THE BOOK

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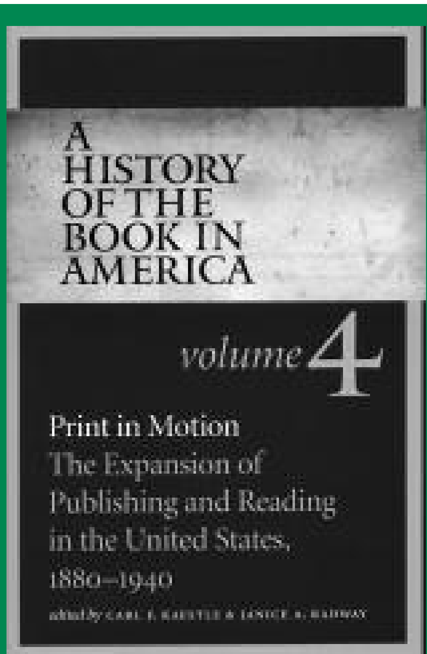


Print in Motion:The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880–1940, edited by Carl F. Kaestle and Janice A. Radway, has been published by the University of North Carolina Press in association with the American Antiquarian Society. Carl F. Kaestle is University Professor Emeritus in the Departments of Education, History, and Public Policy at Brown University. He is author or editor of six books, including *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading since 1880.* Janice A. Radway has recently joined the faculty of Northwestern University as professor of communication studies and rhetoric and professor of gender studies and American studies. She is author or editor of four books, including *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* and *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (both from the University of North Carolina Press).

2009 Summer Seminars at AAS

TEACHING WITH VISUAL MATERIALS (CHAVIC)

The AAS Center for Historic American Visual Culture (CHAViC) is presenting its first five-day summer seminar from Monday, June 15, to Friday, June 19, 2009, in Worcester. It will focus on interpreting and using visual materials in the classroom. The seminar leader is Professor David Jaffee, since 2007 a faculty member of the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture in New York, where he teaches courses on early American history with a special interest in material culture and visualizing history. Previously professor of history at City College and the Graduate Center, CUNY, where he had taught since 1987, Jaffee was the project director of two National Endowment for the Humanities grants to develop multimedia resources for the teaching of United States history. He has held fellowships from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Winterthur Museum, American Antiquarian Society, and the Charles Warren Center in American History at Harvard University. He is the author of *People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630–1860* (Cornell, 1999) and the visual editor of *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society* (Bedford Books, 2007).

Guest faculty include Paul Staiti, professor of art history at Mount Holyoke College, and Joshua Brown, executive director of the American Society History Project at the CUNY Graduate Center. For further information, including fees, housing, and the application packet, please contact Georgia Barnhill at AAS (gbarnhill@mwa.org).

"BOOK HISTORY AND MEDIA HISTORY" (PHBAC)

What does it mean to study book history in the digital age? Does it matter that nineteenth-century printed texts are today increasingly encountered as digital images and searchable data, courtesy of vendors such as ProQuest, Readex, EBSCO, and Google? This seminar will explore points of contact between book history and media history. Focusing on the efflorescence of popular print in the period from 1830 to 1870, we will attempt to improve our understanding of the circulation of culture under conditions of social and technological change.

This seminar takes advantage of AAS resources: its unparalleled collection of nineteenth-century print materials and the range of online archives--as well as other tools, old and new, for the study of American imprints, newspapers, government documents, and printed ephemera—created by the Society over the years. The readings, discussions, and workshops should interest graduate students and scholars at all levels and in all fields of American history and literature. Librarians will also find this seminar to be of interest.

The seminar will address issues in comparative media studies that are particularly germane to book history, such as the circulation of content across media and of media across cultures; the relationships between the linguistic and the visual, the aural and the inscribed; and the periodicity or temporality of print publication as it helps to shape the shared present of the public sphere.

Continued on page 2

"Literature, Book History, and the Anxiety of Disciplinarity" A Book History Workshop at Ben-Gurion University

On July 1, 2008, twenty-five literary scholars and historians arrived at Israel's Ben-Gurion University of the Negev for a three-day workshop on "Literature, Book History, and the Anxiety of Disciplinarity." The workshop, co-sponsored by the university and the Israel Science Foundation, was led by Barbara Hochman (Ben-Gurion University). Visitors from universities in the United States, Britain, and Taiwan joined local scholars to discuss the complexities and anxieties attending the field of book history.

