or else as a negative allegory in the sense adumbrated by Walter Benjamin, i.e., a concept which allows the author to revisit and interrogate history as the landscape of death and decline. Steeped in the mythical aura of Armenia as the country of stones, Saroyan's petrified fragment can only be interpreted not as a vehicle of unity and fulfilment but as a reminder of tragedy, dispersion, and the failure to coalesce, all of them inevitably linked with the writer's diasporic consciousness

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