

THE  
CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF  
AMERICAN  
LITERATURE

GENERAL EDITOR, SACVAN BERCOVITCH



VOLUME ONE:  
1590–1820

# THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Volume I  
1590–1820

*General Editor*  
SACVAN BERCOVITCH,  
*Harvard University*

*Associate Editor*  
CYRUS R. K. PATELL,  
*New York University*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
**UNIVERSITY PRESS**

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521301053](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521301053)

© Cambridge University Press 1994

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without  
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1994  
Reprinted 2005 (twice)  
First paperback edition 1997  
Reprinted 2006

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

ISBN-13 978-0-521-30105-3 hardback  
ISBN-10 0-521-30105-X hardback  
ISBN-13 978-0-521-58571-2 paperback  
ISBN-10 0-521-58571-6 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs  
for third party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not  
guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

This multivolume *History* marks a new beginning in the study of American literature. It embodies the work of a generation of Americanists who have redrawn the boundaries of the field and redefined the terms of its development. The extraordinary growth of the field has called for, and here receives, a more expansive, more flexible scholarly format. All previous histories of American literature have been either totalizing, offering the magisterial sweep of a single vision, or encyclopedic, composed of a multitude of terse accounts that come to seem just as totalizing because the form itself precludes the development of authorial voice. Here, American literary history unfolds through a polyphony of large-scale narratives. Each is ample enough in scope and detail to allow for the elaboration of distinctive views (premises, arguments, and analyses); each is persuasive by demonstration and authoritative in its own right; and each is related to the others through common themes and concerns.

The authors were selected for the excellence of their scholarship and for the significance of the critical communities informing their work. Together, they demonstrate the achievements of Americanist literary criticism over the past three decades. Their contributions to these volumes speak to continuities as well as disruptions between generations and give voice to the wide range of materials now subsumed under the heading of American literature and culture.

This volume, covering the colonial and early national periods, spans three centuries and an extraordinary variety of authors: Renaissance explorers, Puritan theocrats, Enlightenment naturalists, southern women of letters, revolutionary pamphleteers, and poets and novelists of the young Republic. Myra Jehlen draws upon the multilingual literature of exploration and colonization to tell the story of how America was made up – a story of imperial expansion and imaginative appropriation. Emory Elliott traces the explosive, conflict-ridden development of the New England Way from its fractious beginnings through the tumultuous mid-eighteenth-century revivals. David S. Shields's focus is relatively narrow in time but rich in the materials it brings to light: newly uncovered collections of poems, essays, and letters that reveal a cosmopolitan network of neoclassical belles lettres extending from Philadelphia and New York to the salons of the Old South. Robert A. Ferguson examines the interconnections between the many forms of discourse that constituted the American Enlightenment and eventuated as the rhetoric of nationhood. Michael T. Gilmore describes a series of broad social and economic transformations – from republican to free-market ideology, oral to print culture, communal to individualist values – in the course of detailing the emergence of a national literary tradition.

All five narratives place the literature in international perspective; all five speak of its distinctively American characteristics, whether colonial, provincial, or national; and (in different ways) all of them demonstrate the centrality of language to the course of Americanization. Together, they offer a compelling and, for our time, comprehensive re-vision of the literary importance of early American history and the historical value of early American literature.

# THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Volume I  
1590-1820

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF  
AMERICAN LITERATURE

*General editor:* Sacvan Bercovitch, Charles H. Carswell Professor of  
English and American Literature, Harvard University

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR

I would like to thank Harvard University for a grant that enabled the contributors to convene for three days of discussion and planning. I am grateful for the generous assistance of Andrew Brown and Julie Greenblatt of Cambridge University Press; for the steady support and advice of Daniel Aaron, Eytan Bercovitch, and Susan L. Mizruchi; and for the critical and clerical student help I received from Nancy Bentley, Michael Berthold, Lianna Farber, and Jessica Riskin. My special thanks to Margaret Reid, who helped at every stage and who prepared the index.

