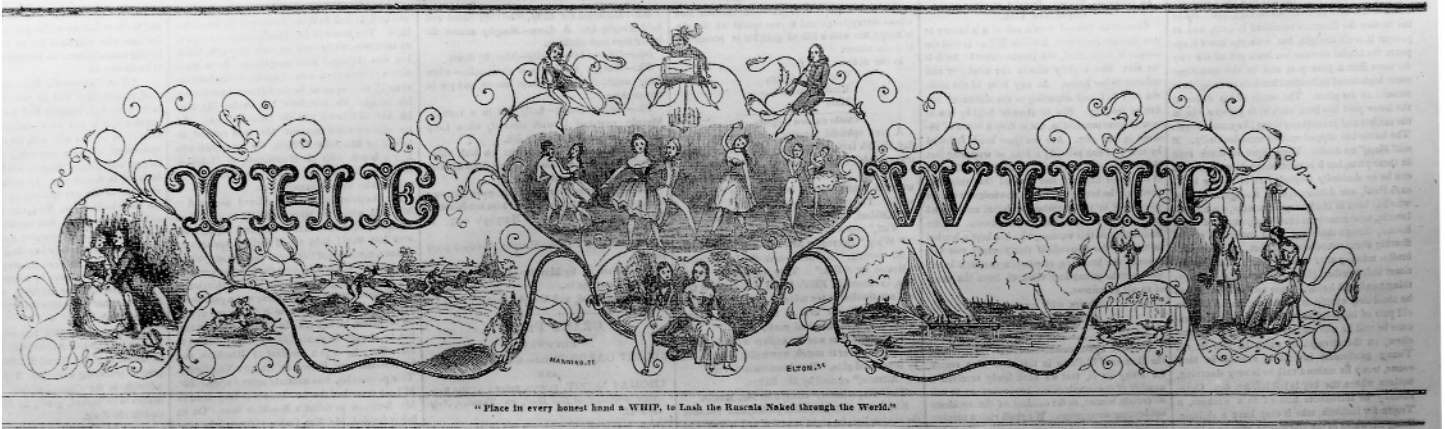


# THE BOOK

JULY 2004, NUMBER 63



The masthead for the *Whip* was drawn by John H. Manning (born c. 1820) who was active as an artist and illustrator from 1841 through about 1859.

## Recent Gifts to Society Stimulate New Scholarship in the History of the Book

Two articles in the recently published issue of the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* highlight new accessions to the AAS collections. The first provides an extensive introduction and annotation of a heretofore unknown antislavery sermon manuscript attributed to the Reverend Samuel Hopkins. Sid Lapidus, collector and AAS Council member, spotted this important manuscript in a bookseller's catalogue the day he received it and called it to our attention. The price was commensurate with its great research value, and Sid generously offered to contribute a substantial portion of the cost enabling the Society to buy it.

The second article, on the New York sporting weeklies, is based on a collection of newspapers given to the Society by Leo Hershkowitz. Professor Hershkowitz, AAS member, donated runs of twenty-seven rare titles, known as the sporting press or racy newspapers. These flourished during the antebellum period to cater to young men who had come to New York to seek their fortune and have their fun. Some of the issues—which he rescued from a dumpster—had been marked up as evidence for prosecutions of obscenity cases.

Jonathan D. Sassi, associate professor of history at the College of Staten Island and the CUNY Graduate Center, who was the AAS-American Association for Eighteenth-Century Studies Fellow in 1999-2000, prepared "‘This whole country have their hands full of Blood this day’: Transcription and Introduction of an Antislavery Manuscript Attributed to the Reverend Samuel Hopkins." He cites Samuel Hopkins's own statement in a 1789 letter describing his move in 1770 to a pastorate in Newport, Rhode Island, where "his attention was soon turned to the slave trade, which had long been carried on here [and where he found himself] almost alone in my opposition to the *slave trade* and the slavery of the Africans." Sassi argues that this sermon "sheds important new light on the origins of Samuel Hopkins's antislavery stance beyond his well-known

publication of 1776, *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*." He parses the "tangled intellectual and social roots of Hopkins's abolitionism" expressed in the twenty-eight-page text replete with powerful rhetorical devices designed to challenge the thinking of his congregation.

Responding to Sassi's carefully researched introduction, AAS member and economic historian John J. McCusker, a member of the Board of Advisors of the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, observed: "...I was particularly taken by Jonathan Sassi's piece on Samuel Hopkins. It is extremely well done both as an introduction to and as a presentation of the document. I admire the thoroughness of the introduction and the sensitivity to time, place and subject. As I read along, he addressed each of my questions almost as quickly as they developed. I

If 3 why is all y<sup>e</sup> ineffectual to procure y<sup>e</sup>  
 God's help? nay, why does a holy God reject  
 all y<sup>e</sup> as abominable to him & seek to be  
 could not bear, & absolutely forbid it as y<sup>e</sup> w<sup>o</sup>  
 his soul hates? We are told in y<sup>e</sup> text. Your  
 hands are full of blood. And y<sup>e</sup> refuse to wash  
 & cleanse y<sup>e</sup> fingers from y<sup>e</sup> filthy nap, but that to  
 bribe God Almighty by y<sup>e</sup> Devotions to remove  
 his Judgements & give y<sup>e</sup> leave to go on in sin.  
 But here I shall con: 1 w<sup>h</sup> a pp: maybe do  
 to have y<sup>e</sup> hands full of blood, & 2 try y<sup>e</sup> by y<sup>e</sup>  
 character of y<sup>e</sup> pp: of y<sup>e</sup> country.

