



# The Book

Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture  
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## *Program Committees Restructured*

Since its founding in 1983, the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture at AAS has enjoyed great success. That so much has been accomplished is due in large measure to the scores of individuals who have contributed generously of their time, talents, and enthusiasm to the Program: teaching courses, presenting papers and lectures, brainstorming ideas, drafting prospectuses, and writing articles and reviews. Most especially, credit is due to the seventy-five individuals who have served on the Advisory Board and Executive Committee, guiding the Program through its formative years.

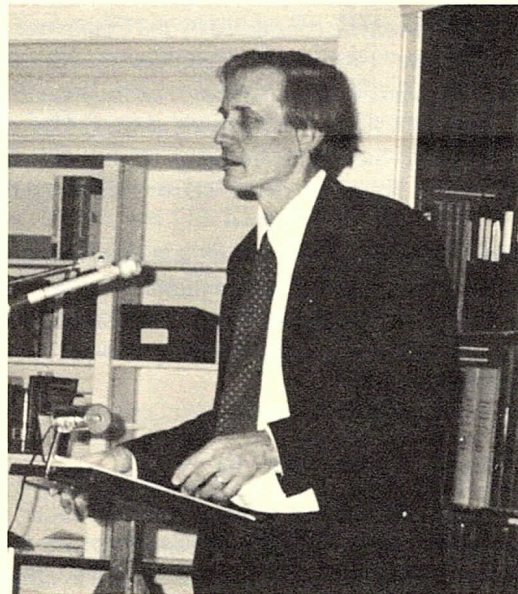
Now that the Program is well established, we are making some changes in its committee structure, prompted by our present institutional needs. First, we recognize that our ongoing effectiveness in the rapidly expanding field of the history of the book requires of us a continuing commitment to broaden the circle of participating individuals and to increase the variety of disciplines represented around the Program's table. To this end, we are continuing and strengthening our Advisory Board, whose thirty-nine members will each be appointed to a three-year term (renewable once). While the Advisory Board does not meet formally, the AAS staff will turn to individuals from this group throughout the year not only for advice, but also for linkages with kindred organizations, programs, and institutions in this country and abroad. As new members are welcomed onto the Advisory Board each year, we hope to see the Program's horizons continue to expand.

On the other hand, it is equally important for the AAS staff to be able to sit down with independent advisors on a regularly scheduled basis to think systematically about our institutional role as a research center for American book history. We need to keep asking ourselves critical questions: "Are we doing all that we should to develop research collections and to make them available for scholarship? Are there opportunities in the field of book history that we are overlooking? Are changes in our programs, collections, and services in this area warranted? Should new strategies and alliances be considered?" To a large extent, the Executive Committee of the Program's Advisory Board has served this function, but their purview has been limited to the Program itself and did not include the AAS library. We have, therefore, refashioned the Executive Committee into a new group called the Committee of Overseers and given it a new

charge. The six members of the committee and its chair, selected from among librarians, bibliographers, and scholars active in the history-of-the-book field, will each be appointed for a single two-year term, with three new overseers cycling onto the committee each year. The committee will meet annually at AAS to work jointly with Program and library staff and will present a report of their findings each year to the AAS president.

To all our advisors we offer our renewed thanks.

Ellen S. Dunlap



*1994 Wiggins Lecturer Lawrence I. Buell*

## *Wiggins Lecture*

Lawrence I. Buell, professor of English and undergraduate dean at Harvard, delivered the twelfth annual James Russell Wiggins lecture on Friday, November 4. His topic, "The Rise and Fall of the Great American Novel," traced the conscious effort beginning in the nineteenth century to identify or create the Great American Novel. With support from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the lecture will be repeated at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin, on Thursday, February 16.



## *AAS Seeks Nominations for Wiggins Lectureships*

The American Antiquarian Society seeks nominations for the James Russell Wiggins Lecturers in the History of the Book in American Culture for 1995 and 1996. The annual lecture is one of the principal activities of the Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture.

The Wiggins Lecture is given at AAS every fall. With funding from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the lecture will be repeated at another site.