*Sacvan Bercovitch*

### THE LITERATURE OF COLONIZATION

I wish to express my gratitude to the Guggenheim Foundation for a year's leave at the beginning of this project. During this leave I benefited from the hospitality of Dartmouth College, which granted me the use of its extraordinary Baker Library. I thank the University of Pennsylvania for an additional semester's leave. Robert W. Karrow, Jr., curator of maps at the Newberry Library, offered invaluable help in selecting the two American maps that illustrate my text; the Library has generously permitted their reprinting. The title of my first chapter, "Papers of Empire," is a quotation from Irwin R. Blacker's introduction to his edited volume *Hakluyt's Voyages* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 1. Some of the translations of European texts cited in Chapter 5, as well as the title of the chapter, are borrowed from Antonello Gerbi's magisterial *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955). Finally, I am deeply grateful to Patricia M. Spacks, Michael Warner, Emily Bartels, Marilyn Young, and Jessica Riskin for their advice and knowledge; and to Sacvan Bercovitch for his editorial guidance.

*Myra Jehlen*

## NEW ENGLAND PURITAN LITERATURE

The following institutions provided financial support for the research and writing: the National Endowment for the Humanities, Princeton University, the University of California, and the Humanities Research Institute of the University of California. Early versions of the first chapter were presented at the University of Verona and at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and I thank my kind hosts, Professors Itala Vivan and Pierre-Yves Petillon respectively, and others who also commented on the work: Professors Viola Sachs, Dominique Marcais, Janine Dove, and Marc Chenetier. I am grateful to the director, Mark Rose, and the staff of the Humanities Research Institute at Irvine for their support, and to the other members of the 1991–2 Minority Discourse Project for reading portions of the manuscript and offering most useful suggestions: Norma Alarcon, Jose Amaya, Vincent Cheng, King-Kok Cheung, Kimberle Crenshaw, Anne Dannenberg, Abdul JanMohamed, May Joseph, Clara Sue Kidwell, Smadar Lavie, Françoise Lionnet, Haiming Liu, Lisa Lowe, Lillian Manzor-Coats, Michael Sprinker, Sterling Stuckey, David Van Leer, and Clarence Walker. At the University of California, Riverside, I have benefited from the readings and guidance of Steve Axelrod, Carol Bensick, Mark Elliott, Bruce Hagood, Deborah Hatheway, Carla Magill, and Carlton Smith. Michael Colacurcio of UCLA, Bernard Rosenthal of SUNY-Binghamton, and Heather Dubrow of the University of Wisconsin also contributed suggestions. Although there are dozens of scholars whose works have enhanced my understanding of Puritan New England, I found especially helpful for this project the work of Bernard Bailyn, Sacvan Bercovitch, Mitchell Breitwieser, Michael Clark, Pattie Cowell, Robert Daly, Edward Davidson, Andrew Delbanco, John Demos, Everett Emerson, Wendy Martin, Harrison Meserole, Robert Middlekauf, Perry Miller, Karen Rowe, Jeanne Favret-Saada, Daniel Shea, Kenneth Silverman, Alden T. Vaughan, and Larzar Ziff. I am also grateful for the support of friends, colleagues, and staff members of the English departments of Princeton and the University of California, Riverside, and to the members of my 1988 NEH Summer Seminar for their encouragement. I have appreciated the patience and help of Andrew Brown and Julie Greenblatt of Cambridge University Press, and of Elizabeth Maguire, formerly of Cambridge Press, and the confidence and suggestions of Sacvan Bercovitch and his associate editor, Cyrus Patell. As always, my wife, Georgia, provided intellectual and emotional support, and my children, Scott, Mark, Matthew, Constance, and Laura, cheerfully indulged me over many years in my preoccupation with the people and events of another time and place.

