The American Renaissance has been a foundational concept in American literary history for nearly a century. The phrase connotes a period as well as an event, an iconic turning point in the growth of a national literature and a canon of texts that would shape American fiction, poetry, and oratory for generations. F. O. Matthiessen coined the term in 1941 to describe the years 1850–1855, which saw the publications of major writings by Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. This Companion takes up the concept of the American Renaissance and explores its origins, meaning, and longevity. Essays by distinguished scholars move chronologically from the formative reading of American Renaissance authors to the careers of major figures ignored by Matthiessen, including Stowe, Douglass, Harper, and Longfellow. The volume uses the best of current literary studies, from digital humanities to psychoanalytic theory, to illuminate an era that reaches far beyond the Civil War and continues to shape our understanding of American literature.

Christopher N. Phillips is the author of numerous articles and book chapters on American literature, published in venues such as *PMLA*, *Early American Literature*, and *Literature in the Early American Republic*. He is the author of *Epic in American Culture, Settlement to Reconstruction* (2012) and *The Hymnal: A Reading History* (2018). Among recent fellowships received are a National Endowment for the Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Library Company of Philadelphia and a Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies in conjunction with the American Antiquarian Society.

* A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
THE LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

EDITED BY
CHRISTOPHER N. PHILLIPS
Lafayette College, Pennsylvania
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13.2 George Kendall Warren, c. 1879. 289 Washington Street, Boston, MA. Cabinet card (4 1/4 x 6 1/2 in.). Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, Open Access for Scholarly Content.  

CONTRIBUTORS


MELBA JOYCE BOYD is a Distinguished Professor in African American Studies at Wayne State University in Detroit, and an Adjunct Professor in Afroamerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor. She is an award-winning author or editor of thirteen books, nine of which are poetry. Boyd’s critically acclaimed and widely reviewed Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances E. W. Harper, 1825–1911 (1994) was the first comprehensive study of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. Boyd’s poetry, essays, and creative nonfiction have appeared in anthologies, academic journals, cultural periodicals, and newspapers in the United States and Europe. She was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Bremen, and has a Doctor of Arts in English from the University of Michigan, and B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from Western Michigan University.

JENNIFER L. BRADY is a lecturer and the Associate Director of Studies in the History & Literature program at Harvard University. Her work on sentimentality, antinovel tracts, fan letters, and historical and imagined readers has appeared in American Literature and Common-place.

BARBARA HOCHMAN is Professor Emerita in the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics at Ben-Gurion University. She has written widely on American fiction, reading practices, and interpretive norms. Her books include Getting at the Author: Reimagining Books and Reading in the Age of American Realism (2001) and Uncle Tom’s Cabin and the Reading Revolution: Race, Literacy, Childhood, and Fiction 1852–1911, winner of the DeLong Book History Prize for 2012.
ZACHARY MCLEOD HUTCHINS is Assistant Professor of English at Colorado State University. He is the author of *Inventing Eden: Primitivism, Millennialism, and the Making of New England* (2014) and a dozen essays on American literature and culture, which have appeared in journals such as *ELH*, *Early American Literature*, *ESQ*, and *Nineteenth-Century Literature*.

CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER teaches at Indiana University Bloomington, where he is Provost Professor of English and George F. Getz Jr. Professor in the Wells Scholars Program, which he also directs. Among his books are *Longfellow Redux*, *Louis Agassiz: Creator of American Science* and, most recently, *Max Eastman: A Life*. The web version of his 2007 Bicentennial Exhibit on Longfellow won the Katherine Kyes Leab and Daniel J. Leab Exhibition Award of the American Library Association. His personal webpage is at www.christophirmscher.com.


WYN KELLEY, Senior Lecturer in Literature at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is author of *Melville’s City: Literary and Urban Form in Nineteenth-Century New York* (1996) and of *Herman Melville: An Introduction* (2008); and co-author, with Henry Jenkins, of *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Re-Mixing Moby-Dick in the English Classroom* (2013). Former Associate Editor of the Melville Society journal *Leviathan* and editor of the *Blackwell Companion to Herman Melville* (2006), she has published essays in a number of journals and collections. Associate Director of MEL (Melville Electronic Library), she also works to develop digital pedagogy with the HyperStudio, MIT’s digital humanities lab, and is a founding member of the Melville Society Cultural Project.

