Gender in American Literature and Culture introduces readers to key developments in gender studies and American literary criticism. It offers nuanced readings of literary conventions and genres from early American writings to the present and moves beyond inflexible categories of masculinity and femininity that have reinforced misleading assumptions about public and private spaces, domesticity, individualism, and community. The book also demonstrates how rigid inscriptions of gender have perpetuated a legacy of violence and exclusion in the United States. Responding to a sense of twenty-first-century cultural and political crisis, it illuminates the literary histories and cultural imaginaries that have set the stage for urgent contemporary debates.


Jennifer Travis is the author of Danger and Vulnerability in Nineteenth-Century America Literature (2018) and Wounded Hearts: Masculinity, Law, and Literature in American Culture (2005), and the coeditor of Digital Humanities: Tools and Methods in Nineteenth Century American Literature (2018) and Boys Don’t Cry: Rethinking Masculinity and Emotion in the U.S. (2002). She is Professor and Chair of the English department at St. John’s University.
Twenty-first-century America puzzles many citizens and observers. A frequently cited phrase to describe current partisan divisions is Lincoln’s “A house divided against itself cannot stand,” a warning of the perils to the Union from divisions generated by slavery. America seems divided in almost every way, on almost every attitude. Civic dialogue on issues often seems extremely difficult. America is an experiment always in process, a remarkable union of 300 million diverse people covering all races and faiths. As a forum in which ideologies and interpretations abound, Literary Studies has a role to play in explanation and analysis. The series Cambridge Themes in American Literature and Culture addresses the key cultural themes that have brought America to its current moment. It offers a summation of critical knowledge on key cultural themes as well as an intervention in the present moment. This series provides a distinctive, authoritative treatment of the key literary and cultural strains in American life while also pointing in new critical directions.

Titles in the Series

War and American Literature
   Edited by Jennifer Haytock, SUNY–Brockport

Gender in American Literature and Culture
   Edited by Jean M. Lutes, Villanova University, and Jennifer Travis, St. John’s University

Apocalypse and American Literature and Culture
   Edited by John Hay, University of Nevada
Contents

List of Contributors viii
Acknowledgments xiv

Introduction: Gender Criticism in the Age of Trump 1
Jean M. Lutes and Jennifer Travis

PART I INTIMACIES

1 The Price of Freedom: Racialized Female Desire in Early America 23
Anna Mae Duane

2 Post-Reproductive Female Sexuality and the Early American Novel 37
Marion Rust

3 The Effeminate Man in Nineteenth-Century America 51
Travis M. Foster

4 Rereading Puritan Masculinity through Trans Theory 66
Ivy Schweitzer

5 “Unbounded Grief”: Black Maternal Sorrow and the Literature of Slavery 82
Shermaine M. Jones

6 Rethinking Reproductive Freedom through Transpacific Narratives 96
Yu-Fang Cho

7 Slow Emergency: Life Writing, Dementia, Gender, and Care 110
Rachel Adams
PART II AGRESSIONS

8 Sexual Violence and Indigenous Women: Rereading the Archive of Catharine Brown (Cherokee) 127
   Theresa Strouth Gaul

9 Intergenerational Memory and the Making of Indigenous Literary Kinships 142
   Susan Bernardin

10 US Women Writers, Sexual Violence, and Narrative Resistance 160
   Catherine Keyser

11 Gender, Violence, and Accountability in Contemporary Queer Latina Writing 173
   Lourdes Torres

12 The Literature of Racial Uplift and White Feminist Failure 188
   Brigitte Fielder

13 Black Male Studies and Contemporary African American Writing 204
   Seulghee Lee

14 Representations of White Masculinity in Veteran-Authored Iraq War Fiction 219
   Hamilton Carroll

PART III NEW DIRECTIONS

15 What a Doctor Should Look Like: Queer Femme Erasure and the Politics of Dress in the Nineteenth Century 237
   Christine "Xine" Yao

16 Genderqueer: Literary and Gender Experimentation in Twentieth-Century American Literature 255
   Jaime Harker

17 Fanfiction, Transformative Works, and Feminist Resistance in Digital Culture 271
   Anastasia Salter and Bridget Blodgett
Contents

18 Vulnerable States: Immigration and Gender in American Literature
   Sigrid Anderson
   286

19 The Mahjar: Arab Women’s Literary Culture in America at the Early Twentieth Century
   Elizabeth Claire Saylor
   300

20 Disabled Women’s Life Writing and the Problem with Recovery
   Clare Mullaney
   316

21 Feeling, Memory, and Peoplehood in Contemporary Native Women’s Poetry
   Mark Rifkin
   332

Bibliography

Index

© in this web service Cambridge University Press  www.cambridge.org
Contributors

RACHEL ADAMS is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Her books include *Raising Henry: A Memoir of Motherhood, Disability, and Discovery* (Yale University Press, 2014) and *Sideshow USA: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

SIGRID ANDERSON is the librarian for English language and literature at the University of Michigan. Anderson has a Ph.D. in English and American literature from the University of Virginia. She has published on American and British literature and culture, women’s writing, and transatlantic print culture. Her work has appeared in *Victorian Literature and Culture, American Periodicals*, and *portal: Libraries and the Academy*. Her book *Fictions of Dissent: Reclaiming Authority in Transatlantic Women’s Writing of the Late Nineteenth Century* (2010) was published by Pickering & Chatto.

