



The Book

Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture
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Fabian To Lead Summer Seminar On Forms of Personal Narrative

"Telling Lives, Telling Lies?: Biography, Autobiography, and Personal Narrative" is the title of the 1999 Summer Seminar in the History of the Book in American Culture. Ann Fabian, visiting associate professor of history at CUNY Graduate Center, will lead the seminar.

Americans' taste for writing and for reading personal narratives will be the central focus of the week-long seminar. Among the questions to be considered are how personal narratives, autobiographies, and biographies have been produced and consumed in the past. Using obscure stories, primary documents, recent scholarship, and case studies drawn from the collections of the American Antiquarian Society, this summer's seminar will explore the literature of personal experience. The seminar will examine the social and political contexts of individual stories, but consider as well the religious, commercial, and political entities that brought out and circulated biographical and autobiographical materials. The construction of an authoritative voice within autobiographical texts and some of the controversies surrounding fabricated narratives will also be examined. The aim of the seminar is to understand both the elite and popular uses of personal narrative and to investigate some of the ways those with little apparent power or influence tried to use their stories to change the world and their places within it.

This Summer Seminar, like those that have preceded it, has been designed to consider key aspects of the "communications circuit," including publishing, reading, and reception, in addition to authorship. AAS Summer Seminars are intended for literary scholars and historians (including advanced graduate students), librarians, archivists, and bibliographers, and other scholars who are working, or contemplate working, on topics involving the interpretation of the cultural role of books and other forms of printed material.

Faculty will include Steven Bullock (humanities, Worcester Polytechnic Institute), Scott Casper (history, University of Nevada, Reno), and William Reese (president of the William Reese Company), and AAS staff. Fabian's new book, *The Unvarnished Truth: Personal Narrative and Nineteenth-Century America*, will be published by the University of California Press in 1999. The five-and-a-half-day seminar will begin with a late-afternoon session and dinner on Sunday, June 6, and conclude in the afternoon of Friday, June 11.

Applications for the seminar received by Wednesday, March 31, will be accorded priority. Further details, includ-

ing information on fees, financial aid, and housing, may be obtained from the Society's gopher (URL [gopher://mark.mwa.org](http://mark.mwa.org)), or by contacting John B. Hench (jbh@mwa.org) or Caroline Sloat (cfs@mwa.org) at AAS.

A complete application consists of a brief statement (one side of a sheet of paper) of your interest in the history of the book, providing any other pertinent background, and telling how you think participation in this seminar would enrich your research, teaching, or other professional development. If you are applying for financial aid, include two sentences at the end describing your need. A current curriculum vitae must be enclosed. Include your name and address, telephone numbers at home and at work, your e-mail address, and your title and affiliation. Mail the original and four photocopies of the application to John B. Hench, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609. You may not submit your application electronically.

Book Notes

W.H. Bond and Hugh Amory, eds. *The Printed Catalogues of the Harvard College Library 1723-1790* (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts; distributed by Oak Knoll Press, 1996). 738 p.

In 1946 at the beginning of his critical study of the lives and works of the nineteenth-century Brahmin historians—Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman—David Levin made a chance discovery in a book he had just borrowed from the Harvard College library. On the front flyleaf of the third volume of George Bancroft's *History of the United States* (1840), Levin noticed Francis Parkman's signature, boldly inscribed in ink. This bit of provenance, seemingly insignificant, shed new light on the relationship between two writers. Levin suddenly realized that Parkman was seventeen when he read—and marked—his copy of Bancroft's *History* and conceived of his grand subject, the French in North America. The fact that, over one hundred years later, another young historian would also figure in the bibliographical pattern serves to illustrate that library collections have a tendency to take on a life of their own, their books (and readers) combining and recombining in unpredictable ways over time. As a social and cultural institution, the library has an influence greater than the sum of its parts.

But parts must be accounted for nonetheless, and to account for their stocks, librarians are by nature fond of catalogues, those essential tools of the trade. For locating books at Harvard during its earliest years—before Levin, before Parkman—there is no better guide than *The Printed*

Catalogues of the Harvard College Library 1723-1790. Editors Bond and Amory have provided us not only with an invaluable historical reference work but also with a way to think about authors and titles, individuals and ideas, books and the broader world of colonial and Revolutionary America. Locating a book, they remind us, is as simple as noting its shelfmark and as complex as teasing out the book's relationships with events beyond the library.