- 1 a pp maybe do to have y<sup>e</sup> hands full of blood  
 w<sup>h</sup> y<sup>e</sup> take away life unjustly, or shed innocent  
 blood, as Manassah did, & connive, at it as y<sup>e</sup>  
 pp: of Israel did in his time, by w<sup>h</sup> means it  
 become y<sup>e</sup> sin of y<sup>e</sup> whole Land.
- 2 w<sup>h</sup> y<sup>e</sup> are unkind, malicious, cruel hat-  
 ing one another. Murder begins in y<sup>e</sup> heart  
 he y<sup>e</sup> hates his Brother is a murderer y<sup>e</sup> 3.15
- 3 w<sup>h</sup> Extortion & oppression prevail among  
 a pp: y<sup>e</sup> maybe do to have y<sup>e</sup> hands full of  
 blood, for by Extortion y<sup>e</sup> means of life are  
 taken away, w<sup>h</sup> are expressly called life  
 Dut. 20.19 The Tre of y<sup>e</sup> field, mans life  
 & it appears from y<sup>e</sup> counsel God gave y<sup>e</sup> pp:  
 of y<sup>e</sup> Jews at y<sup>e</sup> veriftime w<sup>h</sup> y<sup>e</sup> are charged  
 with having y<sup>e</sup> hands full of blood; if it was  
 Extortion & oppression it was y<sup>e</sup> sin y<sup>e</sup> prevailed  
 among y<sup>e</sup> & upon w<sup>h</sup> y<sup>e</sup> charge was chiefly  
 founded, see v. 17 Seek Judgement, relieve  
 y<sup>e</sup> oppressed, judge, & fatherly, plea for y<sup>e</sup> widows  
 & y<sup>e</sup> orphan in a course of sin agt y<sup>e</sup>
- 4 w<sup>h</sup> a pp go on in a course of sin agt y<sup>e</sup>  
 G: as y<sup>e</sup> by trample under foot y<sup>e</sup> blood by  
 w<sup>h</sup> y<sup>e</sup> are sanctified, & become guilty of y<sup>e</sup>  
 blood of y<sup>e</sup> 2. 2. 3. y<sup>e</sup> on y<sup>e</sup> account maybe do to  
 have y<sup>e</sup> hands full of blood. e

A page (3) from a manuscript antislavery sermon by the Reverend Samuel Hopkins of Newport, Rhode Island. It was written sometime in 1776 on a text from Isaiah 1:15: "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: Your hands are full of blood."

especially liked the way he finessed the issue of the importance of the slave trade to the colonies and to Newport, a subject of some difficulty to many who want to make more of colonial involvement as shippers in the trade than the evidence warrants." Reflecting on the slavery context in which the sermon was delivered, McCusker observes: "There is no question that much of the colonial economy hinged on slaves and slavery. The simple fact is that almost all slaves imported into the colonies (i.e., before the American Revolution) were brought in British-owned vessels. On average, over the important five years from 1768 to 1772 fewer than thirty ships sailed from the continental colonies to Africa for slaves, just over half of them from Rhode Island. That number represented less than one-half of one percent of all ships cleared from colonial ports. The number of

slaves imported from Africa into the British colonies during that same period that were transported in ships owned and operated by the colonists was about one-seventh of all slaves transported in British-owned ships. The number brought by Rhode Island-owned ships was half that, less than 4 percent. That Rhode Islanders were involved in the slave trade, there can be no doubt. The extent of their involvement prior to the American Revolution was nowhere near as great as it was to become later — even if attempts to limit that involvement by the preaching of Samuel Hopkins or anyone else met fierce Yankee resistance. Attempts by anyone to limit the colonial economy in any way met similarly fierce resistance, as we all know." McCusker is Ewing Halsell Distinguished Professor of American history and professor of economics at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas.

Very different from the Hopkins sermon in tone and substance are the witty and irreverent drawings made in the early 1840s for a new kind of publication, the sporting press and comic almanacs. They are the subject of Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz's illustrated article "Another 'American Cruikshank' Found: John H. Manning and the New York Sporting Weeklies." Horowitz is the Sydenham C. Parsons Professor of American Studies at Smith College and was the Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at AAS in 1999-2000. The American artist John H. Manning, who was employed by Robert H. Elton, supplied many of the images designed to attract readers with humorous yet often ambiguous scenes.

Also appearing in this issue (Volume 112, part 1) of the *Proceedings* is Claire Parfait's essay, "The Nineteenth-Century Serial as a Collective Enterprise: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*." Each of the essays is available as a separate offprint. Further details may be found on the AAS website.

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The editor welcome all news relevant to the interests of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture.

