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Nord and Nerone to Lead 2008 Summer Seminar on Newspapers and the Culture of Print

The legendary collection of newspapers at the American Antiquarian Society will form the primary source material for the 2008 Summer Seminar in the History of the Book. “The Newspaper and the Culture of Print in the Early American Republic” will be led by journalism historians David Paul Nord and John Nerone. The seminar will take place at the Society from Wednesday, June 18 through Monday, June 23, 2008.

Nord is professor of journalism and adjunct professor of history at Indiana University and author of *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (2001). Nerone is research professor in the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois. He is author of *Violence Against the Press: Policing the Public Sphere in U.S. History* (1994) and co-author of *The Form of News: A History* (2001). Both Nord and Nerone are part of the five-volume *A History of the Book in America* series. Nord is a co-editor of *The Enduring Book, 1945-1995* (vol. 5) and a contributor to Volume 2; Nerone’s essay, “Newspapers and the Public Sphere” appears in Volume 3 (2007). This series is being published by AAS and the University of North Carolina Press.

Nord and Nerone, who have both held fellowships at AAS, believe that the AAS is the best place in the country for a seminar such as this. The newspaper collection was begun by Isaiah Thomas as he prepared to write his classic *History of Printing in America*

(1810). “He knew well that the newspaper was the most common and most characteristic product of the early American press,” Nord observes. The society has steadily added to that core since 1812 and has also collected many supporting materials, including business records, newsboy broadsides, organizational newsletters, and other ephemeral documents related to the newspaper trade. The AAS collections include more than 15,000 different newspaper titles.

Guest faculty who will participate in the sessions include Vincent Golden, AAS curator of newspapers and periodicals.

This six-day seminar at the American Antiquarian Society, the library that Isaiah Thomas founded in 1812, will explore American print culture in the early republic through the newspaper. Sessions will focus on the material base of newspaper printing and production, on the business side of newspapers, and on the readers of newspapers and the role that newspapers played in their public and private lives. While this seminar should

be of particular interest to scholars of historical media and communications, others working primarily in history, literature, and allied fields in early American culture will also gain an understanding of how to use this rich source material in their studies.

Further information about the seminar, including the application packet, may be found on the AAS website <americanantiquarian.org/summersem.htm>. Financial aid is available and preference will be given to first-time attendees. The application deadline is March 14, 2008.



Announcing a new AAS publication: *Liberty! Egalit ! ;Independencia!*

AAS and Oak Knoll Books of Newcastle, Delaware, a publisher specializing in book arts and book history imprints, released in October 2007 *Liberty! Egalit ! ;Independencia! Print Culture, Enlightenment, and Revolution in the Americas, 1776-1838*. This volume collects the findings of the interdisciplinary group that convened at the American Antiquarian Society's 2006 conference exploring print culture's role in the transatlantic and hemispheric circulations of revolutionary ideas and counter-revolutionary convictions. The book showcases the newest sort of print culture history—that which recaptures change in the means of communication employed by revolutionaries and counter-revolutions in tension with the cultural structures and material circumstances they faced. Particular attention has been paid to the way spoken messages related to written and to printed texts. David Geggus's "Print Culture and the Haitian Revolution: The Written and the Spoken Word" offers a model for understanding the role of the various media in the overthrow of executive control, the consolidation of power, and the assertion of sovereignty of a revolutionary state.

When Karen Stolley, Mariselle Mel ndez, and I organized the AAS conference, we sought scholars who could map a broad geography of sites of communication, while illuminating particular forms of oral, written, or print practice. The book shows the success of our effort. From the workings of the press in Peru; to the correspondence throughout the Americas of the French radical priest, Abb  Gr goire; to the translation tracts into various languages of tracts such as Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzm n's *Letter to the Spanish Americans*; to the paraphrases of American revolutionary rhetoric in the publications of the failed insurrectionists of 1830s Canada,

the extent and variety of this print world stands revealed. It appears as something more than the world of restless young men, for we see how Leonora Sansay, an American novelist, internalized and domesticated the Haitian Revolution in her *Secret History, or The Horrors of St. Domingo*. And it appears as something more than a set of insular Anglo-American, French, and Ibero-American revolutionary traditions.