The workshop was divided into three principal themes. The first, "The Anxiety of Disciplinarity," confronted questions about the place of book history within conventional disciplinary boundaries. This theme was largely self-reflexive, dealing not only with texts but also with book historians and their relationship to their field. To what extent do educational training and departmental affiliation shape the disparate goals and methods of book historians? To what extent do diverse approaches to evidence and interpretation reflect divisions within rather than across disciplines? Can consideration of these questions help explain why literary scholars outnumber historians at SHARP conferences, American Antiquarian Society summer seminars, and elsewhere?

The workshop's second and third themes both revolved around the relationship between books and their readers. In "Reading and Readers," this relationship gained historical specificity and visual concreteness as speakers explored the early design of bookmarks (Peter Stallybrass, University of Pennsylvania), the reading practices of antebellum working men (David Stewart, National Central University, Taiwan), the libraries of Arctic travelers (Bill Bell, University of Edinburgh), and the "It-Narrative," a genre in which the book itself narrates the history of its relationship with its readers (Leah Price, Harvard University). The third theme, "Book History and Cultural Legitimacy," took the discussion of readership from the personal to the communal, examining the relationship between reading habits and the cultural contexts that shape them.

These two themes also extended the self-reflexive element introduced by the first, addressing not only the reading practices of the "common" reader but also those of book history scholars themselves. Questions about the nature of reading—professional and personal—remained central in the workshop as several papers addressed the complexity of the relationship between a reader and a text when that reader is also a literary scholar. To what extent, they asked, can researchers looking into these matters be the subject of their own inquiries? Conversely, does the dual status of researchers as readers undermine the "objectivity" of their work?

The final panel of the workshop directly engaged these issues in three papers on the subject of "Religion and Reading." Erin Smith (University of Texas at Dallas) analyzed her first-hand experience in a "religious liberal" reading group that creates and consolidates a spiritual community around the communal reading experience. Iris Parush (Ben-Gurion University) examined the transition of nineteenth-century eastern European religious Jews into Western secular society, tracing changes from the communal, oral reading tradition of the Yeshiva to the individual, silent reading tradition of the library. Robert Orsi (Northwestern University) ascribed the burning of comic books by Catholics in the 1940s to anxieties resulting in part from the vividly imaginative and participatory reading practices encouraged by the religious education of Catholic children. Having educated their children to experience the content of religious reading as a "real" part of their lives, adults feared the impact on children of secular, "demonic" texts such as comic books. This panel reintroduced the theme of self-reflexivity into the discussion with particular force, as all three speakers engaged texts to which they were, to some extent, personally and culturally affiliated, thus rekindling a heated closing debate about the positioning of critics in relation to their research.

For more details about the program, see the conference website: **http://www.bgu.ac.il/~bhochman/workshop/**

— Thom Rofe and Danielle Rubin, Ben Gurion University

PHBAC Conference *continued from page one*

Seminar members will be introduced to the Society's collections, participate in hands-on archival investigations, and discuss readings drawn from recent work in both media studies and book history.