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*Matriculants and faculty of the 2004 Summer Seminar: front row from left: Wolfe, Nixon, Tompkins, Chaison, McCarthy; second row: McEntee, Faulkner, Schoolman; third row: Schachterle, Schaaf, Carlyon; fourth row; Szczesiul, Peterson, Alemán; fifth row: Pratt, Fafluk, McKee, Kubl, McKnight; top row: Gura, White, Habich, Hench.*

## The 2004 Summer Seminar in the History of the Book

### “SUMMER CAMP” FOR STUDENTS OF PRINT CULTURE

From June 20 to June 25, 2004, twenty students participated in AAS’s annual seminar in the history of the book in American culture. Philip Gura, Newman Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and AAS Research Librarian Joanne Chaison designed this year’s topic, “Enriching American Studies Scholarship through the History of the Book,” to attract students from a wide range of disciplines, and they were not disappointed. Ranging from full professors to graduate students commencing their dissertations, and travelling from as far away as New Mexico, Colorado, and North Carolina, the class brought to the table remarkable interests and projects that were then expanded and refined through an introduction to scholarship in book history.

The first day consisted of introductory sessions, led by Chaison and Thomas Knoles, curator of manuscripts, on resources for the study of American book history at AAS, and another on the materiality of texts, overseen by James N. Green, associate librarian of the Library Company of Philadelphia. A highlight of the latter session was a presentation on the operation of the early American printing press by AAS curator of newspapers Vincent Golden. Thereafter, the weeklong seminar was built around three different research areas: the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s; the intersection of early photography with emergent print culture in the 1840s and 1850s; and the recovery

of American literary texts, both prose and poetry, in the period of the “American Renaissance.” Each unit comprised discussion of relevant contemporary scholarship as well as “hands-on” sessions. These were held in the Council Room and devoted to the students’ examination and discussion of rare primary materials from AAS’s holdings. Among the treasures used for these classes were the first published accounts of Jonathan Edwards’s revivals in Northampton, Massachusetts; examples of the first use of photographs for book illustrations; and issues of the *Broadway Belle*, a rare newspaper edited by George Thompson, America’s premier purveyor of erotic literature. In these presentations Eliza Richards, assistant professor of English at Boston University (who will be joining the faculty at Chapel Hill in September), spoke eloquently on the circulation of nineteenth-century American women’s poetry, and Georgia Barnhill, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Graphic Arts at AAS, led the stimulating discussion on early photography and its relation to print culture, assisting seminar leader Philip Gura.

A unique feature of this year’s seminar was each student’s presentation of his or her research interest, followed by a brainstorming session on how the topic might be enriched through attention to the history of print culture. A total of five sessions was devoted to these projects, on such varied topics as the pulp fiction about the Mexican War, the cultural significance of the Mather family library (many volumes of which are held by AAS),

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the cultural history of Southern hospitality, and the urban boardinghouse as literary trope. In sum, these research interests defined the great variety of interdisciplinary work that continues to characterize the best work in American studies.

Seminar participants came away from the weeklong experience with a renewed appreciation of the centrality of print culture to a wide range of scholarship and an eagerness to explore AAS's unparalleled holdings in all areas of American history and culture prior to 1876.

Philip F. Gura

## MATRICULANTS

Jesse Alemán, assistant professor of English, University of New Mexico; Jonathan Carlyon, assistant professor of Spanish, Colorado State University; David Faflik, Ph.D. candidate in American literature, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Carol Faulkner, assistant professor of history, SUNY Geneseo; Robert Habich, professor of English, Ball State University; Alisha Knight, assistant professor of English, Washington College (Maryland); Nancy Kuhl, assistant curator of American literature, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Molly McCarthy, visiting assistant professor of history, Wellesley College; Grace McEntee, professor of English, Appalachian State University; Maura McKee, Ph.D. candidate in American literature, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Cheryl Nixon, assistant professor of English, University of Massachusetts-Boston; Mark Peterson, associate professor of history, University of Iowa; Lloyd Pratt, assistant professor of English, Yale University; Jennifer Schaaf, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Pennsylvania; Lance Schachterle, associate provost and professor of English, Worcester Polytechnic Institute; Martha Schoolman, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of Pennsylvania; Anthony Szczesiul, associate professor of English, University of Massachusetts-Lowell; Kyla Wazana Tompkins, assistant professor of English, Pomona College; Melissa White, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of Virginia; Su Wolfe, senior cataloger and serials specialist, American Antiquarian Society.

## MATRICULANTS' PERSPECTIVES

### Molly McCarthy (history)

Book history is hot. Or, at least, the phrase seems to be thrown around an awful lot of late. But what exactly is it, who does it, and how do I get a license to practice? The Summer Seminar took away some of the mystique linked with those who “do” book history and showed me how I, too, could add to my historian’s bag of tricks by enlisting a book-history approach in my research and teaching.