*Emory Elliott*



## BRITISH-AMERICAN BELLES LETTRES

Although my account of British-American belles lettres owes an obvious debt to the scholarship of the persons named in the final paragraph of the section, there are influences that may not be readily apparent and that require notice. For instance, the emphasis given institutions of literary conversation owes much to Jürgen Habermas's argument concerning the central place of coffeehouses, clubs, and the republic of letters in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Peter Clark's work on sociability, Lawrence Klein's investigations of politeness, and Richard Bushman's explorations of gentility have instructed my readings of belles lettres as texts designed for social pleasure. Likewise, Dena Goodman's ongoing work on French salon culture greatly aided my understanding of the institutions of women's writing and conversation in British America. The path-breaking scholarship of Pattie Cowell and Carla Mulford establishing a canon of colonial women's writings is the precondition for any informed comment on the subject. My sense of British-American literature as a subject owes a good deal to the critical writings of William Spengemann.

As Samuel Foster Haven Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society, I explored the relationship of manuscript communications and print; the findings presented here should be regarded as an exercise in the new deontological history of the book advocated by David D. Hall and Michael Warner.

A National Endowment for the Humanities summer research grant enabled me to undertake archival work on Lewis Morris II and Robert Bolling. The American Philosophical Society supplied a grant to research the career and writings of Archibald Home. The Citadel Development Foundation supplied travel funds for work on Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, James Kirkpatrick, and George Ogilvie.

I thank Robert Ferguson, J. A. Leo Lemay, Wilson Somerville, Philip Gura, and Cathy Davidson for reading and commenting on drafts of this study. I particularly thank Carla Mulford for her scrupulous critique of its argument.

Henry Brooke's manuscript poems, "A Discours on Je'sting" and "The New Metamorphosis," are quoted courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. They appear in "Commonplace Book," Peters Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Captain Thomas Walduck's letter of 12 November 1710 to James Petiver, Sloane MS 2302, British Library, is excerpted courtesy of the Trustees of the British Library.

Selections from "Poems on Several Occasions by Archibald Home. Esqr.

late Secretary, and One of His Majestie's Council for the Province of New Jersey: North America" are printed courtesy of the Trustees of the University of Edinburgh (Laing Manuscripts III, 452, University of Edinburgh Library).

I thank Robert Micklus for permission to quote extensively from his edition of Alexander Hamilton, *The History of the Ancient and Honourable Tuesday Club*, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1990).

Lewis Morris's political verse, taken from "Misc. Prose and Verse," Robert Morris Papers, is printed courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Rutgers University Archives.

Joseph Green's letter to Captain Benjamin Pollard, 7 June 1733, Smith-Carter Papers, appears courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Robert Bolling's "Occlusion," Collection, Br[ock] 163, appears courtesy of the Huntington Library.

Elizabeth Graeme's "The foregoing song answered by a young Lady," *Juvinilia Poemata*, Manuscript 13494Q, is printed courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

I thank Pattie Cowell for her permission to print the extensive quotation from Susanna Wright's verse epistle to Elizabeth Norris, "Womenkind Call Reason to Their Aid," *Signs* 6, no. 4 (1981): 800.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has granted permission to print Susanna Wright's "Lines written . . . in the year 1726," J. Watson Notebook, Ms Am 307, 510.

I thank Carla Mulford for permission to quote the text of Annis Boudinot Stockton's "To the Visitant," from the forthcoming edition of *The Poetry of Annis Boudinot Stockton* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society).

David S. Shields

#### THE AMERICAN ENLIGHTENMENT, 1750–1820

In writing my section of this history in the present tense, I ask you to enter into a particular awareness of history as subject and as enterprise. "Presentism" is a term that historians often use to denigrate a misleading application of contemporary standards to the past, and the warning is a real one; the dangers of inappropriate application always remain with us. My own use, however, reaches for another reality. Whatever the dangers, the imposition of the present on the past is also an unavoidable construct – so unavoidable that it is well for writer and reader to recall that limitation together.