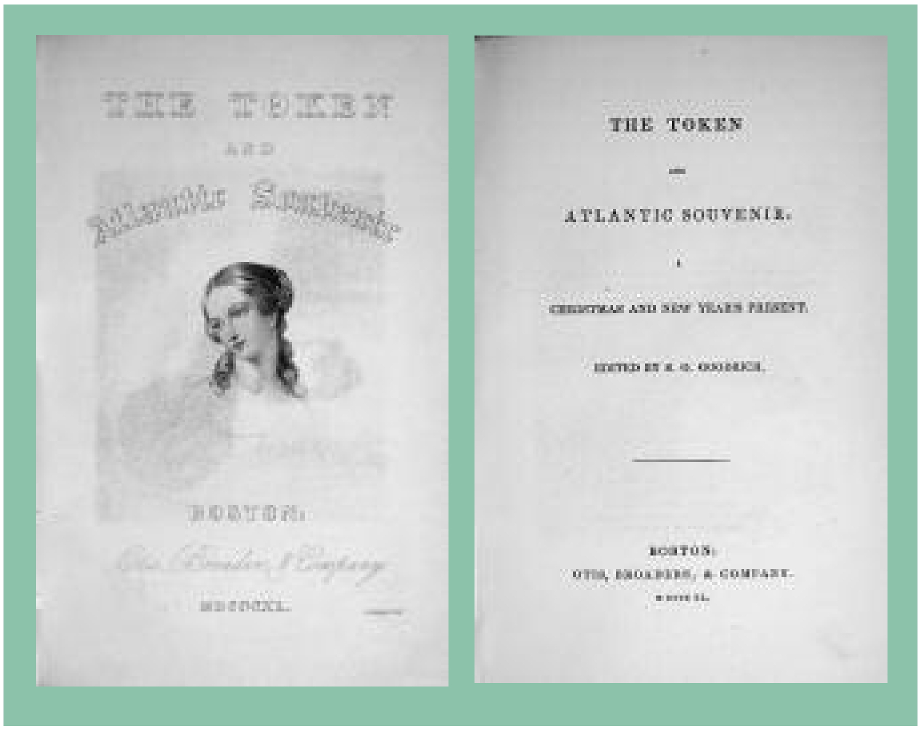
The seminar leaders are Lisa Gitelman and Meredith L. McGill. Gitelman is visiting associate professor of the history of science at Harvard University and author of *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (MIT Press, 2006). McGill is director of the Center for Cultural Analysis at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and author of *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–53* (Penn, 2003). Guest faculty will include Thomas G. Knoles, Marcus A. McCorison Librarian and curator of manuscripts at AAS. The seminar will be held in Worcester from Monday, June 22, through Friday, June 26, 2009.

For more information about the seminar, including fees, housing, and the application packet, please visit the AAS website: **http://www.americanantiquarian.org/sumsem09.htm**

RESEARCH NOTES

Cover Stories: The Counterfeit Gift Book Economy

Adorned with sumptuous engravings of beautiful women and cherubic children and with titles such as *The Gift of Friendship, Gems of Beauty,* and *Leaflets of Memory,* the gift books that flourished between 1825 and 1860 appear cloyingly sweet. But anyone who has read even a handful has probably been struck by a strange phenomenon: *The Garland* of 1852 reappears as *The Token of Friendship* of 1854, *The Keepsake of Friendship* of 1849 replicates *The Amaranth* of 1847, and *The Lily* of 1831 becomes *The Forget Me Not* of 1845 (although the preface continues to refer to it as *The Lily*). The gift books, or literary annuals, as they were often called, trafficked in a system of deliberate deceptions that their ornately sentimental exteriors belie. Indeed, these ornate exteriors were exactly what made such deceptions possible.



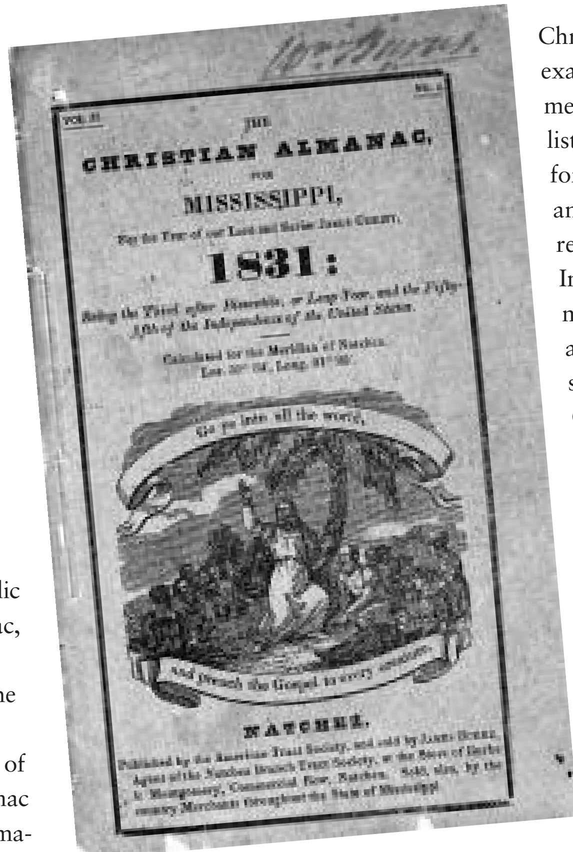
The counterfeit gift book economy has long been recognized; Frederick Winthrop Faxon and Ralph A. Thompson, the genre's two major bibliographers, both document spurious editions at some length. But little is known about exactly how the trade operated. A remarkable letter at AAS from the publisher and jobber J. A. Noble to Otis, Broaders, and Company, publishers and periodical agents, however, illuminates the seedy underbelly of the gift book industry. On August 7, 1840, Noble ordered 500 copies of the previous year's edition of *The Token,* the long-running gift book edited by Samuel Goodrich, "With New Title page and fixed in every way to appear like an 1841 Annual. To be bound same style as last year except 1841 on the back instead of 1840 or the 1840 cut off entirely.… I give 90¢ for them in Neat Arabesque the Book to be as large at least as last year and to be called 'Token & affections Gift' for 1841 Edited by S. G. Goodrich." Noble is confident the plan will succeed. "I bought 200 copies 1838 Token," he boasts, "got them bound & called 1840—New York [imprint]—& they sold well." (They did indeed; AAS has one in its collections.) Moreover, he has a plan to exploit the asymmetrical U.S. literary market: "What imprint would you put in—they must be either Boston N. Y. or Phila. Should you conclude to let me have them—every copy should be sold south of Virginia & West of the Alleghenies," regions far enough away from the northeastern publishing centers that unsuspecting readers might be duped by the bogus *Token*.