More valuable than all the assigned readings put together was the way in which the AAS staff opened its stacks (figuratively, that is) and allowed seminar participants to touch and feel the raw materials of book history: books, pamphlets, broadsides, newspapers, periodicals, lithographs, sheet music, even daguerreo-

types. It was in these interactive workshops, which built on earlier seminar discussions, where I learned the most, both from the seminar leaders and my fellow participants. It helped me understand how historians could benefit from widening their field of vision beyond the words on the page to the object itself by posing questions many historians are not accustomed to asking. For instance, we considered the various ways in which “The Great Awakening” was orchestrated as a textual event; the role poetry played in nineteenth-century working-class periodicals such as the *Lowell Offering* or the *Operative*; and the impact photography, in the form of the daguerreotype, had on ideas of artistic representation. In all cases, seeing the actual artifacts and analyzing such features as layout, format, edition, and publisher, not to mention the presence of manuscript inscriptions or marginalia left by previous owners, were instrumental pieces of the puzzle. Luckily, James Green, one of two guest faculty, spent an afternoon early in the week giving us a bibliographic tour through early American printing so we could better “read” the objects spread out in front of us.

Still, the challenge for those enlisting this mode of “reading” books and other printed ephemera is in connecting the kind of raw bibliographic data we assembled in our workshops with larger historical trends. Book history seems most fundamental when the answers to the sorts of questions focusing on the production and distribution of print are put in service of broader inquiries regarding the circulation and dissemination of ideas or the cultural work such printed matter performs at a particular moment or, indeed, across time. By the end of the week, each seminar participant had a chance in a series of roundtable discussions to open up his or her own project to both the narrow and the broad questions that the pursuit of book history engages. Like the interactive workshops, it was another way, though much more intricate and intimate, of witnessing how the tools of book history may correspond to a wide array of literary and historical projects. If there is one lesson I learned, it is that book history, in some way or other, almost always applies.

### Nancy Kuhl (curator of rare books)

I attended the Summer Seminar with the hope of enriching the work I do with Yale University undergraduates who visit the Beinecke Library. Often, students who come to the library with classes in American literature, African American studies, and American studies have never been to a rare book library before; thus, I design class sessions to introduce students to materials related to the courses at hand, but also to give them a basic sense of how scholars use original documents and rare books to enhance their understanding of a book’s reception, its history, and its position in American culture.

Because supporting the research of scholars using materials in our collections is also an important part of my work at the Beinecke, the seminar’s format—a combination of intense discussion across academic disciplines; hands-on study of nineteenth-century periodicals, illustrated books, daguerreotypes; and other

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materials from the AAS collections, and lengthy discussions of participants' works-in-progress—was very useful to me. This varied use of class sessions allowed for the investigation of the history of the book from a range of critical and theoretical perspectives and for the practice of common research methodologies in the study of print culture and book history.

Sessions dedicated to works-in-progress allowed for in-depth examination of individual projects, research methodologies, and new ideas. The shared expertise of seminar participants and leaders generated a kind of running bibliography of books and archival resources, pointing to the many innovative ways history of the book scholarship has been incorporated into research in various disciplines. These sessions—which considered a range of literary formats, forms, and genres, engaging topics and issues across academic fields—continued our discussion of issues and questions raised throughout the week. They also offered specific contexts for thinking about the history of the book and for envisioning ways it can enhance scholarship and teaching in many disciplines. After the AAS seminar, I feel I am better able to situate class exhibitions and discussions within the broader context of nineteenth- and twentieth-century print culture and the history of printing in America. The opportunity to discuss ideas for engaging students in the study of rare books, early periodicals, and other printed and manuscript materials with faculty members in different disciplines and with advanced graduate students was extremely useful to me, and I will refer back to conversations I had with my fellow AAS seminar participants often as I develop class exhibitions for the coming academic year.

### **Jesse Alemán (English)**

After a full day's travel from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Providence, Rhode Island, and then a short jaunt from Providence to Worcester, I arrived famously late to the welcoming reception. "Famously late" because, first, I showed up in a Worcester Polytechnic Institute squad car—Neal, one of WPI's finest, sensed I was late and shuttled me to the Goddard-Daniels House (GDH)—and, second, because someone had started the Kerouacian rumor that I drove all the way from Albuquerque. So I missed the opening session proper, but found the GDH porch filled with excitement and collegiality, a friendly, intellectual energy that pervaded the weeklong seminar and certainly made it a refreshing and rewarding learning experience.

The leader Philip Gura, the session's invited faculty, and the AAS staff created an ensemble of rigorous reading materials and informative, "hands-on" sessions to provide a broad but focused approach to the "History of the Book." Even the selected participants reflected a range of interests that dovetailed into book history. The eclectic literary and historical interests converged on the assumption that there is more to books than just words on the page—that, in fact, books are material and cultural artifacts that tell a story even before you open them.

James N. Green taught us that before the book is ever made, the production of its paper tells the story of emerging technolo-

gies, divisions of labor, developments in the print industry, and changes in the economy. The development of the printing press—from wood to iron to power presses—likewise narrates the relationship between technology, literacy, and book circulation, while book bindings, cloth covers, and even gold leafing reveal the secrets of the book's publication history: its printer, binder, intended audience, cost, and even its cultural value at the time of production. With wry authority, Green's "hands-on" session perfectly characterized what it means to study the book as a composite of production histories, laborers and skilled workers, resources and print technologies, and market forces that shaped the book's story.

