The Cambridge Introduction to the Nineteenth-Century American Novel

Stowe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Twain: these are just a few of the world-class novelists of nineteenth-century America. The nineteenth-century American novel was a highly fluid form, constantly evolving in response to the turbulent events of the period and emerging as a key component in American identity, growth, expansion, and the Civil War. Gregg Crane tells the story of the American novel from its beginnings in the early republic to the end of the nineteenth century. Treating the famous and many less well-known works, Crane discusses the genre's major figures, themes, and developments. He analyzes the different types of American fiction – romance, sentimental fiction, and the realist novel – in detail, while the historical context is explained in relation to how novelists explored the changing world around them. This comprehensive and stimulating introduction will enhance students' experience of reading and studying the whole canon of American fiction.

Gregg Crane is Associate Professor of English at the University of Michigan.
Cambridge Introductions to Literature

This series is designed to introduce students to key topics and authors. Accessible and lively, these introductions will also appeal to readers who want to broaden their understanding of the books and authors they enjoy.

- Ideal for students, teachers, and lecturers
- Concise, yet packed with essential information
- Key suggestions for further reading

Titles in this series:
The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies
Christopher Balme

The Cambridge Introduction to James Joyce
Eric Bulson

The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays
Warren Chernaik

The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot
John Xiros Cooper

The Cambridge Introduction to Francophone Literature
Patrick Corcoran

The Cambridge Introduction to the Nineteenth-Century American Novel
Gregg Crane

The Cambridge Introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald
Kirk Curnutt

The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre
Janette Dillon

The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Tragedies
Janette Dillon

The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf
Jane Goldman

The Cambridge Introduction to Herman Melville
Kevin J. Hayes

The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot
Nancy Henry

The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats
David Holdeman

The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures
C. L. Innes

The Cambridge Introduction to Walt Whitman
M. Jimmie Killingsworth

The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism
Pericles Lewis

The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett
Ronan McDonald

The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson
Wendy Martin

The Cambridge Introduction to Mark Twain
Peter Messent

The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing
David Morley

The Cambridge Introduction to Ezra Pound
Ira Nadel

The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne
Leland S. Person

The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad
John Peters

The Cambridge Introduction to Harriet Beecher Stowe
Sarah Robbins

The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story
Martin Scofield

The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare
Emma Smith

The Cambridge Introduction to English Theatre, 1660–1900
Peter Thomson

The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen
Janet Todd

The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy
Jennifer Wallace
The Cambridge Introduction to the
Nineteenth-Century American Novel

GREGG CRANE
For Robert David Crane and Barbara Gregg Crane
## Contents

**Acknowledgments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The early American novel</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1 The romance</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the romance?</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The historical romance</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The philosophical romance: Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sensational romance – a taste for excess</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2 The sentimental novel</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the sentimental novel?</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme and variations: a young woman’s story</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentiment and reform: <em>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</em></td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentiment and the argument against reform: <em>The Planter’s Northern Bride</em></td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentiment, upward mobility, and the African American novel</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving toward realism</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3 The realist novel</strong></td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is American literary realism?</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realist technique and subject matter</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions, divergences, and extremes within realism</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

The taste for excess – sensationalism redux 203

**Notes** 208  
**Works cited** 220  
**Index** 231
Acknowledgments

For their counsel and encouragement, I am indebted to Sara Blair, George Bornstein, Jonathan Freedman, John Kucich, Kerry Larson, Robert Levine, Dianne Sadoff, and Eric Sundquist. I also wish to express my gratitude for the many thoughtful revision suggestions made by John Whittier-Ferguson and Samuel Otter. From the book proposal through to final revisions, Ross Posnock and Cindy Weinstein have generously helped me with indispensable advice and critique. Leslie Ford deserves special thanks for her meticulous and insightful appraisal of the manuscript. And I want to acknowledge and thank my daughter, Zoe, for our ongoing conversation about the ingredients of a good story.

While writing this book, I have frequently found myself thinking about pedagogy and the alchemy of excitement and knowledge that characterizes good teaching. This train of thought always seems to conclude with some memory of my parents. Over the years, I have been in many classrooms but none more inspiring than those of my mother and father. I know of no better teachers.