Wiggins Lecturers are scholars from a variety of disciplines touching on the history of the book (defined broadly to include all forms of printed matter). Their lectures are statements on important, broad methodological and interpretive issues in the field. Although the focus of the series has been on the book in what became the United States, two past lectures have provided an international dimension. Previous Wiggins lecturers include historians David D. Hall and Robert A. Gross; literary scholars Larzer Ziff, Cathy N. Davidson, Nina Baym, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Lawrence I. Buell; bibliographers James M. Wells and John Bidwell; communications historian Michael Schudson; and foreign specialists Roger Chartier and Ian Willison.

Nominations will be considered by the Committee on the Wiggins Lecture. Committee members are Kenneth E. Carpenter, (Harvard College Library), chair; John Bidwell (Clark Library, UCLA); Mary Cayton (Miami University); Alice Fahs (UC-Irvine); Ezra Greenspan (University of South Carolina); and Jonathan Rose (Drew University and SHARP).

Please send nominations (giving a brief rationale for the choice) as soon as possible to Committee on the Wiggins Lecture, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609-1634. Fax (508) 754-9069. E-mail: [cfs@mark.mwa.org](mailto:cfs@mark.mwa.org)

## *AAS Summer Seminars for 1995*

The Program's 1995 summer seminar plans are taking shape. The offerings will be a seminar on "Reading Culture, Reading Books" led by Robert A. Gross (College of William and Mary) and Mary Kelley (Dartmouth College) and a workshop, led by Michael Winship (University of Texas at Austin), on understanding and working with nineteenth-century financial records of American printers, publishers, and other members of the book trades. Details will be forthcoming shortly via printed flyers and electronic bulletin boards. If you are not on our mailing list and want to receive a flyer, contact AAS.

## *Evans Imprint Records on CD-ROM*

*The Catalogue of Early American Imprints, 1640-1800*, prepared by AAS, is now available on CD-ROM from

Readex. Researchers are able to locate specific material through a variety of access points, using cataloguing records created by the Society's North American Imprints Program (NAIP) that provide detailed descriptions and extensive notes. This important bibliographical tool functions as a guide to the 36,000 imprints reproduced in the microform series *Early American Imprints, Series I. Evans*, which is available in many libraries around the world. It is more than that as well, in that it also includes records of 3,000-plus titles not included in the microform collection. Some of the latter were recorded in the Evans and Bristol bibliographies, but were unavailable for filming. Most, however, are titles and editions not previously recorded, and thus described for the first time in this catalogue. As such, this CD-ROM catalogue constitutes, in effect, corrigenda and addenda to Evans, Bristol, and Shipton-Mooney.

The price is \$1,515, which includes shipping and handling. For more information, contact NewsBank/Readex, 58 Pine Street, New Canaan, CT 06840. Telephone (800) 762-8182, fax (813) 263-3004.

## *Fellowship Announcements*

AAS offers visiting fellowships of from one to twelve months' duration available for tenure between June 1, 1995, and May 31, 1996. Fellowships funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities are long-term awards intended for scholars beyond the doctorate, including senior scholars. Normal tenure is six to twelve months, but new NEH guidelines permit the Society to arrange tenure of four to five months. Among the short-term fellowship categories are special ones promoting research in any area of American eighteenth-century studies and in the history of the book in American culture. The broadest category of awards, the Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson fellowships, are open to individuals, including foreign nationals and persons at work on doctoral dissertations, who are engaged in scholarly research and writing in any field of American history and culture through 1876. Application materials may be requested by writing or telephoning the Society or by e-mail to [cfs@mark.mwa.org](mailto:cfs@mark.mwa.org), but please provide a postal address.