Illustrations, etchings, daguerreotypes, lithographs, and photos also have their own histories of development in print, and Gigi Barnhill shared with us the story of early photography in relation to books. Daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, wet plate photos, and stereoscopes, Barnhill noted, marked radical changes in modes of representation that made the painted portrait a cultural vestige and also heralded changes in the modern era—as Holgrave of Hawthorne's *House of Seven Gables* reminds us—that influenced book production and the accessibility of representational art across class lines. Early photography transformed print culture perhaps even as it challenged its mimetic value by adding yet another subplot to the book's story.

But perhaps the story behind the story of the Summer Seminar was the collegiality of the seminar participants. The sessions were refreshingly rigorous, energetic, and courteous. All of the participants engaged in the round-table discussions and brought to our meetings complementary fields of study and different levels of experience that, in the end, made these sessions pass more like spirited conversations than formal seminar sessions. Seminar leader Philip Gura certainly inspired the week's collegiality, for he is not only outrageously well read in the areas of American studies, the history of the book, and nineteenth-century literature, he is also estimably casual and caring for a scholar of his standing.

Perhaps the geniality of the seminar participants stemmed from our excitement and interest in the history of the book; maybe it emerged from our mutual feelings of being on an "academic vacation" in Worcester; it certainly was fostered by the warm welcome Joanne Chaison, Caroline Sloat, and Philip Gura extended to us; and it was maintained daily by the freshness of the morning coffee and lunch salads the AAS staff provided. As with a single book, the AAS summer seminar reflects a collaborative effort that includes the mutual respect of scholars, the commitment of librarians and staff, and the overarching intellectual curiosity that brought us together in Worcester in the first place. And, as with any great masterpiece, it will keep us returning for more.

### **SYLLABUS**

Copies of the syllabus for "Enriching American Studies Scholarship through History of the Book" may be found on the Society's website: [www.americanantiquarian.org/sumsem04syl.htm](http://www.americanantiquarian.org/sumsem04syl.htm)

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## Research Note

**S**emi-erotic and obscene books are among many underutilized research sources for studying American material culture. As a 2002-03 Reese Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society, I took advantage of access to an exceptional array of artifacts and staff specialists to research the production styles of American erotica publishers. My fellowship research has become the centerpiece of my dissertation, “American Publishers of Indecent Books, 1840-1890.”

That dissertation studies the relationship of social policies to the business strategies and technological practices of American publishers of racy and obscene books. At AAS, I located forty of about one hundred and thirty books listed in the reference works of the prominent nineteenth-century erotica bibliographer Henry Spencer Ashbee. The Society’s holdings are remarkably extensive in my field, and greatly enhanced my work towards a descriptive bibliography of erotic publications produced in whole or in part in the United States through 1890.

The Society, which stands among the few repositories in the world where research such as mine can be conducted, approaches access to even its most controversial holdings with a generous intention. The Society ensures the integrity of and researcher access to its collection through cataloguing that meets rigorous standards of authenticity for imprint date and location. In the study of erotic literature, the lack of veracity of publication information on a book’s title page ranks closely behind such factors as refusal to collect books, their intentional destruction, and the persistence of uncataloged collections as a research difficulty.

My research relies heavily upon the examination of artifacts to overcome the lack of surviving business records. AAS staff members expended great effort to facilitate the core technical research of my dissertation that includes the identification of printing technologies and paper composition as well as the type usage and illustration techniques characteristic of American erotica. Technical details can distinguish false imprints and establish

the range of domestic production methods employed for illicit publishing.

Gripping devices pulled sheets of paper through nineteenth-century printing presses, often leaving indentations that provide a wealth of details about a printer’s technological level. In consultation with staff, I structured a regional study of the prevalence of gripper marks on Bibles as a comparison to my study of erotica publications. I learned how to construct effective queries using the online catalogue to find publications printed on other power presses to confirm that certain pairs of u-shaped indentations can be linked only to the Adams power press, the dominant American book printing press for most of my period of study. Through gripper mark identification, sensational and semi-erotic literature can be linked closely to the use of that press while the evidence about Bibles and explicit erotica is less conclusive. I am also indebted to the Society for allowing me during my fellowship to make my first public presentation of my gripper identification method.

In the most important discovery of my fellowship, I located a wire seam on a single 1840s newspaper printed on what I believe to be straw paper. That mark confirms that at least one American manufacturer mass produced paper with a high straw content a decade before straw is known to have been a viable alternative fiber for machine production. Yellow and lacking durability when folded, straw paper has rarely been collected by American institutions. Conservation staff allowed me use of their laboratory facilities and advised me about the material.

Because AAS conscientiously collects varied examples of a single publication, research such as mine that will aid the conservation of a wide range of print artifacts and encourage a better understanding of American industrial experimentation can be conducted.