If two historical truths can be isolated from this collection, it is the cultural permeability and geographical transmissibility of enlightenment notions of liberty, equality, and independence around the Atlantic world. Whether the thinker was a European Enlightenment savant, such as Juan Antonio Llorente, or an American statesman, such as Daniel Webster, ideas get translated and processed through networks that had only modest regard for national boundaries. My contribution to the volume, the 2006 James Russell Wiggins Lecture, "We declare you independent whether you wish it or not," shows the complications of publicizing revolution by examining the campaigns and conspiracies of the filibusters, the exporters of revolution from the young United States into Spanish America. In the spirit of the symposium, it dealt with all the forms of communication in play—rumor-fueled misinformation campaigns spread through frontier taverns, conspiratorial letters, manuscript insurrection plans, print manifestos, and constitutions. The essay, which begins the collection, closes with a meditation on constitutions that points to Eric Slauter's reflections on "Written Constitutions and Unenumerated Rights."

—David S. Shields, University of South Carolina

David Shields, et al. *Liberty! Egalit ! ;Independencia! Print Culture, Enlightenment, and Revolution in the Americas, 1776-1838* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society and New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Books, 2007). 216 pp. paper, \$25.00, ISBN 978-1-92954-546-9. <www.oakknoll.com>.

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Remembering Jay Fliegelman

Jay Fliegelman, an influential scholar in American literary and cultural studies, died on August 14, 2007, of complications from cancer and liver disease. News of his illness and death was met with deep sadness throughout the academic community. His former students and colleagues at Stanford University remembered him as “an extraordinary and unique kind of scholar....one of the great teachers of our time.” Ramón Saldívar, head of Stanford’s English department, said that Fliegelman “affected his students intellectually and emotionally in such a profound way that his passing will leave a great void in American studies.”

Those of us who knew Jay through his presence at the American Antiquarian Society remember well his brilliance. In 1998-1999, Jay was appointed our first Mellon Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence, which he referred to as an “irresistible offer.” He was working on his third book, *Belongings: Dramas of American Book Ownership, 1660-1860*, though at the time of his fellowship, he called it “Storied Associations: Books from Important American Libraries, 1650-1860, and the Tales They Tell.” It was such an energizing, stimulating experience to have him in residence—he was full of ideas and curiosity; engaged in so many stimulating conversations with staff, and happily served as mentor to our academic research fellows. There were no limitations or boundaries to his insatiable interests in scholarship; he always had wonderful suggestions for the fellows, irrespective of topic or discipline. When he left in 1999, many of us hoped we’d see Jay back at AAS soon. There was simply no one quite like him.

In September 2005, I called Jay and asked him if he might be interested in teaching the 2006 summer seminar in the history of the book. I had barely finished asking the question when he interrupted and, with great excitement in his voice, said: “Yes! Yes! Sure! I’d love to do it.” Always the scholar and the student, perhaps he had an instant flashback to 1998 when he was a participant in the summer seminar led by David D. Hall from Harvard University on “Readers, Writers, and the Book Trades in Early America.” With this invitation, he’d now be the leader. And so we began to develop plans for the seminar, with Jay, of course, in the driver’s seat.

The seminar was entitled “Books and Their Readers to 1800 and Beyond” and in his description, he wrote that it would “deal with the meaning and forms of signatures, marginalia, gift inscriptions, and other marks of ownership, especially as they illuminate the emotional and intellectual relationship of individuals to artifacts. We will examine books as parents, children, friends, mentors, loved ones, prompt texts for performance, witnesses, cultural capital, and sources of authority and authorization.” He said that one of the main questions for discussion would be: “In what way is a book ‘owned’?” He would strive to promote a seminar that asked questions of books in their capacity as a “unique blend of materiality and

meaning.” The announcement captured the interest of a large, if not the largest, competitive pool of applicants who ever wanted to enroll in the seminar. Twenty-two participants were selected, among them historians, literary scholars, rare book librarians, curators, bibliographers, and dissertation writers. They were so talented and from so many disciplines—a perfect group for Jay.