CHRISTOPHER N. PHILLIPS is Associate Professor of English at Lafayette College. He is the author of *Epic in American Culture, Settlement to Reconstruction* (2012) and *The Hymnal: A Reading History* (2018). He is also the principal investigator on the Easton Library Company Database Project, a digital humanities collaboration between Lafayette College and the Easton Area Public Library in Easton, Pennsylvania.

JUDITH RICHARDSON is Senior Lecturer in the English Department at Stanford University, and Coordinator of the American Studies Program. She is the author of *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley* (2003), and is currently at work on a book about nineteenth-century America’s “plant-mindedness,” its multivalent obsession with vegetable matters.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Rifkin is Director of Women’s and Gender Studies and Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is the author of five books, including Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination (2017), Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance (2014), and When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality and Native Sovereignty (2011) (winner of the John Hope Franklin Prize for Best Book in American Studies; winner of the Best Subsequent Book prize from the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association). He co-edited Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity, a special double-issue of GLQ (winner of the Best Special Issue award from the Councils of Editors of Learned Journals). He has served as president of the NAISA and on the editorial boards of American Literature and J19.

Russell Sbriglia is Assistant Professor of English at Seton Hall University, where he teaches courses in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American literature. He is the author of American Romanticism and the Materiality of Transcendence: Five Hegelian Variations (forthcoming), editor of Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Literature but Were Afraid to Ask Žižek (2017), and co-editor, with Slavoj Žižek, of Subject Lessons: Hegel, Lacan, and the Future of Materialism (forthcoming).


Zoe Trodd is Professor of American Studies at the University of Nottingham and director of a university Research Priority Area on Rights and Justice. Her books include American Protest Literature (2006), To Plead Our Cause (2008), The Tribunal: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid (2012), and Picturing Frederick Douglass (2015).

Jeffrey Walker, Professor of English at Oklahoma State and former Fulbright lecturer in Norway and Belgium, authored a critical study of the Revolutionary poet and traitor Benjamin Church, edited collections of essays on Fenimore Cooper, co-edited Cooper’s 1821 bestseller The Spy and the annual journal Literature in the Early American Republic (LEAR), and is completing an edition of Cooper’s unpublished letters.

Laura Dassow Walls teaches at the University of Notre Dame, where she is the William P. and Hazel B. White Professor of English and an affiliate of the History and Philosophy of Science Program. She has published widely on American
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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## CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Ralph Waldo Emerson born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Louisiana Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>Nathaniel Hawthorne (née Hathorne) born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>Haitian Revolution wins independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>William Gilmore Simms born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Ban of American transatlantic slave trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Edgar Allan Poe born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Margaret Fuller born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>Fanny Fern (née Sarah Payson Willis) born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>Napoleon defeated at Waterloo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>William Cullen Bryant, “Thanatopsis”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>Henry David (née David Henry) Thoreau born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>George Copway (Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh) born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>Frederick Douglass (née Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey) born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Washington Irving, <em>The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Herman Melville (née Melvill) born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Susan Warner born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Walt Whitman born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Missouri Compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>James Fenimore Cooper, <em>The Spy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>Cooper, <em>The Pioneers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Frances Ellen Watkins (Harper) born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Cooper, <em>The Last of the Mohicans</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>South American independence from Spain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHRONOLOGY

1830  Emily Dickinson born
       Simón Bolívar dies

1831  *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*
       William Lloyd Garrison founds the anti-slavery newspaper *Liberator*

1833  Slavery abolished in British empire

1835  Simms, *The Yemassee & The Partisan*

1836  Emerson, *Nature*
       American artist Thomas Cole exhibits *Course of Empire* in New York
       Battle of the Alamo; Republic of Texas declares independence

1837  Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales* (volume 1)
       Financial Panic of 1837

1838  Poe, *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*
       “Trail of Tears,” part of decades-long Native removal policy

1839  Poe, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*

1840  Emerson, *Essays* (1st series)
       Fuller commences editing *The Dial*

1842  Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales* (volume 2)

1844  Emerson, *Essays* (2nd series)
       Anti-Catholic riots in Philadelphia
       Samuel F. B. Morse sends first American telegram