The Bibliographical Society of America invites applications for its annual short-term fellowship program. The deadline is January 31, 1994. Prospective applicants may contact the BSA Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 397, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

The Huntington Library and the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, have inaugurated an annual two-month fellowship providing support for bibliographical research in early modern British literature and other areas in which both libraries have common strengths. Applicants must hold the Ph.D. degree or demonstrate equivalent scholarly experience. Applications are accepted from October 1 through December 15, 1994. The Fellowship Coordinator, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 2520 Cimarron



Street, Los Angeles, CA 90018-2098, telephone (213) 735-7605, fax (213) 731-8617 or the Research Department, Huntington Library, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA 91108, telephone (818) 405-2194 or fax (818) 405-0225 should be contacted for more information and application materials.

### *Dutch Book -Historical Society Conference*

Recently I represented the AAS Program in the History of the Book at the first conference of the Dutch Book-Historical Society (Nederlandse Boekhistorische Vereniging), entitled "Leafing through Other People's Minds: The History of the Book as Cultural History," and held September 28-30, 1994, at the conference center Drakenburgh in Baarn, near Hilversum, in the Netherlands. Over 100 people participated and contributed to the conference, which was ably organized by four young Dutch scholars of book history: Paul Koopman, Theo Bijvoet, Lisa Kuitert, and Garrelt Verhoeven.

The focus of the conference was on the reader, past and present, and on scholarly approaches to investigating and understanding the cultural uses of books. Each day concentrated on a specific time period—namely 1450-1700, 1700-1850, and 1850 to the present—and on each day papers were organized to present both a broad synthetic account of the reading culture of the period as well as examples of the most recent Dutch research into book and reading history of that period. Although most papers were given in Dutch, English abstracts were provided for the foreign participants.

What emerged clearly from the conference was that the history of the book is an active and growing field in the Netherlands. A full range of approaches to the discipline were represented—from analytical bibliography to the sociology of literature—and a full range of sources and evidence is being used—publishers' archives, subscription lists, diaries, and pictorial representations of readers and the book trade. Speakers came from a variety of disciplines—literature, history, library science, sociology, cultural history, and media studies. Lectures by five foreign speakers added an international dimension to the discussions. Beside myself, these were given by Margaret Spufford (Roehampton Institute, London), Roger Chartier (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris), Hans Erich Bodeker (Max Planck Institute for History, Göttingen), and David McKitterick (Trinity College Library, Cambridge).

McKitterick's paper, "What is a National History of the Book?," was of particular interest. Drawing on his experience as general editor of *A History of the Book in Britain*, McKitterick began his observations by insisting that historians of the book must "know no boundary between manuscript and print." Similarly, he explained, completely satisfactory chronological and geographical boundaries for national histories of the book are difficult to draw, though they are perhaps necessary for defining and structuring our

current projects. He argued that national investigations of the history of the technology of book production, of the history of the book trade, and of the history of book and type design will always contain an international dimension that challenges our "national" conceptions of these boundaries. In conclusion, he reflected on three further subjects and their importance to the history of the book: the history of reading, the history of libraries, and the very question of what we mean by "book" and how the book relates to other oral, written, printed, and electronic media and expression. While these issues seem central to some scholars and peripheral to others, he stressed that they must surely be addressed and incorporated into our national histories of the book.

McKitterick's talk served as the introduction to a panel discussion, "Towards a History of the Book in the Netherlands and Flanders," for which the foreign speakers were asked to summarize briefly the current state of national book history projects in their own countries. More importantly, Dr. Frans A. Janssen (Professor in the History of Books and Libraries at the University of Amsterdam) and Dr. Ludo Simons (Head Librarian at the University Faculties of Sint-Ignatius, Antwerp, and Professor of Book and Library Studies at the Catholic University, Leuven, and the University Institute, Antwerp) described their preliminary thoughts on how a history of the book might be organized and administered. Among the issues that were raised in the following discussion was the relation between cultural history and the history of the book and, in particular, what role in such a history would be played by traditional research in bibliography, literary history, and material and economic history. A related concern was how to keep the history of the book from redefining itself too broadly as the history of written, or even verbal, communication. A final point of discussion was the extent that this history must address the international role of books from the region, both in its former colonies as well as the European book trade. While none of these issues was finally resolved, it is clear from the conference that the field of book history is alive and well in the Netherlands and that any history of the book in the Netherlands and Flanders, when it does appear, will be a fascinating and valuable contribution to scholarship.