E. Haven Hawley  
Georgia Institute of Technology

## Book Notes

**Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 448 pp; cloth, \$27.50; ISBN 0-46508-193-2.**

Martin Luther proclaimed printing to be “God’s highest and extremest act of grace.” The early seventeenth-century engraver Jan van Schley depicted a printing press descending from heaven, to the welcoming hosannas of men and angels. A mid-nineteenth-century writer for the American Tract Society imagined the voice of God announcing the creation of the full panoply of modern communication technologies: “I the Lord

have given you . . . the ocean steamer, and the rail-way, and the steam printing-press, and the telegraph; employ all these for my glory and for the establishment of my kingdom!”

Compared to these unabashed creationists, professional historians of communications have been positively Darwinian. Great men—writers, publishers, inventors—certainly play their roles in the standard histories, but at least since Alfred McClung Lee’s *Daily Newspaper in America* (1937), histories of the media have favored evolution. “Social instruments like the daily newspaper grow as institutionalized forms in the evolutionary process,” Lee wrote. “This evolutionary process

operates through the factors of invention or social variation, selective elimination, and transmission. . . . The newspaper supplements and partially supplants more primitive means of transmission in response to the peculiar needs of urban civilization” (4). And so on. More recent historians have been less enamored of the jargon of Darwinism, but they have been no less persuaded that the development of the media has been an evolutionary process, driven by social forces such as democratization, commercialization, and urbanization. Even sudden advances in technology have come to seem more pulled by societal need than pushed by individual genius.

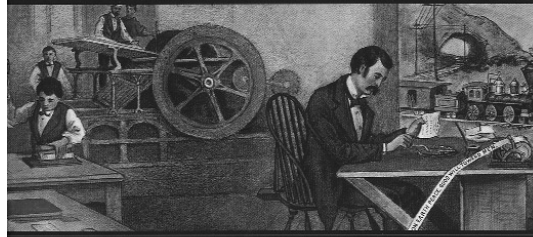
Now comes Paul Starr’s *The Creation of the Media*, a new creation story suited to a new age. In Starr’s account, the acts of creation are performed by men, not gods; and they are political acts, not technological inventions or commercial innovations. This is the theme of the book: that the media did not just evolve; it was created through specific policy decisions—what Starr calls “constitutive choices.” Starr’s focus on political policymaking leads him into a wide-ranging comparative history of the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. While media technology and capitalist economy were similar across nations, the institutions of government, policy, and law were different; and those differences were formative, sending nations down very different paths in the realm of mass media.

Though *The Creation of the Media* is a comparative history of communications, the United States is Starr’s most favored nation. “It is the particular argument of this book,” he writes, “that the United States has followed a distinctive developmental path in communications ever since the American Revolution” (2). This path brought the United States to preeminence in communications long before it rose to leadership in industry, science, or technology. By the early nineteenth century the Americans were already leaders in postal service and newspapers, later in telegraph and telephone, and later still in movies and broadcasting. “This pattern of early leadership and persistent advantage in communications,” according to Starr, “stems fundamentally from constitutive, political decisions that led the United States from its founding on a course sharply diverging from the patterns in Britain, elsewhere in Europe, and even in Canada” (3).

The key “foundational decisions” that set American media on its distinctive path in the nineteenth century include consti-

PAUL STARR

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE



THE CREATION  
OF THE MEDIA

Political Origins of  
Modern Communications

tutional provisions for copyright, patents, and press independence, coupled with newspaper subsidies through the postal service. Other constitutive choices came later with decisions to privatize telegraph, to separate telephone from telegraph through antitrust policy, and to regulate broadcasting through independent commission. Thus, while European nations taxed newspapers and nationalized telecommunications, the United States promoted private enterprise in media. But—and this is crucial to Starr’s argument—the American story is not one of laissez-faire commercialism. It is, rather, a story of the *political* construction of media systems, through subsidy, law, and myriad forms of regulation, both formal and informal.

Despite his comparative method, Starr’s story is squarely in the tradition of American exceptionalism. But it is exceptionalism of an up-to-date variety.

Starr’s understanding of American distinctiveness grows less from old celebratory notions of American cultural and economic genius and more from recent social and economic theory. Though he wears the mantle of theory lightly or closets it in the endnotes, Starr rests his argument for the force of constitutive decisions on recent theories of social constructionism in law, technology, and economics. American exceptionalism, in Starr’s view, is not about underlying cultural values but about specific historical choices. In the body of the book he draws on a homey Bible metaphor to tell us that “once the twig was bent, the tree started to grow in a particular direction—private interests accumulated, ideological defenses developed, and what was once an open question became a hardened institutional reality” (165). In the endnotes he draws on the jargon of sociology and economics to define his “constitutive approach” as a theory of “path dependence” (403).

Starr’s comparative method is also in line with current fashion in historiography, despite its emphasis on the American case. As part of a broad critique of American exceptionalism, historians in the United States have recently internationalized their discipline, effacing national borders and cultural boundaries. What was once called American colonial history, for example, has morphed into the history of the early modern Atlantic world. American religious history, business history, race and gender history, and even histories of progressivism and social reform have all been internationalized or, perhaps more properly, denationalized. Starr’s book falls nicely into the new

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paradigm of history without borders—but with a twist. In the end, for Starr, America is exceptional anyway. And even a little celebration is in order. Though he worries about the future of American public life in the current age of Big Media, Starr clearly likes what he sees in the American experience. “Our public life is a hybrid of capitalism and democracy, and we are better off for it,” he writes, “as long as the democratic side is able to keep the balance” (402).

