The Cambridge Companion to American Poets brings together thirty-one essays on some fifty-four American poets, spanning nearly 400 years, from Anne Bradstreet to contemporary performance poetry. This book also examines such movements in American poetry as modernism, the Harlem (or New Negro) Renaissance, “confessional” poetry, the Black Mountain School, the New York School, the Beats, and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry. Its reputable host of contributors approaches American poetry from perspectives as diverse as the poetry itself. The result is a Companion concise enough to be read with pleasure yet expansive enough to do justice to the many traditions American poets have modified, inaugurated, and made their own.


A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
CONTENTS

Notes on Contributors  xi
Acknowledgments  xix

Introduction
MARK RICHARDSON  1

1 “The First Shall Be Last”: Apology and Redemption in the Work of the First New England Poets, Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor
CHARLOTTE GORDON  10

2 Phillis Wheatley
CARLA WILLARD  24

3 The Historical Epic, Women’s Poetry, and Early American Verse
KERRY LARSON  32

4 The Fire This Time: Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Whittier
CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER  47

5 Ralph Waldo Emerson
MARK SCOTT  61

6 Edgar Allan Poe
KEVIN J. HAYES  77

7 Walt Whitman
DAVID S. REYNOLDS  87

8 Melville the Poet
ROBERT FAGGEN  104
## CONTENTS

9 Forever Young: Rereading Emily Dickinson in the Twenty-First Century  
**Martha Nell Smith**  
119

10 Paul Laurence Dunbar  
**Joanne Braxton and Lauri Ramey**  
136

11 Edwin Arlington Robinson  
**Henry Atmore**  
144

12 Robert Frost  
**Mark Richardson**  
160

13 Gertrude Stein  
**Joan Retallack**  
172

14 Wallace Stevens  
**Eleanor Cook**  
188

15 William Carlos Williams  
**Ian Copestake**  
201

16 Ezra Pound  
**Alec Marsh**  
214

17 Marianne Moore  
**Celeste Goodridge**  
231

18 T. S. Eliot and American Poetry  
**John Xiros Cooper**  
245

19 Hart Crane's Visionary Company  
**Robert Bernard Hass**  
258

20 The New Negro Renaissance  
**Steven Tracy**  
271

21 Langston Hughes  
**Henry Atmore**  
286

22 Elizabeth Bishop  
**Susan McCabe**  
300
CONTENTS

23 Gwendolyn Brooks
   JAMES SMETHURST

24 The Three Voices of Robert Lowell
   STEVEN GOULD AXELROD

25 The Black Mountain School
   ALAN GOLDING

26 Jack Spicer
   DANIEL KATZ

27 Allen Ginsberg: Irreverent, Reverential, and Apocalyptic American Poet
   JONAH RASKIN

28 Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and Confessional Poetry
   MELANIE WATERS

29 “Street Musicians”: Frank O’Hara and John Ashbery
   ANDREW EPESTEIN

30 Adrienne Rich: The Poetry of Witness
   WENDY MARTIN AND ANNALISA ZOX-WEAVER

31 An “Empty Prescription”: Pleasure in Contemporary American Poetry
   DAVID KIRBY

Further Reading

Index
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

HENRY ATMORE, Associate Professor of English at Kobe City University for Foreign Studies, took his doctorate in the History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge. He has contributed to The Reader’s Guide to the History of Science and is the author of a number of articles in such journals as The British Journal for the History of Science, The Journal of Victorian Culture, and The College Hill Review. He also contributed two essays to Robert Frost in Context (Cambridge University Press, 2014) and is coeditor, with Donald G. Sheehy, Robert Bernard Hass, and Mark Richardson, of The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume II (forthcoming from Harvard University Press).

STEVEN GOULD AXELROD is Professor of English at the University of California, Riverside, and the author of Robert Lowell: Life and Art (Princeton University Press, 1978), Sylvia Plath: The Wound and the Cure of Words (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), and a number of essays on American writers.

JOANNE “JODI” BRAXTON is Frances L. and Edwin L. Cummings Professor of English and Africana Studies at the College of William and Mary. Her books include Sometimes I Think of Maryland, a volume of poetry (Sunbury Press, 1977); Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition (Temple University Press, 1989), Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afro-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance (Rutgers, 1990); and The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar (University Press of Virginia, 1993). Braxton is currently writing an autobiography.