The conference papers will be published by the Dutch Book-Historical Society, in Dutch with English abstracts. The Society was founded in 1993 and is now presided over by Dr. Paul G. Hoftijzer (Department of English, Leiden University, and Associate Professor in the History of Publishing and the Book Trade, Amsterdam University). The Society also publishes an annual *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis*. Further information about the Society and its publications is available from the Society's secretary: Mr. B. P. M. Dongelmans, Stevinstraat 14, 2405 CP Alphen aan den Rijn, The Netherlands.

Michael Winship  
University of Texas at Austin



## Book Note

### THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

We are entering an age of intellectual consolidation. After decades of academic expansion in the humanities, which has opened up numerous realms of study and diversified methods and theories, the time has come for taking stock. Or so it appears from the growing number of volumes reviewing and synthesizing scholarship in various fields. Recent years have brought us primers on *The New American History*, a fresh generation of encyclopedias in such areas as religion and social history, and a host of guides to old and new members of the literary canon. The latest arrival is the first volume of *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, covering the period 1590-1820. Promising "a new beginning in the study of American literature," the work is the collaboration of five specialists on early America, each canvassing a distinct era or body of writing, under the general editorship of Sacvan Bercovitch. With no pretense of offering an authoritative narrative or a single approach, the book nonetheless reflects, in Bercovitch's words, the "overriding interest in history" that has come to drive literary studies. Prominent in that historical turn is our own specialty, the interdisciplinary history of the book.

As the American Antiquarian Society embarks upon its own multivolume collaborative *A History of the Book in America*, it seems appropriate to use the new *Cambridge History* as a way of gauging the impact of *histoire du livre* upon literary studies. (A few years from now, *HBA* may draw equivalent scrutiny from scholars of American literature.) If the history of the book is to realize its promise in cultural studies, it needs to inform interpretations of American literature—to suggest how the production, distribution, and reception of print not only makes possible the enterprise of writing and reading, but enters into the very construction and themes of texts. The *Cambridge History*, to be fair, was never conceived in these terms. It is, as Bercovitch says, "a polyphony of large-scale narratives," surveying, from several perspectives, "writers, texts, [and] movements in literary history." Nonetheless, the volume invites our analysis. Replete with references to oral and print culture, assaying shifting forms of authorship and evolving modes of publication, the *Cambridge History* testifies to a growing conversation between scholars of literature and historians of the book. It also discloses important limits to that exchange.

Not all the contributors to the *Cambridge History* attend to issues in our purview. Hence, this notice will skip over Myra Jehlen's account of "The Literature of Colonization" and Emory Elliott's canvass of "New England Puritan Literature." From our perspective, the significant essays are David S. Shields's excursion into "British-American Belles Lettres," Robert A. Ferguson's assessment of "The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820," and Michael T. Gilmore's

reinterpretation of "The Literature of the Revolutionary and Early National Periods." From this triptych, a striking theme unfolds to provide coherence for the volume as a whole. The *Cambridge History* charts the slow, fitful movement towards an autonomous print culture in the United States. From the beginning of English colonization to the eve of the American Revolution, the printing press was driven largely by the needs of a society where most communication took place in intimate settings, face to face. But starting in the early 1700s and gathering force in succeeding decades, the realm of print underwent significant change. Increasingly, it impressed its dominion on traditional forms of writing and speech; it carved out a growing complex of producers and consumers of its products; it found expression in literary forms all its own. Declaring independence from oral culture, print asserted a separate station in the American republic of letters.