Though set into a theoretical context of the new institutionalism and a historical context of the new internationalism, *The Creation of the Media* is first and foremost a sweeping narrative history of American media from the Revolution to World War II. And it is the best such history ever written. This is not to say that Starr has unearthed important new historical evidence or framed bold new historical interpretations. Nearly everything he writes—from descriptions of book history in the Atlantic world, to copyright and patent law, to the rise of radio—derives from the existing historical literature. Even his main historical insight—the crucial role of federal policymaking—grows largely from the spadework of historians of the postal service, such as Richard John and Richard Kielbowicz. *The Creation of the Media* succeeds then, not as novel interpretation, but as synthesis. Paul Starr seems to have read every book and article published in the last thirty years on the history of mass media in America, Canada, and Europe. And he has read well.

But labeling *The Creation of the Media* “synthesis” understates its achievement. This is truly a case where the whole adds up to much more than the sum of its parts. Though they do not necessarily use the terms, other authors have written thoughtfully about “constitutive choices” and “path dependence” in histories of the American postal service, copyright and patent law, antitrust law, and telephone and radio. But no one before Starr has pulled all of this material together to tell one grand story. Starr’s achievement is to re-imagine the history of communications as a single history of interconnected networks, policies, and institutions—not as variant histories of various media. In a sense, Starr argues, this was America’s achievement as well. While historians have tended to treat the media in isolation from one another, those who created the media in America did not. Put simply, *The Creation of the Media* is a splendid work of historical sociology and historical synthesis.

I have just one quibble. As a sociologist and historian, Starr is professionally predisposed to see constitutive power in social institutions and human choice. Banished from Starr’s creation story is any sort of technological determinism. It is law and policy that laid foundations, left legacies, and constrained future action. It is political decisions, not technologies, that left their mark. For the most part, I believe that this social constructionist version of media history is vastly superior to technological determinism. And yet the question nags: Does technology as technology have any constitutive force? Running through Starr’s analysis, lurking between the lines, is the sense that it sometimes does. Patent law, for example, was enor-

mously powerful in shaping media institutions and systems, and yet on occasion the sudden appearance of a new technology rendered both patents and the institutions that depended on them obsolete. In other words, though old notions of the independent power of technology do not hold up in our era of social constructionism, it may be that technology does sometimes float free of our ability to constitute and contain it. Things sometimes are in the saddle. The medium sometimes is the message. The printing press, perhaps, sometimes does descend from heaven.

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**Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 336 + xiv pp; cloth \$59.95; paper \$19.95; ISBN 0-80782-838-6**

The Second Great Awakening in America overlapped with a revolution in printing technology during the first half of the nineteenth century, and evangelicals seized the opportunity thus presented to disseminate their message in print. They published everything from theological treatises, denominational periodicals, and Sunday School textbooks to hymnals, memoirs, and novels that were consumed even by broader, non-evangelical audiences. These diverse products all had the common goals of reaching the world with the gospel and aiding believers on the path to righteousness. Evangelical printed works issued from a diverse group of publishing enterprises: strictly denominational ones, the largest and most important of which was the Methodist Book Concern; nondenominational organizations such as the American Tract Society; and trade publishers such as Harper and Brothers and J. B. Lippincott and Company, which offered many religious titles in their catalogues. Indeed, trade publishers offered many other works—*McGuffey’s Readers* for example—that were forthrightly moralistic without being overtly religious, so a clear-cut estimate of the evangelical impact on the publishing world is impossible to obtain. Nevertheless, as Candy Gunther Brown demonstrates in *The Word in the World*, evangelicals achieved a salient “presence”—to use one of her key terms—in the world of nineteenth-century publishing.

That presence, however, caused many concerns among evangelicals about their ability to maintain the “purity” of their message, to use another of her key terms. Who would ensure doctrinal orthodoxy without traditional ministerial oversight of the message? Would the profit motive corrupt the goals of evangelizing the world and sanctifying believers? Could fiction convey religious truth, or was the novel inherently too emotional and a hopeless waste of time that should have been better improved? Would reading become mere entertainment instead of the focused, self-reflective discipline it had been? This tug-of-war between desires for presence and purity serves



# The WORD *in the* WORLD



*Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading  
in America, 1789–1880*

CANDY GUNTHER BROWN

as the recurrent motif of the book; it is the classic question, in other words, of how to be in the world but not of it.

*The Word in the World* is an ambitious book, for not only does Brown encompass all of the different types of texts mentioned above, but she also considers the myriad actors involved, such as authors, editors, publishers, distributors, and readers. In order to get a handle on this potentially overwhelming mass of material, Brown identifies four recurrent “core narrative structures” within evangelical print: “contending for the faith, exemplifying the priesthood of all believers, infusing the world with sanctifying influences, and uniting as the church universal” (21). For example, denominational periodicals that engaged in doctrinal skirmishing were “contending for the faith,” while their readers who contributed letters to the editor were acting in the role of “the priesthood of all believers.” Christian novelists aimed to sanctify what most evangelicals regarded as an otherwise pernicious genre, and hymnal compilers created the appearance of a transatlantic, trans-denominational, and trans-historical “church universal” united around the great hymns of the faith. Brown has especially insightful things to say about how editors and publishers created an informal evangelical canon of books and hymns.