Such schemes hinged on the visual appeal of the gift books, whose allure lay at least as much in their elaborate exteriors as in their literary contents. Indeed, the fact that the counterfeit gift book economy operated so extensively and for so long may offer the best evidence that few people ever actually opened gift books (if they had, surely some would have noticed the familiar pages, the mismatched titles, or the vestigial dates). In my current book project, *Counterfeit Presentments: Fraud and the Production of American Literature, 1830–1860*, I argue that the spurious gift books strikingly illustrate two key features of antebellum print culture: first, its unprecedented conspicuousness, both material and discursive, and second, the problems of deception that such display provoked. Noble and his cohorts' counterfeit gift books realized (and indeed, may have stoked) a pervasive fear that literature was not what it appeared or, rather, was *only* what it appeared: a distraction, a ruse, an empty shell. The counterfeit gift book economy that their correspondence reveals raises pressing questions for literary history: How does our understanding of the emergence of American literature change once we recognize that fraud was an ordinary part of its operations?

— Lara Langer Cohen, Wayne State University

“Both Useful and Entertaining”: *The Christian Almanac*, 1820–1840

As a source, almanacs offer a dizzying array of opportunities for historians of popular culture in early America. In the early American republic, almanacs were cheap and widely available in cities and rural areas. Marketed for farmers, lawyers, merchants, and ladies, their eclectic contents ranged from science and literature to farming practices, humor, and medical advice.



The almanac collection at AAS is beyond compare for breadth and variety. What I found during my month as a Peterson Fellow reinforced my suspicion that the popularization of the natural sciences extended down from textbooks, public lectures, and museums to the lowly almanac, where readers could find essays on the Copernican view of the solar system and the latest discoveries concerning the size of the universe. Its entries calculated by members of the nascent scientific community, the almanac was a readily accessible place to find information on how nature functioned.

But I also found something I did *not* expect. My previous research into almanacs, focusing on the Revolutionary period, had shown very few references to Christianity. Between 1760 and the 1780s, almanac makers had devoted plenty of space to anecdotes about morality in general, but they omitted any discussion of specific Christian doctrines and concepts, such as the Trinity or Jesus. Beginning in the 1820s, however, a new kind of almanac appeared—Christian almanacs.

Perhaps inspired by the *British Almanac* published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in London beginning in the 1820s, the New England Tract Society began publishing *The Christian Almanac* in 1820. The American Tract Society (ATS) and its sister societies continued to publish various editions of The Christian Almanac for regional, state, and national audiences through at least 1840. As the ATS Christian Almanac spread, similar almanacs cropped up throughout the nation, published by local printers such as Zadock Thompson of Vermont and large religious organizations such as the American Baptist Publication and Sunday School Society in Philadelphia.

AAS holds more than one hundred editions of Christian almanacs published throughout the United States between 1820 and 1840. The Christian almanac genre is a unique form of popular print culture in the early United States. These sources offer a window onto the growing institutions of American Christianity in the 1820s and 1830s. Although they had much the same form as traditional almanacs, Christian almanacs also included specifically Christian anecdotes and information. For example, instead of court dates and governmental officials, the Christian almanacs listed the board members of organizations for foreign and domestic missions, tract and Sunday school societies, and statistics reflecting each institution’s success. Instead of the usual common sense morality of traditional almanac anecdotes and humor, Christian almanacs included stories of piety, prayer, temperance, and Christ’s love for humanity.