1845  Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
       Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*
       Harper, *Forest Leaves*
       Poe, “The Raven”
       Texas admitted to the Union

1846  Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse*
       Melville, *Typee*
       Mexican War begins

1847  Copway, *Life, History, and Adventures of Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh*
       Longfellow, *Evangeline*
       Melville, *Omoo*

1848  Melville, *Mardi*
       Poe, *Eureka*
       Mexican War ends
       Seneca Falls Convention, first women’s rights convention
       Gold discovered in California
       Revolutions in France, Germany, Italy, Austria Empire
       Cole dies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1849 | Irving, *Mahomet and His Successors*  
Longfellow, *The Seaside and the Fireside*  
Melville, *Redburn*  
Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (later *Civil Disobedience*) and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*  
Poe dies  
California Gold Rush |
| 1850 | Emerson, *Representative Men*  
Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*  
Melville, *White-Jacket*  
Warner, *The Wide, Wide World*  
Margaret Fuller dies  
Compromise of 1850 – Fugitive Slave Act passes, California becomes a state |
| 1851 | Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*  
Longfellow, *The Golden Legend*  
Melville, *Moby-Dick*  
Cooper dies |
| 1852 | Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” and *The Heroic Slave*  
Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*  
Melville, *Pierre*  
Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (serialized in 1851)  
Warner, *Queechy*  
Franklin Pierce elected president |
| 1853 | Fern, *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio*  
Melville, “Bartleby” |
| 1854 | Fern, *Ruth Hall and Fern Leaves, 2nd series*  
Harper, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*  
John Rollin Ridge, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*  
Thoreau, *Walden*  
Cummins, *The Lamplighter* |
| 1855 | Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*  
Longfellow, *The Song of Hiawatha*  
Melville, “Benito Cereno”  
“Bleeding Kansas” |
| 1856 | Melville, *The Piazza Tales*  
Stowe, *Dred*  
Chronology

1857    Melville, *The Confidence-Man*
        *Dred Scott* case upholds Fugitive Slave Law

1859    Longfellow, *The Courtship of Miles Standish and Other Poems*
        Simms, *The Cassique of Kiawah*
        Thoreau, “A Plea for Captain John Brown”
        Irving completes *Life of George Washington*
        John Brown leads raid at Harper’s Ferry armory, captured and executed
        Darwin, *Origin of Species*

1860    Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*
        Abraham Lincoln elected president

1861    Rebecca Harding (later Davis), “Life in the Iron Mills”
        Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
        Eleven states secede to form Confederate States of America
        Civil War begins

1862    Thoreau dies

1863    Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*
        Lincoln delivers “Gettysburg Address”

1864    Thoreau, *Maine Woods* (published posthumously)
        Hawthorne dies

1865    Thoreau, *Cape Cod* (published posthumously)
        Whitman, *Drum-Taps* (later incorporated into *Leaves of Grass*)
        Civil War ends
        Lincoln assassinated
        Thirteenth Amendment ratified, abolishing slavery in the United States

1866    Melville, *Battle-Pieces*
        Completion of first permanent transatlantic telegraph cable

1867    Longfellow, *The Divine Comedy of Dante*

1868    Fourteenth Amendment ratified

1869    Harper, *Moses: A Story of the Nile; Minnie’s Sacrifice*
        Copway dies
        Completion of Transcontinental Railroad

1870    Simms dies
        Fifteenth Amendment ratified

1871    Whitman, *Memoranda During the War*

1872    Longfellow, *Christus: A Mystery*
        María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *Who Would Have Thought It?*
        Fern dies

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Chronology

1876      Melville, *Clarel*  
Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*  

1877      Henry James, *The American*  
Reconstruction in the former Confederacy ends  

1878      Bryant dies  

1881      Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (revised 1892)  

1882      Whitman, *Specimen Days*  
Longfellow dies  

1884      Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*  
Emerson dies  

1885      Warner dies  

1886      Dickinson dies  
United States signs international copyright agreement  

1891      Melville dies, manuscript for *Billy Budd* discovered  

1892      Harper, *Iola Leroy*  
Whitman dies, completes “deathbed edition” (7th ed.) of *Leaves of Grass*  

1893      World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago  

1895      Douglass dies  

1896      *Plessy v. Ferguson* asserts legality of Jim Crow segregation laws  

1903      W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*  

1911      Harper dies