Jay invited Leah Price from Harvard University to join him as guest faculty member, and together, they designed an ambitious (and very large) syllabus with a fascinating range of readings. Sessions had intriguing titles, such as “Reading the Bible: Milk Drawn from Both Breasts of the Testaments,” “Word and Thing,” “Metaphors of Navigation,” “The Big Picture,” “Revolutionary Commonplacing,” “Print and the City,” “Economics,” “Collecting,” among others. The week flew by too quickly, filled with lively conversations at the seminar meetings in the Goddard Daniels House, at workshops in the Council Room in Antiquarian Hall, and during coffee breaks and meals.

One evening, Jay presented an informal, illustrated talk about his extraordinary book collection. He specialized in acquiring “association copies” owned by someone central in American history, or someone who had an important impact on the life of a significant historical figure. Jay’s wife, Christine Guth, operated the PowerPoint, while he sat at the head of the table regaling us with stories of how he had acquired his books, what they meant to him as physical and cultural objects, as “belongings,” how they were arranged on bookshelves in his home, how he enjoyed re-arranging them from shelf to shelf to “make connections between them”—he spoke with emotion and authority about collecting, reading, ownership, and the materiality of texts. As his talk drew to a close, Jay told us how much he enjoyed inviting people to his home to show them his collection. Many of us imagined how fascinating it would be to visit him in Menlo Park to see his private library. On the shelves, for example, we’d see Frederick Douglass’ autobiography, inscribed by the author to Ellen Richardson, the Englishwoman who purchased Douglass’ freedom from a southern slave owner. Or, we could examine Thomas Jefferson’s copy of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Not only does this book have Jefferson’s signature on the title page, but when he let James Madison borrow it, Madison also signed his name on the title page (and three other places!) before returning the book to its owner, Thomas Jefferson. Each of Jay’s books tells an amazing story of “association.”

On the final day of an AAS summer seminar, there is a ceremony, an informal but meaningful moment during which each participant comes forward to receive a certificate and some words of thanks from the seminar leader. It celebrates an achievement, and long days of intensive reading and discussion. No seminar leader ever put more enthusiasm into this ceremony than Jay Fliegelman. He stood at the front of the room and

had something witty, yet touching, to say about each person. Jay was clearly in his glory! Matthew Brown from the University of Iowa was a participant in the seminar and captured the event perfectly when he wrote in *The Book* (July 2006): “Equally memorable was the certificate ceremony, with emcee Fliegelman morphing into equal parts Paul Schaffer and Arsenio Hall, and the Elmarion Room seemingly transformed into a Las Vegas awards hall. The week was full of intellectual pleasures, and students were left with a teaching and research agenda keenly attuned to the emotional valences of books.”

Since 1985, a number of preeminent scholars have led the book history seminar. Among them, Jay Fliegelman was a dazzler. Summarizing his seminar for *The Book*, he observed that “beyond historicizing the act of reading, and its changing paratextual prompts, the group discussed everything from the operations of the economy of readerly attention to the ways in which books “read” their readers in intimate encounters. Such encounters involve the exposure of personal vulnerabilities and the overcoming of self-consciousness.” He concluded by saying, “Sybarites of the flesh might disagree that intellectual pleasure is the most intense pleasure, but my experience of the seminar reinforced my conviction. Exhausted and flooded with adrenaline, I left having learned as much as I taught and, as in the past, deeply appreciative of the staff and collections of AAS.” Those words—“*I left having learned as much as I taught*”—seem to capture Jay’s life perfectly and poignantly. Jay Fliegelman touched many lives in profound ways; we are fortunate that he touched ours, through his presence at AAS.