For my own research, the Christian almanac provided a variation on the traditional almanac literature that opened up new questions about how Americans balanced scientific and faithful approaches to the world. Still relying on the traditional view that almanac readers would need “scientific” calculations to understand their natural world throughout the year, the publishers of Christian almanacs offered equally important information about the spiritual world for readers to study and understand as the year progressed. Taken with my other research into how the natural sciences were portrayed in popular culture in the early republic, these sources show that the relationship between religion and science in the early republic was more complicated than the traditional “warfare” thesis would imply. Americans who chose to purchase a Christian almanac sought both religious and scientific information to get them through the year.

— Lily Santoro, University of Delaware

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Ellen Dunlap, President

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The editor welcomes all news relevant to the interests of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture.

Book Notes

Stephen Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States* **(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) $29.95. Cloth: ISBN-13: 978-0-674-02657-5.**

Stephen Mihm's beautifully written and marvelously illuminating study of counterfeiting explores the illicit underside of the shift from government-issued coins and bills to privately issued bank notes as the main currency in the early United States. Amid a chronic scarcity of gold and silver specie, the new nation's burgeoning market economy ran largely on paper substitutes. But the Constitution prohibited the states from emitting "bills of credit" as their colonial forebears had done, and the federal government waited until the Civil War to create its own paper money. Meanwhile, primary responsibility for the money supply eventually fell to hundreds of state-chartered but privately operated banks issuing thousands of varieties of bank notes—a virtually limitless jumble of transferable IOUs of widely varying repute, based in principle on the banks' limited specie reserves, but in practice backed by little more than Americans' anxious acceptance of bank notes as cash. Just when most people came to depend on monetary transactions for their basic livelihood, the currency they used came to depend in turn on the honesty and solvency of a faceless multitude of far-flung corporations.

Little wonder that the monetary free-for-all fostered a dizzying array of chicanery and fraud, along with a widespread fear of counterfeiting, which Mihm calls the "ghost in the machine of antebellum capitalism" (262). Rather than complicating matters further, he uses the story of counterfeiting to make plain and comprehensible the methods, materials, and mechanics of this notoriously confusing monetary system. He translates the arcane operations of early American finance into a compelling and accessible narrative studded with vividly drawn characters, elegantly explaining the nuts and bolts of both banking and counterfeiting and their wide cultural significance. More broadly still, Mihm (in a manner much like that of recent historians of gambling, addiction, prostitution, and the slave market) finds in counterfeiting a revealing doppelganger for industrial capitalism in its formative stage, at once its haunting mirror image and the illegitimate other against which it came to be defined.

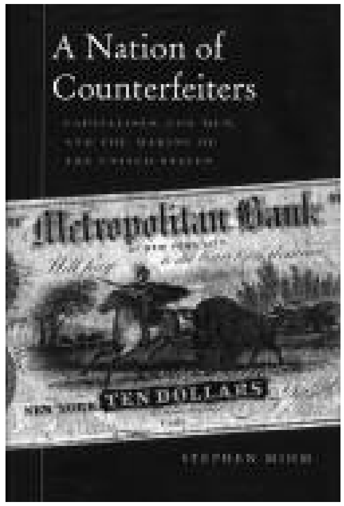
Drawing on prodigious research in court and prison records, local histories and directories, numismatic collections, memoirs, newspapers, magazines, and regularly published "counterfeit detectors," among many other sources artfully assembled, Mihm describes a "vast shadow economy" (13) that arose in collaboration as well as competition with the privatized business of creating currency. The hub of the currency underworld in the first decades of the nineteenth century lay along a moving frontier of political and geographical backwaters where law enforcement was sparse and settlers often viewed counterfeiters as local heroes—first the little townships of southern Québec and northern Vermont, then the gullies and caves of the Cuyahoga River Valley, followed by similar extralegal enclaves throughout the Middle West. From these remote headquarters, a handful of illustrious outlaws and their families directed an elaborate chain of production and distribution reaching from backwoods engravers through itinerant wholesalers and jobbers to typically impoverished workers and widows known as "pushers" or "shovers," who passed the bogus bank notes into general circulation at the counters of small shopkeepers in the cities.

By the 1830s, the introduction of new technology subdivided, deskilled, and standardized the craft of engraving and printing paper currency, along with the rest of the printing trade. Hard-pressed artisans moonlighted for counterfeit operations using the same interchangeable dies and plates as honest firms. This spurred the mass production of imitation bank notes that were increasingly hard to distinguish from the originals, of genuine notes altered to indicate a higher denomination or a sound bank of issue instead of a broken one, and of totally fabricated notes of imaginary banks.

In an era when lawful currency commonly rested on the cheap promises of a bunch of unknown "investors" with a corporate charter and a printing press, what really differentiated legitimate banking from counterfeiting, or finance from fraud? This insistent question lies at the heart of *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, which illustrates anew the vital insight about modern market society that American historians such as Karen Halttunen and Jackson Lears have derived in part from Herman Melville's *The Confidence Man* (1857). "Confidence was the engine of economic growth, the mysterious sentiment that permitted a country poor in specie but rich in promises to create something from nothing," Mihm writes (10–11). "At its core, capitalism was little more than a confidence game." For Mihm, as for most historians of money, the fundamentally fictional character of bank notes and counterfeits alike revealed a pragmatic truth: The value of money was whatever people believed it to be, for their belief was what made it valuable to begin with. So long as those receiving it in payment trusted that others would do the same, counterfeit currency was as good as the real thing, equally serving the needs of an expanding market.

Not all antebellum Americans took for granted, as Mihm does, the rising needs of the market or the spiraling demand for money in the first place. Many questioned the role of the nascent financial industry in creating the demand for its own services by promoting speculative booms and busts. Most contemporaries plausibly assumed that the real engines of economic growth were labor and land, not currency and credit, and that money was meant to measure the material cost and practical utility of what they produced. With considerable reason, Jeffersonians and Jacksonians viewed the widening gap between money values and actual work and wealth as a sign of the exploitation of agriculture and industry by an emerging financial aristocracy as much as an index of confidence. Americans' persistent belief in a "real economy" underlying monetary relations, now too easily dismissed as a quaint pre-modern superstition, formed a hallmark of what a previous generation of social historians called the "transition to capitalism."

As a retelling of that transition, Mihm's work implicitly replaces the divisive nineteenth-century dialectic of labor and money, or twentieth-century scholars' distinction between a "society with markets" and a "market society," with the dual development of capitalism and its counterfeit double. On the one hand, the arresting notion of antebellum America as a "nation of counterfeiters," or "a collection of self-interested strivers united only by their restless ambition, their hatred of monopoly, and their love of lucre" (15), highlights the pervasiveness of individual competition and the economic function of finance in allocating capital. On the other hand, this insightful approach tends to elide class conflict and the political function of finance in establishing and maintaining the rule of capitalists.



Instead of the ideological struggle over the advent of industrial capitalism at the center of earlier accounts, the pivotal conflict in this book concerns elite efforts to impose law and order on the currency chaos in which counterfeiting flourished. In part, this is a story about the relative weakness of law enforcement more generally in the isolated interior and poorly policed cities of the early republic, where local, state, and federal authorities proved no match for the organization and sophistication of a booming black market. But counterfeiters benefited more particularly from eclectic political resistance to the concentration of power over the currency in quasi-governmental bodies such as the First and Second Banks of the United States, created by Congress in 1791 and 1816, which went down to successive popular defeats when their twenty-year charters expired. The wild proliferation of bank notes in the 1830s sparked the growth of commercial counterfeit detectors reporting not just on known counterfeits but also on the reputability of every legitimate bank across the country and the discount rates at which its notes traded, much like the credit-rating agencies that arose at the same time. Profiting as they did from their subscribers' insecurity and from banks' vulnerability to damaging reviews, private detectors rushed into the void occasioned by the lack of any "single guardian of the public trust . . . above the fray of the national economy" (253).