Contemporary appropriations of the American Revolution occur in every era. That is what it means, at least in part, to have a legacy. But if the Revolution changes with each succeeding generation, acknowledgment of this

fact does not release the historian — even the historian as literary critic — into a realm of unbounded speculation. Indeed, the hazards of an inevitable ahistoricism should force writer and reader back upon the joined integrity and volatility of primary materials. In this sense, use of the present tense signifies both the slippage in any necessary ordering of the past and the sometimes contradictory impulse to recover history in the making.

Literary history in particular welcomes the present. It dwells upon extant texts, and I try to use the analytical convention to reach for more of the original excitement that revolutionary texts provoked. Not fixed accomplishment but the messiness of ongoing event and the related immediacies of thought and act drive the often hesitant language of the period. The now arcane genres of sermon, pamphlet, and public document — not to mention the forgotten placards of ritualized protests — are fluid forms evolving under immense cultural pressure, not rigid envelopes in a static discourse.

What do we really know about the Revolution? First and foremost, we have the writings, the related texts, and other artifacts of those figures who participated in and witnessed events. Second, we have the so-called facts gathered about those events, then and later. Third, we have the contested ground of the history of interpretation regarding the period and its thought, and fourth, we have what might more generally be called the history of ideas. Like every scholar, I seek to combine the four elements in effective and graceful ways, and I try to do so with the many previous approaches to this cumulative record in mind. My contributions to the bibliography at the end of this volume provide a partial record of my indebtedness. At the same time, and in a competing goal, I mean to remind you of uneasy simplifications in the combinations themselves. The past is always more complicated than we can know. The most basic primary text glosses underlying incident, and each new layer of writing contributes to the studied appearance of history.

I try to entertain these difficulties within several recognitions. Current awareness of cultural diversity makes this a good moment for reexamining national origins. Then, too, the writings and speeches of the period are in themselves more rhetorically complex and more fully available to critical consciousness than many have realized. I believe that we are still learning how to read the basic texts of the Revolution and that the need for scrutiny now is all the more engaging because of growing intellectual awareness of a dialectics in Enlightenment thought. This scrutiny, in turn, benefits from a singular piece of national good fortune: the federal union begins in a moment when Americans take ideas seriously — not always the case in its history. If this study opens any of these ideas to fresh inquiry for others, it will have served its most important purpose.

In the community of scholars, five have been more than communal during

the course of this project. Ann Douglas and Richard Posner read and commented with care on parts of the manuscript. My immediate collaborator Michael T. Gilmore made important suggestions throughout. John Paul Russo and Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson tested every word more than once. Separate but together, they made as fine a committee of correspondence as one could hope for.

I have been helped, as well, by the chance to place some rudimentary thoughts for this project in print, where other scholars have been able to comment and improve upon them. These items, for which I thank the editors and publishers, include: " 'We Hold These Truths': Strategies of Control in the Literature of the Founders," *Reconstructing American Literary History*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 1-29; "Ideology and the Framing of the Constitution," *Early American Literature* 22 (Fall 1987): 157-65; " 'We Do Ordain and Establish': The Constitution as Literary Text," *William and Mary Law Review* 29 (Fall 1987): 3-25; and " 'What is Enlightenment?' Some American Answers," *American Literary History* 1 (Summer 1989): 245-72.

Robert A. Ferguson

#### THE LITERATURE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY AND EARLY NATIONAL PERIODS

My contribution to the Cambridge History focuses on the flowering and decline of civic humanism in the development of American culture between the Revolution and the 1820s. This perspective derives from the writings of historians and literary critics who see the republican period as originary of our modern world but also as fundamentally different from the liberal and Romantic ethos that crystallized in the nineteenth century. Among the scholars who have strongly influenced my argument, I would like to single out Gordon Wood, J. G. A. Pocock, William Charvat, Cathy Davidson, Michael Warner, and Benedict Anderson. The rich work on the origins of the novel form, both in England and America, has been particularly important to my understanding of early national literature. In addition to Davidson's work, I wish to acknowledge the scholarship of Lennard Davis, Nancy Armstrong, and Michael McKeon. Other valuable sources – and there have been many – are listed in the bibliography. As the reader will discover, I often disagree with the conclusions of the scholars who preceded me, but I could not have written this section of the History without their pioneering investigations.