SUSAN BERNARDIN is Director of the School of Language, Culture, and Society at Oregon State University, located within the homelands of the Ampinefu Band of Kalapuya. A coauthor of *Trading Gazes* (Rutgers), she also facilitated a new edition of *In the Land of the Grasshopper Song* (Bison) in collaboration with Karuk tribal members Terry Supahan and André Cramblit. She has received two Walker Awards and also the Beatrice Medicine Award for “Acorn Soup is Good Food: L. Frank, *News from Native California*, and Intersections of Literature and Visual Arts.” She is editor of *Gender and the American West* (Routledge, 2021).

BRIDGET BLODGETT is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Division of Science, Information Arts, and Technology at the University of Baltimore. Her research analyzes internet culture and the social impacts thereof on offline life. Her current research takes a critical eye to online game communities regarding gender, inclusiveness, and identity. *Toxic*
List of Contributors

Geek Masculinity in Media (with Anastasia Salter) was released in 2017 by Palgrave Macmillan and is the summation of this work to date.

Hamilton Carroll is Professor of American Studies at the University of Leeds. He is the author of Affirmative Reaction: New Formations of White Masculinity (Duke University Press, 2011). He has published widely on topics in contemporary American literature and culture in numerous edited collections and in journals such as Comparative American Studies, Genre, the Journal of American Studies, Modern Fiction Studies, Studies in American Fiction, and Television and New Media.

Yu-fang Cho is Professor of English and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Miami University, Oxford. She is the author of Uncoupling American Empire: Cultural Politics of Deviance and Unequal Difference, 1890–1910 (SUNY, 2014) and the coeditor of the 2017 special issue of American Quarterly, “The Chinese Factor: Reorienting Global Imaginaries in American Studies.” She has received fellowships from the Bancroft Library, the Huntington Library, the National Research Institute of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Taiwan, and Cornell University’s Society for the Humanities. Her current project is on how Asian-Indigenous relationality in transpacific cultural memory unsettles the post-WWII ideological shift of nuclear power from a death-making weapon to a technology of good life.

Anna Mae Duane is Associate Professor of English at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, where she teaches classes in American literature, childhood studies, and disability studies. She is the author or coeditor of seven books, including The Children’s Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities (University of Georgia Press, 2013) and Who Writes for Black Children? (coedited with Kate Capshaw, University of Minnesota Press, 2017). Her latest book, Educated for Freedom: The Incredible Story of Two Fugitive Schoolboys Who Grew Up to Change a Nation (New York University Press, 2020), is a dual biography of James McCune Smith and Henry Highland Garnet.

Brigitte Fielder is Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is (with Jonathan Senchyne) coeditor of Against a Sharp White Background: Infrastructures of African-American Print. Her first book Relative Races: Genealogies of Interracial Kinship in Nineteenth-Century America was published by Duke University Press in
List of Contributors

2020. She is currently working on a second book, on racialized human–animal relationships in the long nineteenth century.

Travis M. Foster is Associate Professor of English and Academic Director of Gender and Women’s Studies at Villanova University. He is the author of Genre and White Supremacy in the Postemancipation United States, published in 2019 as part of Oxford’s American Literary History series. He is also the editor of the forthcoming Cambridge Companion to American Literature and the Body and the coeditor of a special issue of Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers titled “American Women’s Writing and the Genealogy of Queer Thought.” His articles have appeared in American Literary History, American Literature, ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance, and History of the Present.

Theresa Strouth Gaul is Professor and Chair of English and former Director of Women and Gender Studies at Texas Christian University. Her publications include the award-winning Cherokee Sister: The Collected Writings of Catharine Brown, 1823–1839 (Nebraska, 2005) as well as other books and articles on women’s writings, early Cherokee studies, and epistolarity. A former coeditor of Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers, Gaul is editor of A Companion to American Literature, Vol. I: Origins to 1820 (Wiley Blackwell, 2020).

Jaime Harker is Professor of English and Director of the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies at the University of Mississippi. She is the author of three monographs: America the Middlebrow: Women’s Novels, Progressivism, and Middlebrow Authorship between the Wars; Middlebrow Queer: Christopher Isherwood in America; and The Lesbian South: Southern Feminism, the Women in Print Movement, and the Queer Literary Tradition. Her work focuses on feminist and queer print culture in twentieth-century literature. She is also the founder of Violet Valley Bookstore, a queer feminist bookstore in Water Valley, Mississippi.

Shermaine M. Jones is Assistant Professor of African American Literature in the English Department at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research is concerned with race, affect, and the politics of mourning. Her publications include “Presenting Our Bodies, Laying Our Case: The Political Efficacy of Grief and Rage during the Civil Rights Movement in Alice Walker’s Meridian” in Southern Quarterly Journal and “‘I CAN’T BREATHE!’ Affective Asphyxia in Claudia
List of Contributors

Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric* in *South Journal*. She has received numerous fellowships in support of her work, including, most recently, the Woodrow Wilson Career Enhancement Fellowship 2018–2019.