To frame the *Cambridge History* as a narrative of print culture is to impose a selective design upon a variegated volume. Yet this interpretation follows easily from the organizing conception of the work. The *Cambridge History* takes as its subject of inquiry a central problem: the study of literary genres, the relations among them, and their connections to culture and society. At one moment, we discern, sermons and other forms of religious writing concentrated the imagination of a people; at another, political pamphlets carry the urgent impulses of the times. The epic poem assumes primacy as a form; drama suffers from the hostile legacy of Puritanism; the novel struggles for

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legitimacy. The contributors explore the social purposes of genres, the varied producers and consumers of them, the settings in which they take shape and engage writers and readers alike. Genres embody distinct constellations of author and audience. Arising in one medium—say, the sacred space of the meeting house or the convivial mood of the coffee house—they may transplant, with more or less resistance, to another, such as the public columns of the newspaper. The interplay between genre and medium traces the use of oral, written, and print forms; it implicates the *Cambridge History* in the history of the book.

In this perspective, it is stunning to note the omission of important genres of colonial writing. Ballads and broadsides, the street literature of Puritans, get perfunctory notice. Criminal narratives—last words and dying speeches—are ignored. Such ephemeral pieces are easily overlooked. But enduring forms like the almanac are missing, too. More than a century ago, Moses Coit Tyler observed that “No one who would penetrate to the core of early American literature, and would read in it the secret history of the people in whose minds it took root and from whose minds it grew, may by any means turn away, in lofty literary scorn, from the almanac,—most despised, most prolific, most indispensable of books, which every man uses, and no man praises; the very quack, clown, pack-horse, and pariah of modern literature, yet the one universal book of modern literature....” The *Cambridge History* unwisely forgets that advice. With a capacious embrace of writings by groups once marginalized or excluded—women, native Americans, African Americans, colonizers from France, Spain, and Portugal—the volume simultaneously narrows the range of expression. The makers of the canon are more various, but the definition of literature is surprisingly restricted.

The *Cambridge History* is equally inattentive to the book as a material object. While Robert Ferguson does remark upon the handiness of the pamphlet for the conduct of pre-Revolutionary debates, such insights are infrequent. The text is all; in contrast to colonial times, nobody looks at how it is dressed—whether it wears a “mean” or “genteel” garb. Physical bibliography, an integral resource for the history of the book, has dropped out of modern literary studies. So, too, has the systematic study of publication history; the *Cambridge History* gives only casual attention to the circuit of booksellers and printers through which manuscripts made their way into print. Such matters, which could deepen the study of genres, are not pursued.

The *Cambridge History* rises above mundane details of publishing history to advance a broader agenda. It identifies leading genres, limns their principal texts, explores their social milieu, and most of all, assesses their ideological functions and cultural work. Shields depicts the little-known culture of *belles lettres*, in which a form of writing became a mode of sociability. Originating in the coffeehouses and clubs of Restoration London and spreading to the colonies after 1700, *belles lettres* consisted of imaginative pieces—poems,

parodies, mock-histories, bon mots, toasts—designed to afford pleasure, animate conversation, and refine sensibilities. Such writings eschewed the publicity of print and the burden of civic service. Composed for a specific audience or occasion, the gathering of gentlemen in a club or men and women at a salon, they were “scripts for oral performance,” supplying an evening’s entertainment and circulating in manuscript among friends. Yet, as Shields demonstrates, the genre was inexorably drawn out of the coffeehouse, invested with social purpose, and exposed to public view. Intended for a sophisticated oral culture, *belles lettres* was “co-opted” and popularized by the press. In a dynamic first noted by Elizabeth Eisenstein, the world of print was an expansive empire, extending its sway over every cultural form.

Robert Ferguson tracks a different route to the hegemony of print. His provocative essay examines the contribution of several genres—sermons, pamphlets, and public documents—to the forging of “a consensual literature for a diverse and divided citizenry.” In the popular mobilization against British imperial policies, the sermon was “the bellwether of rebellion.” An oral form, enacted from the pulpit for an immediate audience, the sermon gave emotional urgency to the colonial cause. “We glimpse...a disruptive power in speech,” Ferguson writes, “that does not belong to print. The belief required for independence literally is born in these sermons.” So, too, the cheap pamphlet, easily cast into print, could capture the spontaneous mood. Originally directed to elite circles, the political writings burgeoned in the pre-Revolutionary debate, with an ever-widening authorship and audience. The radical power of the pamphlet was realized in the intense, expectant moment of 1776. In an imaginative reading of *Common Sense*, Ferguson detects “the rhythms and personal presence of speech” behind Thomas Paine’s explosive words. *Common Sense* released the rage of the Revolutionary crowd in his millennial call for independence.