It has taken a very long time for this project to see the light, and I have accumulated many debts along the way. The manuscript was read in its entirety by Sacvan Bercovitch and Robert Ferguson; their comments led to

essential revisions that gave the book its final shape. Two former colleagues at Brandeis, Allen Grossman and Anne Janowitz, acted as sounding boards for my ideas and provided penetrating critiques of several chapters. Individual chapters also benefited from the advice of Cecelia Tichi, Kenneth Silverman, Amy Lang, Donald Pease, Robert Gross, Brook Thomas, Ivy Schweitzer, Winfried Fluck, Andrew Delbanco, Eugene Goodheart, and Michael McKeon. Present and former graduate students kept me on my toes by challenging and refining interpretations I first ventured in their presence. Chief among them are Steve Hamelman, Jim Keil, Ute Groenig, Marc Woodworth, Kim Hamilton, and Grant Rice. I am grateful to all these friends and colleagues; none bears any responsibility for my errors of fact and judgment.

A grant from the American Council of Learned Societies in 1987–8 enabled me to complete an initial draft, and I am thankful for the support.

On a more personal level, I owe thanks to my wife, Deborah Valenze, who supported me emotionally as well as intellectually during the years I worked on this book. She read every word, shared my excitement, and endured my frustrations. I know my prose is more lucid and accessible for her disciplining insights, my spirit more whole and resilient for her love. In the case of my two daughters, Emma and Rosa, the frustrations on their part far outweighed the satisfactions. I hope they will forgive the times when I was unavailable for outings. Their love too sustained me through the writing.

I finished revising this book not long after learning that my father had terminal cancer. His courage and relish for life, even in the face of death, were unforgettable. I dedicate this part of the Cambridge History to his memory.

*Michael T. Gilmore*

# CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	page vii
Introduction	I
<div style="text-align: center;"> <b>THE LITERATURE OF COLONIZATION</b>  <i>Myra Jehlen, Rutgers University</i> </div>	
1 The Papers of Empire	13
2 The Natural Inhabitants	37
3 Three Writers of Early America	59
4 Settlements	84
5 The Dispute of the New World	109
6 Traveling in America	126
7 The Final Voyage	149
<div style="text-align: center;"> <b>NEW ENGLAND PURITAN LITERATURE</b>  <i>Emory Elliott, University of California, Riverside</i> </div>	
1 The Language of Salem Witchcraft	171
2 The Dream of a Christian Utopia	183
3 Personal Narrative and History	205
4 Poetry	226
5 The Jeremiad	255
6 Reason and Revivalism	279
<div style="text-align: center;"> <b>BRITISH-AMERICAN BELLES LETTRES</b>  <i>David S. Shields, The Citadel</i> </div>	
<div style="text-align: center;"> <b>THE AMERICAN ENLIGHTENMENT, 1750-1820</b>  <i>Robert A. Ferguson, Columbia University</i> </div>	
1 Finding the Revolution	347
2 What Is Enlightenment? Some American Answers	368

3	Religious Voices	390
4	Writing the Revolution	426
5	The Literature of Public Documents	470
6	The Limits of Enlightenment	496

THE LITERATURE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY AND  
EARLY NATIONAL PERIODS

*Michael T. Gilmore, Brandeis University*

539

1	Letters of the Early Republic	541
2	Magazines, Criticism, and Essays	558
3	The Drama	573
4	Poetry	591
5	The Novel	620
6	Charles Brockden Brown	644
7	Washington Irving	661
8	James Fenimore Cooper	676