—Joanne D. Chaison

The Book (July 2006) with articles describing Fliegelman’s summer seminar americanantiquarian.org/TheBook/July2006.pdf and the seminar syllabus americanantiquarian.org/sumsem06syl.htm may both be found on the AAS website.

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Research Note

Words Backwards and Forwards:

Introducing the Telegraph and Daguerreotype



Nathaniel Paine (1832-1917) as a child with his sister. Daguerreotype. American Antiquarian Society.

The first electronic document ever produced was Samuel F. B. Morse’s famous first telegram “What hath God wrought?,” which, in Morse’s words, was “written” from Washington “at” Baltimore in May 1844 (Morse Papers, Library of Congress). Writing from Washington at Baltimore neatly expresses the “tele-” (distance) and “-graph” (writer) of “telegraph,” but the graphology of Morse’s invention remains far from transparent.

How were indented dots and dashes on paper tape self-evidently “writing”? Was Morse being meta-phorical in some measure, or were the semantics of “writing” circa 1844 plastic enough to be applied literally to this new medium?

Questions such as these become more perplexing when one considers a second “first” involving Morse—a painter by profession—who was the first to provide American readers with an account of Louis Daguerre’s invention of photography. In private and published correspondence of 1839, Morse had described the uncanny minuteness of detail that could be rendered by daguerreotype. He enthused that a shelf of books captured by the new process “has these books, reduced of course to a very diminutive scale; with the naked eye the lines of the letters are perceived but the letters themselves cannot be perceived, yet with a magnifier every letter is visible and easily legible” (Vail Telegraph Collection, Smithsonian Institution). What is not clear from Morse’s account is that daguerreotypes (and later tintypes) are produced by a direct-positive process, so that any writing pictured in them is pictured in reverse, as backwards writing. In vaunting the mimetic power of the new imaging process, Morse had somehow conflated legibility and perceptibility even as he distinguished them.

The research I conducted at the AAS—on “words backwards”—forms an initial kernel of a new book project, which seeks to enroll the interests and methods of visual culture studies into the study of mechanically reproduced texts. In today’s parlance, I’m interested in the “textual interface,” in experiences of texts as pictured in different states and conditions according to the media of their circulation. What this means is that I’m interested in words-and-images as well as words-as-images. A month spent as a Jay and Deborah Last Fellow in American visual culture provided the opportunity to historicize some of my preliminary thinking about twentieth-century media of documentary reproduction, including xerography, microfilm, and digital scans.

Morse is a key figure in my study. His earliest telegrams prompt questions about new media and writing; his daguerreotypes

point toward different questions about new media and reading. Early manuals and journals of photography at AAS confirm that Morse was not alone in using legibility as a standard for daguerreotype reproduction while at the same time overlooking the possible illegibility of daguerreotypes themselves. M. P. Simons suggests in *Photography in a Nut Shell* (Philadelphia, 1858) that photographers use books, “plainly lettered on the back,” to focus their cameras. If three books were arranged near, middle, and far, then a daguerreotype would plainly show where the sharpest focus was. Nowhere do the manuals express concern that writing is reversed. They do, however, routinely admit the problem of reversal or—in one case—“mirroring,” but only with regard to what were called “views” or—the more painterly term—“landscapes.” S. D. Humphrey’s *Daguerreian Journal* (August 15, 1851) warns, for instance, “A landscape when reversed would lose its identity, even to those well acquainted with the original.” This would not be so for a portrait, since “both sides of a person’s face and clothing [are] usually alike.” Early practitioners devoted themselves to devising and promoting special “view cameras” and camera “reflectors” that would “give clear, true and beautiful views” (Levi L. Hill, *Photographic Researches and Manipulations*, 2nd ed., Philadelphia, 1854). The “truth” of a view, Hill suggests, is its right-to-left orientation. “Truth” was another thing entirely when it came to portraiture and, apparently, to writing.