Mihm's story culminates with the dramatic rise of such a monetary sovereign during the Civil War, when the cash-strapped federal government finally created a national paper currency of irredeemable Treasury notes, or "greenbacks," which it declared legal tender for all public and private debts, along with a system of national banks that issued their own standardized notes backed by United States bonds. A steep federal tax on state bank notes drove the antebellum hodgepodge of competing currencies out of circulation. As counterfeiters consolidated their operations accordingly and flooded the Union with forgeries of its new paper money, the wartime government responded with a fierce crackdown resulting in the permanent establishment of a special police force to protect the currency, the Secret Service. Henceforth, Mihm concludes, the right to create money became the "exclusive privilege of the nation-state" (374), as the "private monetary system and the counterfeit economy it had fostered" gave way to a uniform national currency founded on "public credit" rather than "private assets" (307).

Although Mihm refers in passing to the epochal postbellum battles over greenbacks and the gold standard, his work glosses over important aspects of the long constitutional struggle over currency left unresolved by the Civil War. Indeed, the modern partnership of government and banks in managing the money supply actually emerged from the war both stronger and more bitterly contested. The National Banking System concentrated control of the country's lendable funds, as well as much of its currency, in the hands of northeastern bankers and bondholders, who successfully pressed for the government securities that backed the bank notes, bought with depreciated greenbacks, to be redeemed in gold. Wall Street and Washington then jointly engineered a drastic contraction of the money supply amid the depression of the 1870s, bringing the nation onto the international gold standard under the banner of "sound money" and ending the wartime revival of the colonial practice of issuing paper money backed strictly by government fiat instead of private reserves. Greenbackers and Populists campaigned in desperation for the currency to be governed directly by elected officials without financial intermediaries and to be tied to the real output of factories and farms rather than to the financial assets of moneyed men, but to little avail.

Paradoxical as it may seem, then, the abolition of the competitive market in currency and counterfeits that Mihm masterfully describes ushered in the ultimate triumph of the revolution undertaken by the architects of the Anglo-American financial system in delegating the sovereign privilege of making money to banks, from whom governments as well as citizens borrowed at interest the currency thus created. The National Bank System and its successor, the Federal Reserve System, finally gave the nation's financial elite the unchallenged authority it required to govern the distribution of investment and income and the movement of prices and profits overall[1]. Today, central bankers chiefly responsible to private investors preside over the international economy as a kind of supreme financial judiciary, while market observers hail the incipient displacement of government-sanctioned coins and bills by new forms of electronic money controlled entirely by financial institutions—and operating, ironically enough, on the same principles as the circulating bank notes of the antebellum era[2].

— Jeffrey Sklansky, Oregon State University

1. For a truly path-breaking analysis of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century origins of the capitalist revolution in currency and circulating credit, a.k.a. the "financial revolution," see Christine Desan, "The Market as a Matter of Money: Denaturalizing Economic Currency in American Constitutional History," *Law & Social Inquiry* 30:1 (2005): 1–60. On the nineteenth- and twentieth-century triumph of a capitalist monetary order, the essential guide is James Livingston, *Origins of the Federal Reserve System: Money, Class, and Corporate Capitalism, 1890–1913* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

2. For an enthusiastic account of the promise of electronic money to liberate currency from government oversight, see "The End of the Cash Era," *Economist* (February 17–23, 2007):13. On the functional identity between the new forms of electronic payment and the antebellum system of bank notes, see James Steven Rogers, "The New Old Law of Electronic Money," Boston College Law School Legal Studies Research Paper Series, Research Paper No. 62 (2005).

Catherine O'Donnell Kaplan, *Men of Letters in the Early Republic* **(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). Cloth: ISBN 978-0-8078, $59.95; paper: ISBN 978-0-8078, $24.95.**

Catherine O'Donnell Kaplan's *Men of Letters in the Early Republic* explores the professional lives of a group of men who pursued citizenship through the arts in an age of political polemic. Elihu Hubbard Smith, Joseph Dennie, and the editors of the *Monthly Anthology*, and *Boston Review* (the Anthologists), created intellectual communities and founded publications dedicated to cultivating sensibility and friendship, rather than participating in electoral politics or the expanding commercial economy, as the means of improving the individual and the nation. Kaplan concludes that although the men succeeded in their immediate pursuits—establishing networks of like-minded men of letters and crafting modestly successful magazines—they failed to legitimize the arts as an expression of masculine intellectual citizenship.

Kaplan argues that the American Revolution created an intellectual and political problem for men of letters in the United States. Contemporary English and Scottish belletrists used their marginal position in politics to shape an alternative vision of masculine citizenship founded on sensibility and friendship. In the newly independent United States, however, where most men could participate directly in politics, the pursuit of the arts seemed trivial, threatening men of letters with a fate worse than death—irrelevance. There simply was no place for men of letters in the bustling, striving, and partisan world of the early American republic. Or was there?