*Chronology* 695

*Bibliography* 767

*Index* 781

## INTRODUCTION

THIS MULTIVOLUME *History* marks a new beginning in the study of American literature. The first *Cambridge History of American Literature* (1917) helped introduce a new branch of English writing. *The Literary History of the United States*, assembled thirty years later under the aegis of Robert E. Spiller, helped establish a new field of academic study. Our *History* embodies the work of a generation of Americanists who have redrawn the boundaries of the field and redefined the terms of its development. Trained in the 1960s and early 1970s, representing the broad spectrum of both new and established directions in all branches of American writing, these scholars and critics have shaped, and continue to shape, what has become a major area of modern literary scholarship.

Over the past three decades, Americanist literary criticism has expanded from a border province into a center of humanist studies. The vitality of the field is reflected in the rising interest in American literature everywhere, nationally and internationally, and at every level – in high schools and colleges, in graduate programs, in publications, conferences, and public events. It is expressed in the sheer scope of scholarly activity and in the polemical intensity of debate. Virtually every recent school of criticism has found not just its followers here but many of its leading exponents. And increasingly over the past three decades, American texts have provided the focus for inter- and cross-disciplinary investigation. Gender studies, ethnic studies, and popular-culture studies, among others, have penetrated to all corners of the profession, but their single largest base is American literature. The same is true with regard to controversies over multiculturalism and canon formation: the issues are transhistorical and transcultural, but the debates themselves have turned mainly on American books.

We need not endorse all of these movements, or any one of them entirely, to see in the activity they have generated the dynamics of intellectual growth. Nor need we obscure the hard facts of intellectual growth – startling disparities in quality, a proliferation of jargons, and the mixed blessings of the new, innovation and mere trendiness entwined – to recognize the benefits in this case for literary and cultural study. However we situate ourselves in current



polemics, it seems clear that Americanist literary criticism has proved to be a forerunner of developments in other humanistic disciplines, precisely through its openness to diversity and debate. And for much the same reason, American literature has become something of a new-found-land for teaching and research. In addition to publishing massive new editions of the nation's literary classics, scholars have undertaken an unprecedented recovery of neglected and undervalued bodies of writing. We know far more now than ever before about what some have termed (in the plural) American literatures, a term grounded in the persistence in the United States of different traditions, different kinds of aesthetics, even different notions of the literary.

These developments have substantially enlarged the meanings as well as the materials of American literature. For this generation of critics and scholars, American literary history is no longer the history of a certain, agreed-upon group of American masterworks. Nor is it any longer based upon a certain, agreed-upon historical perspective on American writing. The quests for certainty and agreement continue, as they must, but they proceed now within a climate of critical decentralization – of controversy, competition, and, at best, dialogue among different voices, different frames of explanation.

This scene of conflict has been variously described in terms of liberal-democratic process, of the marketplace, and of professionalization. In any case it signals a shift in structures of academic authority. The practice of literary history hitherto, from its inception in the eighteenth century, has depended upon an established consensus about the essence or nature of its subject. Today the invocation of consensus sounds rather like an appeal for compromise, or like nostalgia. What used to be a relatively clear division between criticism and scholarship, aesthetic and historical analysis, has blurred and then subdivided over and over again (in various combinations) into a spectrum of special interests: special branches of expertise, special kinds of investment in the materials, and special modes of argument and strategies of persuasion.

In our times, in short, the study of American literary history defines itself in the plural, through volatile focal points of a multifaceted scholarly, critical, and pedagogic enterprise. Authority in this context is a function of different but connected bodies of knowledge. The authority of difference, if it may be so termed, resides in the critic's appeal to a particular constituency, in his or her command over a particular range of materials (with their distinctive set of authorities), and in the integrative force of his or her approach. The authority of connection lies in the capacity of a particular explanation or approach to engage with, challenge, or reinforce others – in its capacity, that is, to gain substance and depth in relation to other, sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting modes of explanation.