Early portrait photographers clearly struggled to get people to look like themselves (*The Photographic Art Journal*, January 1851). The problem was partly technical—having to do with focus, lighting, length of exposure, and the chemistry involved—and partly temperamental—having to do with the vagaries of a studio encounter between a sitter and the means of her reproduction. Books became common transitional objects for sitters and/or props for photographers. As Hill recounts, he was tortured “by daguerreotypes of some young ladies, where the subject has been evidently trying to appear easy and quiet, but betrayed her discomposure by the compressed lips, while endeavoring to hold her breath, and the nervous muscular development of the hands, while holding a book so far in the foreground as to be magnified into proportions that would rival a counting-house ledger (169).” Here was a raft of problems: the unquiet sitter, the photographer unable to compose and expose the plate artfully when faced with a sitter’s discomposure, and the camera’s depth of field, which made objects in the foreground appear hugely out of proportion. AAS has several excellent examples of this last demerit in its Cased Photograph Collection, portraits in which the subject’s foreground forearm is too close to the camera and appears monstrous as a result.

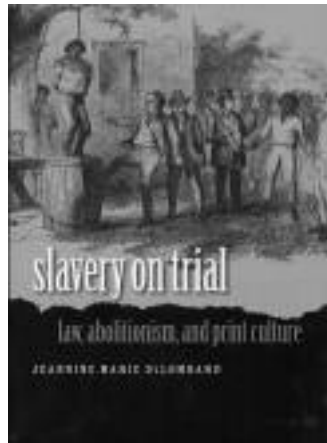
Photographic truth is hardly a transparent matter. The truth of views and the truth of portraits were not the same thing, and both parameters continued to change over time. I suppose it should be no surprise that the truth of electronic writing may lack transparency as well. If Samuel Morse’s famous telegram was “written from Washington at the Baltimore terminal,” the Society’s newspaper collection may help unsteady the immortal words, “What hath God wrought?” Three dailies (the *Baltimore American & Commercial Daily Advertiser*, the *Baltimore Patriot & Commercial Gazette*, and the *Baltimore Sun*) from May 1844 contain accounts of the arrival

of Morse’s telegraph line. None, however, report Morse’s grandiose statement, quoting from the Bible (Numbers 23:23). Instead, as the *Patriot* tells it, Baltimoreans requested news of Congress and “had their names sent down to Washington” by telegraph, eagerly interpellated by the new medium as they were by the new daguerreotype portraiture. It’s not that Morse didn’t send his telegram—he did—but its portentousness registered differently in Washington than it did Baltimore.

—Lisa Gitelman
Catholic University

Book Notes

Jeannine Marie DeLombard. *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). 330 pp + xiv; cloth 65.00, ISBN 978-0-8078-3086-4; paper \$24.95, ISBN 978-0-8078-5812-7.



During the summer of 1830, not long after William Lloyd Garrison’s conviction for libeling a slave trader, his boss appealed for a change in venue. Benjamin Lundy kept the case alive in *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* despite the fact that he, unlike his employee, had been absolved of all charges by a Baltimore judge. In hoping to achieve vindication of a more public sort, editor Lundy explained how the columns of his

paper constituted a different sort of court, which involved not “musty folios, pettifoggers, and ‘Swiss’ bailiffs” but the “bristling types, and iron screws, and levers” of the printer’s trade (43).

When Garrison founded *The Liberator* the following January, he began a thirty-five-year effort to remain clear of the “bailiffs” and instead erect an abolitionist version of the country’s “typographical tribunal” (to borrow the language of press writer Lambert A. Wilmer). Both white slaveholders and the institution of black slavery stood trial in every issue Garrison subsequently produced. The evidence mounted, and the case for the prosecution became overwhelming, even as formal state and federal judicial systems bestowed ever-greater legal protections for slave property. It would take the upheaval of war, not the themes and images of extralegal judicial abolitionism, to accomplish slavery’s undoing.