Seulghee Lee is Assistant Professor of African American Literature and Culture at the University of South Carolina, where he holds a joint appointment in African American Studies and English. His work has appeared in *Lute & Drum* and *Ethnic Literatures and Transnationalism: Critical Imaginaries for a Global Age* (Routledge). He is currently completing his first book, *Other Lovings: Queer Love Bonds in Black and Yellow*, which examines queer love bonds in contemporary African American and Asian American texts. He is also working on a manuscript on anti-Asian misandry and the phenomenology of Asiatic maleness.

Jean M. Lutes is Professor of English at Villanova University, where she teaches American literature and gender studies. She is the editor of *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days and Other Writings by Nellie Bly* (Penguin, 2014) and the author of *Front-Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Literature and Culture, 1880–1930* (Cornell University Press, 2006).

Clare Mullaney received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Pennsylvania in 2018 and is currently an Assistant Professor at Clemson University, where she teaches courses on disability studies, American literature, and book history. Her research has appeared in *J19: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists, The New Emily Dickinson Studies* (Cambridge University Press), and *The Atlantic*.

Mark Rifkin is Professor of English and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Greensboro. He is the author of six books, most recently *Fictions of*
List of Contributors

Land and Flesh: Blackness, Indigeneity, Speculation (Duke University Press, 2019). His work has won several national awards, including the John Hope Franklin Prize for Best Book in American Studies and the Best Special Issue prize from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals. He has also served as president of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association.

Marion Rust is Professor of English at the University of Kentucky and editor of Early American Literature. Her most recent work, “How to Read an Early American Novel,” is forthcoming in The Cambridge Companion to Early American Literature. Other recent essays have appeared in American Literature and Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers. Professor Rust focuses on gender, self-narrative, academia, age, and sexuality, mostly, but not exclusively, within an early American context. She thanks the Just Teach One project for making the chapter in this volume possible.

Anastasia Salter is Associate Professor of Games and Interactive Media and Director of Graduate Programs for the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Central Florida. She is the author of What Is Your Quest? From Adventure Games to Interactive Books (University of Iowa Press, August 2014); Flash: Building the Interactive Web (MIT Press, August 2014, with John Murray); Jane Jensen: Gabriel Knight, Adventure Games, Hidden Objects (Bloomsbury, April 2017); Toxic Geek Masculinity in Media: Sexism, Trolling, and Identity Policing (Palgrave Macmillan, December 2017, with Bridget Blodgett); and Adventure Games: Playing the Outsider (Bloomsbury, February 2020, with Aaron Reed and John Murray).

Elizabeth Claire Saylor is Assistant Professor of Arabic at North Carolina State University and holds degrees from Columbia University and the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Saylor’s research focuses on Arab women’s literature, mahjar literature, the early Arabic novel, and early Syrian immigration to North and South America. Her current book project examines a neglected pioneer of the Arabic novel, the Lebanese immigrant writer, journalist, and feminist ‘Afifa Karam (1883–1924). A passionate and award-winning teacher of Arabic language, literature, and culture, Saylor also directs an intensive summer Arabic program in Jerusalem.

Ivy Schweitzer is Professor of English and past chair of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Dartmouth College. Her fields are...
List of Contributors


Lourdes Torres is Vincent de Paul Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at DePaul University and editor of *Latino Studies*, the flagship journal in the field of Latino studies. She teaches and publishes in the areas of sociolinguistics, Spanish in the United States, Latina/o/x culture, and queer Latinidades. She is the author of *Puerto Rican Discourse* and coeditor of *Tortilleras: Hispanic and Latina Lesbian Expression* and *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Her recent essays have appeared in *Meridians*, *MELUS*, *Centro Journal*, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, and *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*.

Jennifer Travis is Professor and Chair of the English department at St. John’s University, New York, where she teaches American literature, gender studies, and digital humanities. Her most recent books include *Danger and Vulnerability in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2018) and *Teaching with Digital Humanities: Tools and Methods for Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2018).

Christine “Xine” Yao is Lecturer in American Literature to 1900 at University College London. Her book *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling in Nineteenth-Century America* is under contract with Duke University Press. Her essays have appeared in *J19, Occasion*, and *American Quarterly*. Her interests include affect studies through critical race and ethnic studies and queer of color critique. Xine cohosts PhDivas, a podcast about academia, culture, and social justice across the STEM/humanities divide. Her honors include the ASA Yasuo Sakakibara Essay Prize, and her research has been supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our contributors, first and foremost, for sharing their vision and critical imagination. We are also indebted to Ray Ryan, our editor at Cambridge, for inviting and supporting the project; to our anonymous reviewers at Cambridge for offering crucial guidance at an early stage; and to Zachary Richards and Caitlyn Dittmeier for their timely editorial assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication.