

## THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

*The Cambridge History of American Literature* addresses the broad spectrum of new and established directions in all branches of American writing and will include the work of scholars and critics who have shaped, and who continue to shape, what has become a major area of literary scholarship. The authors span three decades of achievement in American literary criticism, thereby speaking for the continuities as well as the disruptions sustained between generations of scholarship. Generously proportioned narratives allow at once for a broader vision and sweep of American literary history than has been possible previously, and while the voice of traditional criticism forms a background for these narratives, it joins forces with the diversity of interests that characterize contemporary literary studies.

The *History* offers wide-ranging, interdisciplinary accounts of American genres and periods. Generated partly by the recent unearthing of previously neglected texts, the expansion of material in American literature coincides with a dramatic increase in the number and variety of approaches to that material. The multifaceted scholarly and critical enterprise embodied in *The Cambridge History of American Literature* addresses these multiplicities – the social, the cultural, the intellectual, and the aesthetic – and demonstrates a richer concept of authority in literary studies than is found in earlier accounts.

This volume is the fullest account to date of American poetry and literary criticism in the modernist period. The history unfolds through three distinct perspectives, which are however connected through a common paradox at the heart of both the poetry and the criticism. Modernist writers sought passionately to escape history even as they passionately engaged it – they championed unfettered creative genius but they believed that the strongest art makes an exacting response to the culture in which it arises. Andrew DuBois and Frank Lentricchia trace this development in the work of Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Wallace Stevens. They show how the conditions of literary production in a democratic, market-driven society forced the boldest of the modernists to try to reconcile their need for commercial remuneration with their knowledge that their commitment to high art might never pay. Irene Ramalho Santos broadens the scope of the poetic scene through attention to a wide diversity of writers – with special emphasis on Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, H. D., Marianne Moore, and Langston Hughes – all of whom, in very different ways, understood the modernist imperative to “make it new” to apply not only the best remnants of Western civilization, but also to hitherto unrepresented constituencies of contemporary society. William Cain describes the literary critical counterpart to that achievement. Combining social and intellectual history with literary biography, he traces both the rise of an internationalist academic aesthetics and the process by which the study of a distinctive national literature was instituted. His narrative ranges from the early progressivists through the major Americanists and the New Criticism, documenting the conflicting forces that shaped the special role of the literary critic in the United States. Considered together, these three narratives convey the astonishing modernist poetic achievement in its full cultural, institutional, and aesthetic complexity.

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF  
AMERICAN LITERATURE

Volume 5  
1900–1950

THE CAMBRIDGE  
HISTORY OF  
AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Poetry and Criticism  
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*Sacvan Bercovitch*

### MODERNIST LYRIC IN THE CULTURE OF CAPITAL

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*Frank Lentricchia*

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*Andrew DuBois*

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*Irene Ramalho Santos*

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*William E. Cain*

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