Jeannine DeLombard’s *Slavery on Trial* assembles Garrison’s story and a comparably rich mountain of related evidence to set forth a bold new reading of antislavery print activism. Legal idioms and principles, DeLombard argues, elevated the claims that abolitionists put before the reading public through their newspapers, magazines, broadsides, and novels. When those state and federal courts invested with binding authority addressed slavery as an institution at all, they did so mainly in the context of property rights or

constitutional disputation. Antislavery print culture, by contrast, established an unceasing criminal case against bound labor. Such efforts worked to shift the perception of criminality from opponents of slavery (who would continue to be jailed) to the institution's aiders and abettors and to clarify how practices sanctioned by law remained a species of moral treason against humanity.

If other scholars have noticed the legal rhetoric of popular abolitionism, DeLombard breaks new ground by explaining how courtroom metaphors set the ground-rules for participation in the antislavery movement. Here, her book takes up the intriguing question of who was allowed to join in the "prosecution" of bondage and on what terms. For slaves to provide testimony was a right formally denied in Anglo-American jurisprudence (in contrast, for instance, to the Spanish colonial system). In this respect, there was a genuinely liberatory aspect in those antislavery attempts to reposition Isabella Van Wagenen (soon to be Sojourner Truth) in the public realm. Print efforts circulated during the "Matthias Scandal" of the 1830s assured that the black Van Wagenen would move from a member of the discredited group of followers to the most important of incriminating witnesses.

As DeLombard makes clear, there were confining, as well as empowering, consequences of summoning former slaves to the "witness stand." Two paired chapters on Frederick Douglass follow how the 1845 and 1855 autobiographies of this most famous of all black abolitionists moved from "a testimonial to a prosecutorial posture" (103). Her perceptive re-reading of these two canonical texts shows that achieving entrée as a witness remained a partial victory so long as the role of jury and the still-more important function of rendering judgments from the bench remained a prerogative of whites.

Douglass's shift in juridical self-fashioning followed his well-known transfer of allegiances from the orthodox Garrisonian camp (which denounced all electoral activity) to politically engaged supporter of the New York Liberty Party. DeLombard cautions against reducing the transformation of his rhetorical position in the case against slavery to such well-known biographical details. She establishes how Douglass signaled his move from a witness against slavery to an advocate for freedom in the final sentence of his 1845 book. His desire to "talk lawyerly about the law" was fully in evidence during the violent shipboard dispute he sparked while en route to England later that same summer. More intriguing still is the fact that developments in actual courtrooms of the free North mirrored the rhetorical challenges Douglass navigated. Displaying again her skill at moving from close readings to larger context, DeLombard sheds light on the Douglass texts first by considering the 1855 fugitive slave case of Jane Johnson (which revealed the continuing dilemmas of black testimony) and then addressing the challenges faced by the country's first black lawyers.

Whites reappear as the main protagonists in the book's final three episodes, which each show, albeit in quite different ways, how efforts to put slavery "on trial" were expanded and reformulated through the late 1850s. Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1856 novel *Dred* dramatized antislavery juridical rhetoric as effectively as any

piece of American fiction. Yet as DeLombard shows, Stowe's ending of this novel negated that black civic agency that Douglass sought to establish and that earlier passages of *Dred* had suggestively explored. The proslavery journalist William McCreary Burwell, by contrast, reversed what had become well-worn antislavery themes in a novel that DeLombard seems to be the first modern scholar to have actually read. Appearing in the same year as *Dred*, the far more obscure *White Acre vs. Black Acre* achieved a burlesque send-up of antislavery judicial rhetoric by presenting the slaveholding south as the aggrieved party in an increasingly convoluted legal tangle, which Burwell suggestively positioned as a civil rather than as a criminal proceeding.