Facsimile reproductions of three Harvard catalogues (and supplements), first published in 1723 (Evans 2432), 1773 (Evans 12805), and 1790 (Evans 22559) form the foundation on which this particular study rests. Bond and Amory place the catalogues in context with an incisive history of the formation and early years of the library at Harvard, a note on the arrangement of the catalogues, and a useful account of their printing and publishing history. Last, but certainly not least, the authors provide an index and concordance to the three catalogues as well as an editorial apparatus. Everyone uses (but no one praises) indexes; in this case, the index is in many respects the key to the entire work, unlocking its manifold riches by identifying authors, expanding titles, and collocating entries. Given the fact that there were over 10,000 entries in the original catalogues, the labor involved here was immense.

Although over one hundred catalogues of various kinds—college, subscription, rental, private, booksellers'—were published in America before 1801, relatively few of them have been given the scrutiny they deserve. (For a comprehensive listing, see Robert B. Winans, *A Descriptive Checklist of Book Catalogues Separately Printed in America* [AAS, 1981]). Certainly this is true of the college catalogues. In addition to the three Harvard publications, six other college library catalogues were printed before 1801. The books at Yale were listed in catalogues of 1743, 1755, and 1791.

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Princeton published its first catalogue in 1760 (reprinted by the Friends of the Library in 1949), while Brown's library collection was enumerated in a 1793 catalogue and Williams College followed suit in 1794.

Although one certainly hopes that some industrious souls will be spurred on by the example set by Bond and Amory and give us similar treatments of the other college libraries so that the stories they tell might be added to the record, the fact remains that having the Harvard catalogues in such an accessible form gives us a more than generous portion now. In large part, this is due to Harvard's venerable age; the library came into existence in 1638, two years after the college's founding. The 1723 catalogue represents the accessions of the seventeenth century; the 1790 catalogue is a record of a prerevolutionary collection (only a handful of entries are for imprints of the 1780s). Lying between these two poles is a broad field for investigation.

An account of Isaac Newton's presence in the Harvard collections is instructive. In the 1723 library, Newton was represented by only one work, *Opticks* (London, 1704). At the time of the supplementary list of 1735, Newton's *Chronology* (London, 1728) and his *Observations on Daniel and the Apocalypse* (London, 1733) were included. In the 1773 catalogue, Newton was represented by a multivolume set of his *Works*, in Latin and English, of unspecified date. Between 1773 and 1790, however, Newton reached his zenith, as measured by his presence in the library, which at this time held his *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* in both the London and Dublin editions of 1728; the *Arithmetica Universalis*, second edition (London, 1722) and its English translation (London, 1748); the seventh edition of *Tables for Leases* (London, 1758); *Optics* (London, 1704; 1719; 1721); *Lectiones Opticae* (London, 1729), *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (London, 1726 and 1729; Geneva, 1729); *De Mundi Systemate* (London, 1731); *Opuscula* (Lausanne and Geneva, 1744); *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel and John* (London, 1733, and 1754) and *Two Letters to M. LeClerc* (London, 1754).

What are we to make of this? Were we Americans, at the far end of the Atlantic world, simply slow to catch the latest waves in science? Not necessarily. We know, for example, from John Adams's diary and from Professor John Winthrop's lecture notes, that Newtonian science was taught at Harvard while Adams was an undergraduate in the 1750s. The Harvard book collection, in this case, is not a completely trustworthy measure of Newton's influence in early America, if we look to the catalogues expecting to trace the chronological development of Newton's ideas in the colonies. When we also take into account the disastrous fire of 1764, which almost completely destroyed the Harvard collection, it becomes apparent that the space given to Isaac Newton in the catalogue of 1790 is less an indication of a new-found interest in Newtonian science and more an attempt to reestablish an important figure in the curriculum.

But there are other times when the catalogue does offer us a window on the pressing questions of the day. This is

perhaps most evident in the numerous political tracts in the 1790 catalogue: those under the heading "America" are listed in chronological order and follow the main controversies of the Revolution, from *Late Regulations Respecting the Colonies Considered* (1765) to—almost one hundred titles later—*Collection of State Papers, Relative to the First Acknowledgment of the United States of America* (1782).