To curb volatile passions, the Patriot elite brought forth a new “literature of public documents” channeling popular protest into orderly forms. Its masterworks were the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which incorporated the fiction of a united people in the impersonal design of a nation. Such documents were the achievement of the eighteenth-century republic of letters, whose ideal scene of writing, Ferguson suggests, resembled a convention. Out of long experience in collective composition, circulating manuscripts for criticism among “social peers” and treasuring private recognition over public authorship, the Founding Fathers produced documents notable for “brevity, comprehension, and forecast.” Read from the pulpits and published in the press, these writings became immediate objects of veneration: models of ordered prose, embodying the abstract rule of reason in the ascendant republic of print.

Michael T. Gilmore gives the fullest consideration to scholarship on book history in an ambitious treatment of the drama, poetry, novels, and periodicals that were produced in a changing society and culture from 1790 to 1820. Gilmore



brings a sophisticated theoretical framework to these “letters of the early republic.” In his perspective, we perceive a close correspondence between the social purposes of a genre and the social milieu in which it is made, distributed, and received. Out of this interplay between genre and society emerge characteristic images and themes in the texts.

Thus, the drama, suspect among late Puritans and radical republicans, was harnessed to civic ends. It performed its patriotic purpose in a communal setting, where all social ranks were arrayed. The raucous popular audience imposed its tastes on the stage, interrupting speeches to demand encores and disrupting the performance with catcalls, hisses and applause. In such circumstances, playwrights aimed not for originality but to satisfy expectations, recycling familiar materials and borrowing from rivals without hesitation. It was in their financial interest to keep scripts out of print; once disseminated in the press, a play became common property for the stage, free for performance with no royalty due the author. Similarly, poetry remained bound to oral settings. Frequently commissioned for ceremonial occasions, poems kept to familiar meters and rhymes, in part to facilitate public singing. As custom work, akin to other forms of craftsmanship in the premodern world, poetry reflected the close interplay between author and audience. By contrast, the novel pressed against tradition and found expression in print culture. Produced by individuals for public distribution in the press, novels were typically taken into the private home and “experienced in isolation.” Though they pretended to be “founded in fact,” social narratives derived from public knowledge, in practice the genre produced fictions of individualism and social mobility, calculated to captivate passive readers in subjective fantasies. But few writers owned up to this end. Clinging to gentility, novelists adopted pseudonyms, declined to copyright their works, and professed didactic intent. “The novel,” Gilmore writes, “was a form in transition and at odds with itself, as much as a partisan of post-revolutionary republican culture as a harbinger of nineteenth-century liberal society.”

The force of Gilmore’s interpretation derives from his ingenious connection between literary and cultural change. In his telling, literary genres participated in, enacted, indeed advanced a series of social transformations: republicanism to liberalism, community to individualism, household economy to commercial capitalism, oral to print culture. Such stark polarities fail to do justice to Gilmore’s nuanced account of the hesitations, tensions, contests, and contradictions embedded in the remaking of genres. None of the forms he describes managed to shed associations with public purpose, desires for gentility, or loyalties to tradition. Nonetheless, the movement was towards a private “individualist aesthetics” in print, which would crystallize in the ideology of the Romantic artist, producing and owning a unique vision for distribution in the market. In accord with the logic of modernity, the aesthetic realm was differentiated as an autonomous category, subject to its own rules in the independent empire of print.

Gilmore’s interpretation is perceptive and intriguing, but it rests in part upon a reading of print culture, whose artifacts he treats all too casually. The physical forms of books—size, paper, binding, design—provide significant clues to their cultural status. Gilmore looks only at title pages, which indicate authorship, and at lists of subscribers. Publishing anonymously or employing a pseudonym is, for him, a sure sign of genteel aspirations. The issue is more complicated. Thomas Paine declined to identify himself as the author of *Common Sense* out of a professed commitment to republicanism. Political arguments, he insisted, should be judged in the impersonal light of reason, and not according to the status of the author. This self-justification could be easily tested. Did anonymous or pseudonymous publications characteristically appear in lavish editions for genteel consumers? Or were they obliged to come forth in cheap duodecimo, wrapped in boards enclosing pages of common type?