DeLombard's conclusion turns from fiction back to the visual materials that the opening chapters used to great effect. Coverage provided by *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* of John Brown's 1859 Harpers Ferry raid is set alongside abolitionists' waning faith in extralegal public appeals. Brown's bloody end on the gallows heralded an important transition, moving the antislavery case away from those contexts of print and law. Garrison's imprisonment had helped to catalyze. Within a year, military force would replace forensic argument as the preferred means of achieving a free America. By 1865, slavery's demise vacated the suit made against the institution; though the more elusive quest for black civic agency remained on the docket for future advocates to take up.

—Robert E. Bonner

Humanities Institute, University of Connecticut, Storrs

Catherine Kerrison, *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) 265 pp + xvi, cloth \$49.95, ISBN: 978-0-8014-4344-2.



Catherine Kerrison's wonderful new book challenges scholars on a host of points. She asks us to think about how the history of the book, print culture, and reading can inform a broader intellectual history. She prods us to broaden our understanding of intellectual history to include the prescriptive literature, letters, journals, and commonplace books that formed the minds of eighteenth-century women. And she poses these questions on a ground unfamiliar

and even alien to American historians: the intellectual history of women in the early South.

Women in the southern colonies, like those elsewhere in British North America, were just beginning to write letters, journals, and commonplace books in the late eighteenth century. These manuscripts, Kerrison finds, became the bricks and mortar of their intellectual lives. Her emphasis on manuscripts echoes that of lit-

erary scholar David S. Shields, who has recovered the importance of manuscript publication in a time before “literature” was equated with “belles lettres.” Manuscripts were critically important to women who depended exclusively on informal venues in which to think and write. Kerrison closely examines manuscript sources along with three print genres—prescriptive conduct literature, religious literature, and novels—and offers a case study of the reading of two young Baltimore sisters.

In her challenge to scholars to see these women thinking, Kerrison faces some challenges of her own. The biggest of these is to demonstrate that women from the South read differently, and thus, thought differently, than other American women. This is particularly difficult to accomplish in a book that quite reasonably implies a comparison between northern and southern women. Reading, writing, printing, and thinking did not respect regional boundaries in Anglo-America. Indeed, as Kerrison acknowledges, “the South” did not become a region at all until the early nineteenth century. Nearly all of the books, and much of the ephemera in British North America originated across the Atlantic, an inter-colonial book trade thrived, and there is little evidence that particular books were restricted to particular regions. When Kerrison points to the popularity of the monarchist Richard Allestree’s, *The Whole Duty of Man* (1657), in the patriarchal South, for example, she must concede that Allestree was “found in bookshops and private libraries throughout the thirteen colonies” (42). Kerrison emphasizes the importance of religious reading for women in both the Anglican and evangelical traditions, but their members were scattered throughout the colonies. Scholars disagree on exactly when the Bible belt arrived in the South, but they agree that during the eighteenth century, the southern colonies were among the most religiously diverse in British North America.

Like others before her, Kerrison grounds the exceptional nature of the South in slavery. She argues that there was, indeed, a southern mind among elite women, and that the circumstances of life in the South—its rural slave economy—uniquely shaped women’s reading and writing. By this, she concedes that the difference that reading made for women was not determined by the content of their books, but by the context in which they read them. Like antebellum plantation mistresses, eighteenth-century women were tightly circumscribed by the patriarchal values of a slave society in which the master had many dependents. In Kerrison’s view, southern thought was formed by the very materialist conditions of slavery.

This argument makes great sense. It seems intuitive that the South had a different culture than the free states. Southern women themselves, as Kerrison shows, seemed to think they did. And certainly other Americans agreed. By the early nineteenth century, people across the country (southerners included, and especially slaves) began to insist that southerners read (or did not, as the case may be) very differently from people in other parts of the country. They pointedly believed that slavery created not only a different social order, but a different culture.