ELEANOR COOK is Professor Emerita of English, University of Toronto. She is the author of Enigmas and Riddles in Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2006) and Against Coercion: Games Poets Play (Stanford, 1998), as well as two books on Wallace Stevens’ poetry and one on Robert Browning’s. She is currently finishing a book on the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop.

JOHN XIROS COOPER is Professor of English at the University of British Columbia. His books include T. S. Eliot and the Politics of Voice: The Argument of The
Notes on Contributors


Ian Copestake is editor of the William Carlos Williams Review, president of the Williams Society, and author of The Ethics of William Carlos Williams's Poetry (Camden House, 2010). An independent scholar, he divides his time between Frankfurt and Los Angeles; his research interests include Basil Bunting, Thomas Pynchon, and the literature of the ocean. His is currently at work on a book titled Madness and the Sea in the American Imagination.


Alan Golding teaches poetry and poetics at the University of Louisville. He is the author of From Outlaw to Classic: Canons in American Poetry (University of Wisconsin Press, 1995) and of numerous essays on modernist and contemporary poetry. His current projects include Writing Into the Future: New American Poetries from the Dial to the Digital (under contract with the University of Alabama Press), and Isn’t the Avant-Garde Always Pedagogical, a book on experimental poetics and/as pedagogy. With Lynn Keller and Dee Morris, he coeditrs the Iowa Series on Contemporary North American Poetry and Synapse, a series dedicated to experimental critical approaches to poetics.

Celeste Goodridge is Professor of English at Bowdoin College. Her publications include Hints and Disguises: Marianne Moore and Her Contemporaries (University of Iowa Press, 1989).
Notes on Contributors

Charlotte Gordon is a critically acclaimed author who has published the biography Mistress Bradstreet: The Untold Story of America’s First Poet (Little, Brown, 2005), The Woman Who Named God: Abraham’s Dilemma and the Birth of Three Faiths (Little, Brown, 2009), and Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Her Daughter Mary Shelley (Random House, 2015). She has also published two books of poetry. She is an Associate Professor of English at Endicott College. Visit her Web site at www.charlottegordonbooks.com.


Christoph Irmscher is Provost Professor of English and Director of the Wells Scholars Program at Indiana University. His books include Longfellow Redux (Illinois, 2006), Louis Agassiz: Creator of American Science (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), and the Library of America edition of Audubon’s Writings and Drawings (1999). He is the curator of the award-winning Harvard Web exhibit “Public Poet, Private Man: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at 200.”

Daniel Katz is Professor of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. He is the author of The Poetry of Jack Spicer (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), American Modernism’s Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), and Saying I No More: Subjectivity and Consciousness in the Prose of Samuel Beckett (Northwestern University Press, 1999), as well as many articles and chapters on twentieth and twenty-first century literature.

David Kirby is the Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor of English at Florida State University. A Johns Hopkins PhD, he is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation, as well as of three University Teaching Awards (1992, 1997, 2012) and a University Distinguished Teaching Award (2007). His collection The House on Boulevard
Notes on Contributors


Kerry Larson is Professor of English at the University of Michigan and is the author of two books, Whitman’s Drama of Consensus (University of Chicago Press, 1988) and Imagining Equality in Nineteenth-Century American Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2008). He is the editor of The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Poetry (Cambridge University Press, 2011) and has published articles on antebellum American literature in ELH, Raritan, and Nineteenth-Century Literature.


Susan McCabe is Professor of English at the University of Southern California. She is currently an editor for the poetry series of the University of California Press. She is the author of two critical studies, Elizabeth Bishop: Her Poetics of Loss (Penn State University Press, 1994) and Cinematic Modernism: Modern Poetry and Film (Cambridge University Press, 2005), and two collections of poetry, Swirl (Red Hen Press, 2003) and Descartes’ Nightmare (winner of the Agha Shahid Ali prize, and published by Utah University Press in 2008).