Modeling themselves on their European contemporaries, Smith, Dennie, and the Anthologists actively advocated belletrism as an alternative form of citizenship and as a means of social and political improvement. Smith envisioned a community of letters apart from the rough-and-tumble political world—a community that, by pursuing truth and beauty, would uncover a path to national improvement. Dennie embraced a partisan Federalism as means of identifying like-minded men and as a vehicle for expressing his contempt for contemporary politics. The Anthologists eschewed both the search for truth and partisan rhetoric. They attempted to cultivate an appreciation of the arts for their own sake, hoping to help individuals develop the sound judgment that men needed to exercise in service to themselves and the nation.

Despite efforts such as these, Kaplan's men of letters failed to convince an audience outside their own relatively narrow circle of readers of the legitimacy of art, sensibility, and friendship as a form of citizenship. Kaplan explains this failure by pointing to her belletrists' treatment of women. Even though they all welcomed women as contributors to their journals and participants in their informal networks, they nonetheless promoted a masculine vision of belletrism that reduced women (and African Americans) to weak dependents. In other words, for all their claims of offering a critique of a society that encouraged the politics of polemic at the expense of the fine arts, the belletrists did not want to challenge that society's most basic assumptions. She sees this particular reluctance as symptomatic of a larger failure to offer a serious criticism of dominant political and economic culture that could provide a meaningful defense of a belletristic vision of citizenship. Kaplan's explanation for this failing is straightforward. Smith, Dennie, and the Anthologists were dependent on the economic largesse generated by the commerce they criticized, as well as on the passions aroused by partisan politics from which they offered a refuge. Consequently, however much they decried politics and commerce, they could never separate themselves from these practices. The result was an intellectual tradition that reinforced what it attacked and, in the case of Dennie, marginalized itself by becoming performance rather than criticism.

This book's conclusion—that these men failed to convince Americans that men of letters could make meaningful contributions to the republic—poses the following question: What does this study contribute to our understanding of the world of either the eighteenth century or the present? Kaplan's answer is to look to the latter, to consider how a public sphere that privileges partisan politics fosters an anti-intellectual culture that marginalizes art and those who produce it. This conclusion, however, overlooks an important cause of Smith's, Dennie's, and the Anthologists' failing: their insistence that the cultivation of letters and the arts must take place on their terms. As Kaplan notes, it was her subjects' insistence on defining the bounds of legitimate belletristic pursuit that ultimately trapped and marginalized them. The lesson of the failure of Smith, Dennie, and the Anthologists is thus cultural as well as political. Any group of critics and reformers that writes primarily to itself, with the expectation of being embraced on its own terms, contributes to its own marginalization. After all, a reform-minded literary culture—that of the sentimental novel—*did* flourish in the early republic; it was just not the one preferred by Smith, Dennie, and the Anthologists.

— Peter Messer, University of Mississippi

Childhood Conference, Part II

Home, School, Play, Work: The Visual and Textual Worlds of Children opened with a fall weekend conference and continues on February 13–14, 2009, at the Cotsen Children's Library, Princeton University (http://www.princeton.edu/cotsen/).

The fall CHAViC conference was a great success, according to the enthusiastic responses of some ninety registrants who were in attendance to hear papers presented by twenty-two scholars. The papers read in Worcester focused on the ways in which children's literature was used to illustrate broad themes in American authorship, reading, and publishing. Among the topics considered were the role of the natural world; evidence of how children read, wrote, and scrapbooked; how children were pictured in word, illustrations, and the new medium of daguerreotype, and were imagined as learners; and how issues of gender and race were expressed in word and image. Conference chair Patricia Crain (English, New York University) delivered the James Russell Wiggins Lecture, "Babes in the Wood: Print, Orality, and Children's Literature in the Nineteenth-Century United States." The original account of the "Babes in the Wood" was a fearful story that in its retellings was adapted into a tale for children. In her lecture, Crain considered the evolution of the form of that text from broadside ballad to storybook and the influences that contributed to the expansion of its text and visual presentation. This lecture will be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, and there are plans to include it in a volume of essays drawn from the papers presented at the conference.

— Georgia B. Barnhill, AAS