

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
THE LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

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



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42091-4 — The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American Renaissance
Edited by Christopher N. Phillips
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108420914

DOI: 10.1017/9781108355643

© Cambridge University Press 2018

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 2018

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-42091-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-43108-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or 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.

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	page vii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xii
<i>Chronology</i>	xiii
Introduction: The Very Idea of an American Renaissance	I
CHRISTOPHER N. PHILLIPS	
PART I INTO THE RENAISSANCE	
1 Reading the American Renaissance in a Pennsylvania Library	13
CHRISTOPHER N. PHILLIPS	
2 Cooper, Simms, and the Boys of Summer	24
JEFFREY WALKER	
3 The Trouble with the Gothic: Poe, Lippard, and the Poetics of Critique	38
RUSSELL SBRIGLIA	
4 Emerson and Hawthorne; or, Locating the American Renaissance	52
GAVIN JONES AND JUDITH RICHARDSON	
5 Cosmopolite at Home: Global Longfellow	66
CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER	
PART II RETHINKING THE RENAISSANCE	
6 Sins of the Rising Generation: Religion and the American Renaissance	83
ZACHARY MCLEOD HUTCHINS	

CONTENTS

7	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> and the Struggle Over Meaning: From Slavery to Race	97
	BARBARA HOCHMAN	
8	The (Im)Possibilities of Indianness: George Copway and the Problem of Representativity	113
	MARK RIFKIN	
9	The Poetess at Work	128
	ALEXANDRA SOCARIDES	
10	Fern, Warner, and the Work of Sentimentality	142
	JENNIFER L. BRADY	
11	Melville: The Ocean and the City	157
	WYN KELLEY	
PART III BEYOND THE RENAISSANCE		
12	Whitman, In and Out of the American Renaissance	175
	DAVID HAVEN BLAKE	
13	A Renaissance-Self: Frederick Douglass and the Art of Remaking	189
	ZOE TRODD	
14	Frances Ellen Watkins Harper "In the Situation of Ishmael"	205
	MELBA JOYCE BOYD	
15	The Corner-stones of Heaven: Science Comes to Concord	221
	LAURA DASSOW WALLS	
	Coda: War and the Renaissance	235
	CHRISTOPHER N. PHILLIPS	
	<i>Further Reading</i>	242
	<i>Index</i>	245

FIGURES

- | | | |
|------|---|----------|
| 7.1 | Topsy-Turvy doll, 1855–1880; Textile, paint; Overall:
18 1/8 × 9 1/2 × 2 in. (46 × 24.1 × 5.1 cm); object #1961.30;
New-York Historical Society. | page 104 |
| 7.2 | Broadside of Mary Webb’s Stafford House performance of
<i>The Christian Slave</i> , 1856. Harriet Beecher Stowe Center,
Hartford, CT. | 111 |
| 9.1 | “The Young Poetess,” <i>Graham’s American Monthly Magazine
of Literature and Art</i> (August 1, 1844), 72. Courtesy, American
Antiquarian Society. | 129 |
| 9.2 | Frontispiece, portrait of Frances Osgood, <i>The American Female
Poets</i> , ed. Caroline May (Philadelphia: Lindsey & Blakiston, 1848).
Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society. | 139 |
| 13.1 | Unknown photographer, c. 1853. Sixth-plate daguerreotype
(3 1/8 × 2 3/4 in.). Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, Open
Access for Scholarly Content. | 195 |
| 13.2 | George Kendall Warren, c. 1879. 289 Washington Street, Boston,
MA. Cabinet card (4 1/4 × 6 1/2 in.). Courtesy Metropolitan Museum
of Art, Open Access for Scholarly Content. | 196 |
| C.1 | Bronze plaque displaying a stanza from Theodore O’Hara’s “The
Bivouac of the Dead,” Gettysburg National Cemetery, Gettysburg
National Military Park. Photograph by the author. | 237 |

CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID HAVEN BLAKE is Professor of English at The College of New Jersey. He is the author of *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity* (2006) and the co-editor of *Walt Whitman: Where the Future Becomes Present* (2008). His most recent book is *Liking Ike: Eisenhower, Advertising, and the Rise of Celebrity Politics*, winner of the 2017 PROSE award for Media & Cultural Studies.

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, anti-novel 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.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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.

GAVIN JONES is Professor of English at Stanford University, and has served as his department's Chair (2011–2015). He is the author of *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (1999), *American Hungers: The Problem of Poverty in US Literature, 1840–1945* (2007), and *Failure and the American Writer: A Literary History* (2014). He is currently working on a study of John Steinbeck's visions of twentieth-century American history.

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).

ALEXANDRA SOCARIDES is the author of *Dickinson Unbound: Paper, Process, Poetics* (2012) and the co-editor of *A History of Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 2016). Her essays have appeared in, among other publications, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, and *The Emily Dickinson Journal*. She is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri.

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

Transcendentalism, including her most recent book, the general-interest biography *Henry David Thoreau: A Life* (2017), which grew out of her first book, *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science* (1995). She is also the author of *Emerson's Life in Science: The Culture of Truth* (2003) and *Passage to Cosmos: Alexander von Humboldt and the Shaping of America* (2009), winner of the James Russell Lowell Prize from the Modern Language Association and the Merle Curti Award from the Organization of American Historians.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks as always to my wife, Emily, for sustaining so much of our life while this book took shape, and for our conversations that helped remind me of what fascinates me about the American Renaissance. For other conversations that helped to mold this project, my thanks to Ed Whitley, Claudia Stokes, Hal Bush, Brian Yothers, Hester Blum, Dana McClain, Faith Barrett, Ezra Greenspan, James Woolley, and Steve Belletto.

I voice my particular thanks to Ray Ryan, who believed in this project and its editor from the beginning and has seen it through the many ins and outs of producing a volume that can safely be said to “contain multitudes.” Working with each of the contributors has also been a joy and an education of a high order, and I feel a much-enlarged scholar of the field in learning from and engaging with each of them. Thank you, one and all.

My work on this volume was supported by generous funding from a National Endowment for the Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Library Company of Philadelphia and a Frederick C. Burkhardt Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies, the latter while in residence at the American Antiquarian Society. My thanks to each of those institutions, both foundations and libraries, for fostering this contribution to the scholarship and teaching of American literary studies at a moment when the American Renaissance, with all its contradictory impulses and contested meanings, seems more relevant to our times than ever.

CHRONOLOGY

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

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

CHRONOLOGY

- 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 Joaquín Murieta*
 Thoreau, *Walden*
 Cummins, *The Lamplighter*
- 1855 Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*
 Longfellow, *The Song of Hiawatha*
 Melville, “Benito Cereno”
 Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1st ed.
 “Bleeding Kansas”
- 1856 Melville, *The Piazza Tales*
 Stowe, *Dred*
 Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 2nd ed.

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 dies, 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*
 Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 3rd ed.
 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 Ruíz de Burton, *Who Would Have Thought It?*
 Fern dies

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