Similar questions emerge from Gilmore’s discussion of the self-reflexive character of Washington Irving’s fiction. In *The Sketch Book*, Irving’s breakthrough into modern authorship, the experience of the impersonal, capitalist marketplace is encoded in the very form of the text. Relying upon a series of intermediaries through whom the narrative is told, Irving attenuates the link between the author and his tales. In Gilmore’s view, the erasure of the writer is the epitome of capitalism in an era of long-distance trade, when products on the market can seldom be traced to known makers. As a metaphor of mediation, *The Sketch Book* also “accelerated the trend away from orality to the impersonal values of print.” In its pages, the reader encountered the “modalities of print”—“space and time, or distance and durability”—in place of “the proximity and evanescence of oral performance.”

This reading of *The Sketch Book* prompts questions about the writer and the marketplace in early America. In Gilmore’s formulation, the experience of mediation was central to daily life in a modernizing society. But did it characterize the republic of letters? In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, colonial writers were commonly separated from their own texts. When Puritan writers dispatched their manuscripts across the ocean for publication in London, they lost all control over texts. Separated from their authors, such texts might become artifacts of alienation, generated by an early modern division of labor. By contrast, Washington Irving took control of the process by which *The Sketch Book* was printed, packaged, and marketed to readers in England and America. In his act of literary entrepreneurship, the author overcame the barriers of specialization that normally governed the publishing process. His successful integration of authorship and trade, proving that writing could be a profitable profession, stands in ironic contrast to the “fetish of mediation” in the text.

In short, Gilmore, like Shields and Ferguson, draws creatively on insights from the history of the book, without ever engaging in the concrete investigations his reflections



suggest. Still, his sophisticated readings illuminate a distinctive contribution of literary studies to the understanding of print culture. By exploring themes and metaphors of writing and reading, his approach tells us how figures like Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, and James Fenimore Cooper represented authorship and audience in a changing literary marketplace. Through his critical practice, we discern that the *Cambridge History* is not simply a new departure in the study of American literature. It makes an independent contribution to the intellectual history of the book.

R.A.G.

## Research Notes

### LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE IN COLONIAL AMERICA

Literacy has become, in Carl F. Kaestle's words, a "hot topic" for historians. For studies on colonial literacy, readers may wish to consult my historiographical overview in Margaret Conrad, ed., *Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800* (1991).

Yet scholars have shown little interest in how literacy was acquired. In fact, the late Lawrence A. Cremin, in his *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783* (1970), called the research on colonial reading instruction "scandalously thin." Earlier discussions of literacy instruction are not only skimpy but often elderly. Cremin himself devotes only a few pages to pedagogy, and the standard history of colonial reading instruction is still the twenty-five page account within Nina Banton Smith's larger *American Reading Instruction* (1986), unchanged from her 1934 version. For contemporary British textbooks, Ian Michael's *The Teaching of English from the Sixteenth Century to 1870* (1987) is invaluable.

For over a decade now, I have been working on a book to fill this scholarly gap. My quest has broadened from a study of pedagogy into a consideration of, among other factors, the purposes of literacy instruction, the different values placed on each literacy skill, and the intersections among literacy and gender, class, and race. While I admire quantitative work, mine is a qualitative study that hops around in time and place to wherever the sources are richest.

Primary sources begin with the textbooks themselves. AAS's microfiche reproduction of Charles Evans's *American Bibliography* (1903-59), has been indispensable. Once one expands beyond pedagogy, the number of potentially relevant sources is unnervingly vast, ranging from published town records to the manuscript correspondence of missionary organizations, school records, diaries, and family letters.