A book of such broad scope naturally crosses into a few different scholarly debates. For instance, Brown argues that

evangelical entry into new publishing genres and formats such as the novel did not signal trends toward secularization or the feminization of piety. Instead, she discusses such figures as Elizabeth Prentiss, who “was one of many nineteenth-century evangelical women who used fiction to sanctify the print market by translating doctrinal preaching into a popular cultural medium” (99). Brown also takes exception with scholars who have argued for a nineteenth-century “reading revolution,” in which there was “a transition from scarcity to abundance of printed texts that resulted in the replacement of intensive with extensive reading practices” (117). Instead, Brown describes a more complex picture, in which eclectic readers would both devour the latest evangelical novels and return again and again to internalize a favorite devotional volume. *The Word in the World* will be of interest to scholars engaged in these questions of American literary culture as well as historians of printed material and evangelicalism more generally.

The book is not a chronological history of the years 1789–1880 as its subtitle might suggest. (The dates refer respectively to the organization of the Methodist Book Concern and the publication of *Ben-Hur*, a best-selling novel that serves as a high-water mark of evangelical penetration of the broader publishing world.) Brown admits that hers is an essentially static picture of the middle third of the nineteenth century, and that choice is legitimate, but it does have consequences as well. For instance, Brown announces that the larger aim of her book is “to rehabilitate the analytical usefulness of the term ‘evangelical’” (17). She criticizes other scholars of evangelicalism for overemphasizing conversion or doctrine, and instead finds its essence in the struggle to balance “purity and presence” (18). However, had Brown been more attuned to changes over time, she might have discovered that both conversions and doctrine were more central to evangelical identification before the mid-nineteenth century. Moreover, the “purity and presence” polarity surely applies to some other groups, such as Unitarians in the first half of the nineteenth century, who stood outside evangelical ranks.

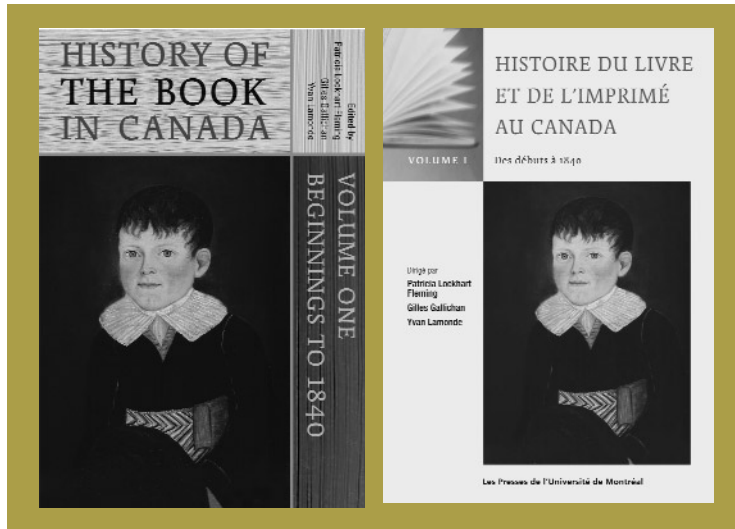
Still, *The Word in the World* abounds with insights into how evangelicals used print to advance their aims and how they wrestled with the implications of that usage. Especially good is Brown’s analysis of how printed matter fostered an evangelical “textual community” (9) that “simultaneously broadened outward to embrace scattered individuals who read the same texts and narrowed inward to the domestic fireside” (169). As an epilogue briefly notes, evangelicals in the twenty-first century are still grappling with questions about their uses of media and its impact on their message, which are similar to those confronted by their nineteenth-century forebears who engaged print culture head on. Whether involved in film, television, or the Internet, evangelicals must still confront the dilemma of maintaining purity amid a broader cultural presence.

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## Publication of the Canadian Book History Project Begins

The first volume of the three-volume *History of the Book in Canada/Histoire du livre et de l'imprimé au Canada* (HBiC/HLIC) will be published in the fall of 2004. Publication will be in French by Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal and in English by University of Toronto Press. The national launch will take place October 14, 2004, at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa.

Volume 2 was submitted for peer review in May of this year. Further editing and translation will proceed this summer, with the editors working to a November deadline for completing



the manuscript. The volume is on schedule for publication in the autumn of 2005. The author conference for Volume 3 was held in mid-June 2004 in Montreal. The volume will be submitted for peer review in January 2005 with an expected publication date in 2006. The project's five bilingual book history databases can be accessed via the HBiC/HLIC website ([www.hbic.library.utoronto.ca](http://www.hbic.library.utoronto.ca)). The databases focus on Canadian textbooks,

the Canadian book trade, catalogues relating to books, imprints to 1840, and a bibliography for the history of the book in Canada.

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