Lauri Ramey is founding Director of the Center for Contemporary Poetry and Poetics, and Professor of English, at California State University, Los Angeles. Her books include The Heritage Series of Black Poetry, 1962-1975 (Ashgate, 2008) and Slave Songs and the Birth of African American Poetry (Palgrave
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


Joan Retallack is John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Professor Emerita of Humanities at Bard College. Her Gertrude Stein: Selections (University of California Press, 2008) includes an extensive essay on Stein’s life and poetics. She also wrote the introduction to the 2012 Yale critical edition of Stein’s Stanzas in Meditation. Retallack’s most recent poetry volume Procedural Elegies / Western Civ Cont’d / (Roof Books) was an ARTFORUM best book of 2010. Her other poetry includes Memoir (Post-Apollo, 2004), How to Do Things with Words (Sun and Moon Classics, 1998), and Afterimages (Wesleyan University Press, 1995). She is the author of The Poetical Wager (University of California Press, 2005) and MUSICAGE, her conversations with John Cage (Wesleyan University Press, 1996).

Notes on Contributors


Mark Scott, Professor of English at Nara Women’s University, is author of two volumes of poetry, Tactile Values (New Issues, 2000) and A Bedroom Occupation (Lumen Books, 2007, with a preface by Richard Howard). He has published essays in literary criticism on Emerson, Frost, Bernard Berenson, and other writers, and he contributed two essays to Robert Frost in Context (Cambridge University Press, 2014).


Martha Nell Smith is Professor of English at the University of Maryland, College Park. She established the Dickinson Electronic Archives in 1997 and now serves as founding director of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities. Her latest contribution to Dickinson digital scholarship, Emily Dickinson’s Correspondences: A Born-Digital Textual Inquiry (University of Virginia Rotunda Press, 2008), was done in collaboration with Lara Vetter. Her books include Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson’s Intimate Letters to Susan Dickinson (Paris Press, 1998), Comic Power in Emily Dickinson (University of Texas Press, 1993), Rowing in Eden (University of Texas Press, 1992), and, with Mary Loeffelholz, A Companion to Emily Dickinson (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

Steven Tracy is a Fulbright Senior Specialist, Chu Tian Scholar at Central China Normal University, and Professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has authored, edited, coedited, or provided introductions for thirty-one books; provided more than seventy contributions to book publications edited by others; and written more than fifty CD liner notes. His latest book is Hot Music, Ragmentation, and the Bluing of American Literature
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


MELANIE WATERS is Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Literature at Northumbria University. Her books include Feminism and Popular Culture (I. B. Tauris, 2013), Poetry and Autobiography (Routledge, 2011), and Women on Screen: Feminism, Femininity and Visual Culture (Palgrave, 2011).

CARLA WILLARD is Associate Professor of American Studies at Franklin and Marshall College. She has published essays on African American literature in such journals as American Literature and American Quarterly.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


xxi
of this publication, is prohibited. Interested parties must apply directly to
Random House LLC for permission. The line from “Phantasia for Elvira
Shatayev,” the lines from “Sibling Mysteries,” from The Dream of a Common
Norton & Company, Inc. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company,
Inc. Excerpt from “Power and Danger: Works of a Common Woman,” from
Copyright © 1979 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Used by permission
of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. The lines from “1948: Jews,” the lines
permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. The lines from “Snapshots of
a Daughter-in-Law,” the lines from “Juvenilia,” the lines from “Aunt Jennifer’
s Tigers,” the lines from “Moth Hour,” the lines from “On Edges,” the lines
from “Implosions,” the lines from “The Blue Ghazals,” the lines from
Norton & Company, Inc. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company,
Inc. Excerpt from “Anger and Tenderness,” from Of Woman
Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution by Adrienne Rich.
Copyright © 1986, 1976 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Used by per-
mission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Excerpt from “Compulsory
Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” excerpt from “Split at the Root: An
Essay on Jewish Identity,” from Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose
permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. The line from “The Stranger,”
© 1973 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Used by permission of W. W.
Norton & Company, Inc. The lines from “Diving into the Wreck,” the lines
from “The Phenomenology of Anger,” the lines from “Power,” the lines from
“The Spirit of Place,” the lines from “Yom Kippur 1984,” the lines from “Tonight No Poetry Will Serve,” from Later
by The Adrienne Rich Literary Trust. Copyright (c) 2011, 2007, 2004, 2001,
1973 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Used by permission of W. W.
Norton & Company, Inc.