My manuscript, still in progress, discusses the following topics: legislation on literacy in the New England colonies; the acquisition of literacy of the Massachusetts and Wampanoag Indians of southeastern New England; seventeenth-century textbooks and early children's books;

and family literacy in Boston, seen through the diaries of Cotton Mather and Samuel Sewall. For the eighteenth century, the records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel generate chapters on missionary schooling in the middle and southern colonies and on literacy for the enslaved. There follow discussions of writing at Boston's three writing schools; of the revolution wrought by John Locke on children's books; the primers and spelling books influenced by John Newbery; literacy in the classrooms of late colonial America; and the implications of family literacy at the time of the American Revolution.

Several themes have emerged from my explorations so far. All societies have viewed reading instruction as a vehicle for imparting their particular values, and this was of course true in the colonial period. Reading was therefore viewed as essential, to be mastered by both genders. Writing, in sharp contrast, was considered mainly a business skill and was gendered from the first, with both instructors and students being male.

By focusing on its calligraphic aspects, however, the colonial writing masters understood the nature of writing acquisition only imperfectly. It was ordinary people who, as they watched anxiously for the arrival of the next letter, fully appreciated the communicative aspects of writing.

An anecdote exemplifies the radically different uses—religious or communicative—to which each literacy skill could be put. By the time of King Philip's War (1675-76), many Indians were literate. Some of the Praying Indians fled to the forest. Their pastor reported on how he had spent the Sabbaths there—he had read and taught the people out of Psalms 35, 46, and 118. King Philip's Indians used the other literacy skill. Their note was found in a cleft of one of the bridge posts of Medfield: "Know by this paper, that the Indian that thou has provoked to wrath and anger, will war this twenty one years if you will."

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## Histories of Reading by Rudolf Schenda

In two studies devoted to reading and readership in Western Europe, *Volk ohne Buch: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der Populären Leserstoffe, 1770-1919* (1970) and *Die Leserstoffe der kleinen Leute: Studien zur populären Literatur in 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (1976), Rudolf Schenda, professor of European folk literature at the University of Zurich, described broad-based reading habits in nineteenth-century Western Europe by analyzing who read what published literature, class by class and genre by genre. In addressing the literature of the barely- and semiliterate, Schenda explored the routes and materials that introduced literacy to millions of Europeans and that vastly expanded the nineteenth-century literary marketplace.

The theoretical significance of Schenda's work transcends the corpus of popular literature that he addresses.



By taking into account factors that literary scholars generally bracket out of their studies, Schenda generated a view of literature, both high and low, as a consumable product. His socially oriented categories include censorship, advertising, publishing figures, and memoirs. Though it would be impossible for a researcher addressing a single literary work to gather material systematically in all of the categories set by Schenda, nonetheless addressing some of them places a literary work in its contemporaneous sociocultural context, while his schema provides an alternative paradigm for locating and understanding readership habits.

Since its initial appearance in 1970, *Volk ohne Buch* has become a standard and often-cited work both in the sociology of literature and in the history of publishing and reading. Schenda's work expands the corpus of books and readers addressed in traditional literary studies. The obverse of this statement is that cheaply produced and priced nineteenth-century literature made its way into bourgeois households quickly and easily and that it was read far more widely than library inventories would suggest.

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### *Victorian Periodicals Conference*

The Research Society of Victorian Periodicals has issued a call for papers for their 1995 conference "Defining Centres: The Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities." Proposals of up to 250 words are invited for twenty- to thirty-minute papers for this interdisciplinary conference that will challenge the restriction of Media Studies to the products of the twentieth century. Those interested in speaking or attending should note that this Edinburgh conference from July 11-13, 1995, immediately precedes the SHARP conference. Proposals and inquiries should be sent to arrive by December 30, 1994, to Dr. D.L. Brake, CEMS, Birkbeck College, 26 Russell Square, London WC1 5DQ, United Kingdom.

### *The 1996 SHARP Conference*

The 1996 Conference of the Society for the History of Publishing, Authorship, and Reading (SHARP) will convene in Worcester, hosted by AAS from July 18 to 21. A call for papers will be issued in *The Book*, number 35 (March 1995) and elsewhere.

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