Yet we do not yet know enough about how southerners read to affirm this. To do so will require decades of patient labor such

as Kerrison’s work, in the archives, to build layer upon layer of evidence. Meanwhile, what we already do know does not support either the singularity or the unity of the region’s mind. Rosalind Remer’s fine study of Philadelphia booksellers demonstrated that they made little distinction between markets in the rural south and southwest and other rural areas of the country at the turn of the nineteenth century. In an exhaustive study of intellectual life in the region, Michael O’Brien found little evidence of a unified southern taste in reading, and Mary Kelley found that antebellum women’s academies across the country taught similar curricula.

Kerrison’s work is most valuable, in my view, for pressing a difficult and troubling question: what exactly *was* the relationship between reading and slavery in American history? Did slavery create a separate culture in the South? The whiggish bent of our histories of reading in the United States makes it difficult to consider the possibility that southerners read like other Americans. Slavery oppressed, deadened, and censored culture in the South, we think. Reading liberates, democratizes, liberalizes, and enlivens, we are convinced. Most famously of all, Frederick Douglass found freedom in a book.

Or did he? Considering readers in the South casts in bold relief our assumptions about the meaning of reading. Kerrison’s women, like those Drew Faust studied in the Civil War era, treasured books and loved to read. Yet their reading persuaded them neither to oppose slavery nor to support women’s rights. By the mid-nineteenth century, southerner after southerner, proslavery and antislavery, black and white, all copied Bacon’s aphorism into their journals: “knowledge is power.” Yet what kind of knowledge? And the power to do what?

Finding Southern women reading demands that we reframe our understanding of the uses of literacy in the early United States. E. Jennifer Monaghan has reminded us that reading can be both an instrument of social control and of individual liberty. For most of human history, for most of humankind, learning to read meant memorizing someone else’s ideas. But eighteenth-century women read in an era when the new meaning of human history began to transform the meaning of reading. Reading was yoked to the new narrative of human progress, and the ancient trivium—the arts of grammar, rhetoric, and logic—became the province of all people. For the first time in history, the ability to read was assumed. English grammars and rhetorics taught the arts of rhetoric and composition, taught ordinary people to voice their own ideas. The irony is that many used their own voices and pens to concur with what was in their books.

All of this is sparked by this thoughtful and deeply-researched book. In the end, Catherine Kerrison has demonstrated what Lawrence Levine argued many years ago: that we should imagine intellectual history not as the history of thought, but as the history of men and women thinking.

—Beth Barton Schweiger.
University of Arkansas

Paul J. Erickson Joins AAS Staff

We are pleased to welcome Paul J. Erickson to AAS as the new director of academic programs. Paul began work in his new position on August 20, 2007.

A native of Minnesota, Paul received his bachelor's degree in English from the University of Chicago. Both his M.A. in American civilization and his Ph.D. in American studies are from the University of Texas at Austin. Among the dozen or more fellowships he held while working on his dissertation, "Welcome to Sodom: The Cultural Work of City-Mysteries Fiction in Antebellum America," was a Peterson Fellowship at the Society in 1998. Because he participated so actively in the life of the Society during his fellowship and upon repeated visits since that time, he is already well known to many AAS staff members and readers.

Paul's own research focuses on literature—particularly popular print culture in the antebellum period—as an avenue to understanding urbanization, bureaucratization, sexuality, and other dimensions of cultural history. Grounded in a history-

of-the-book approach, Paul's work examines publications that might be regarded as sub-literary but that probably reached a broader audience than works of higher literature.

At AAS, Paul's responsibilities include the fellowship program, the academic seminar series, the online publication "Common-Place," and outreach to AAS's academic community of members and readers. He is also collaborating with AAS research librarian Joanne Chaison on the History of the Book summer seminar and the American Studies Seminar.

Paul's lively mind, engaging personality, personal experience of the fellowship program, and dynamic vision for the future make him the perfect person to shape the direction of academic programs at AAS. Paul says, "It's a privilege to be back at a place that has had such an impact on my own scholarship, and especially to be in a position to help other people enjoy the same rich experience and congenial environment that meant so much to me."

—Thomas G. Knoles

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