Unlike imprint catalogues, such as the ESTC or NAIP, library catalogues are not limited by geography or nationality and thus provide us with a different lens on the past. As the author of hundreds of published works, Cotton Mather, for example, looms inordinately large in the annals of American imprints, and, even after the fire of 1764—a brand plucked from the burning!—he looms large in the Harvard catalogue of 1790 as well. But among the theological tracts listed therein, one finds Mather in the company of a wide assortment of bishops, dissenters, and even free-thinkers (over 25 works by Joseph Priestley). This bibliographical variety is evident not just in the theological works but in every topic treated by the Harvard collections. While one will not find the popular genres here (for almanacs, schoolbooks, novels, and psalters, one must look elsewhere), the interests of learned culture are well represented. Handsomely produced for the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, *The Printed Catalogues of the Harvard College Library 1723-1790*, will amply reward historians for years to come, guiding new readers to old books—something the Harvard library has been doing for over 360 years.

Russell L. Martin, AAS

The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman: The Journalism, Vol. 1. Ed. Herbert Bergman, Douglas A. Noverr, and Edward J. Recchia (New York: Peter Lang, 1998). lxx + 590 pp.

Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* appeared to Emerson sublime and mundane, a strange blend of the *Baghavad Gita* and the New York *Herald*. Emerson's remark—whatever overall ambivalence it may convey—recognizes that Whitman's distinctive qualities owe much to his apprenticeship as a journalist. With the publication of this volume (covering the years 1834-46), we encounter Whitman the journalist more directly and fully than ever before. Herbert Bergman, Douglas A. Noverr, and Edward J. Recchia have added significantly to the information available about a critical period of Whitman's development, bringing to light some deep roots of *Leaves of Grass*.

From 1834 to 1846, Whitman worked for at least twenty different newspapers and journals, writing on the Mexican war, education, capital punishment, parades, bathing, women's rights, immigration, and much else. Whitman's journalism is thoughtful, fluent, partisan, expansionist, occasionally impassioned, and generally fairly ordinary in its antebellum context. Some of the material possesses a homely, quirky, and unpretentious fascination of its own; all of it has value when read in light of the later achievement of *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman's earliest extant editorial discusses a black man old enough to remember slavery in New York. Given recent arguments by Martin Klammer, Ed Folsom, and others that Whitman's

engagement with African-American experience was critical to his poetic development, it is intriguing to see how early the journalist turned his attention to African Americans. Other patterns also emerge: Whitman criticized the practice of flogging as a school disciplinary practice so often that it appears an obsessional concern. (The issue appears not only in his editorials but also, of course, in his short fiction, such as "Death in the School-Room.") Equally curious is Whitman's blend of generous openness to immigrant groups (they are welcomed as "brethren") coupled with his occasionally ferocious anti-Irish rhetoric (the controversy with Bishop John Hughes over his effort to use public funds to support parochial schools led to a denunciation of "traitors from abroad" and attacks on Irish priests as "deceitful villains").

As an addition to the series, *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman, The Journalism* is both welcome and curious. *The Collected Writings*, a monumental scholarly edition directed by general editors Gay Wilson Allen and Sculley Bradley, was announced in 1955, was projected to span twelve volumes, and was to be completed by the mid 60s. Like *Leaves of Grass* itself, this scholarly project grew in unexpected ways, reaching twenty-two volumes by 1984. Yet it remained manifestly incomplete (major gaps include Whitman's poetry manuscripts, his poems published in periodicals, and a complete variorum). For the past decade and a half it has appeared that the *Collected Writings* was exhausted rather than completed. No new volumes appeared on the horizon, and there were few indications that New York University Press—publisher of all volumes until now—wished to advance the series.

There were rumors, however, that work on the journalism (long undertaken alone by Herbert Bergman) was proceeding despite some understandable delay (locating primary materials and establishing authorship was difficult). During the several decades that elapsed between the announcement of the journalism volume and its appearance, NYUP not surprisingly lost interest in the prospect of publishing it. The new publisher, Peter Lang, has matched the appearance of this volume to others in the *Collected Writings* series, but the lack of explicit commentary about how the journalism fits into it worsens the problem that besets the project overall. Separate volumes in the series—notably the *Daybooks and Notebooks* (1977) and the *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts* (1984)—are valuable, but they are frequently inconsistent with one another and inadequate in their discussion of the relationship of individual volumes to each other and to the entire project.

The editors, Bergman, Noverr, and Recchia, strive to blend comprehensiveness with representativeness by making available all identifiable Whitman journalism from November 1834 to February 1846 and a "large body of significant and representative *Brooklyn Eagle* and *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* writings from March 1846 to January 1848" (xxviii). Again, the editors are less than forthcoming. Was the original plan to present the "complete" journalism? And did they have to scale back because of the economics of print

publication? Why do they not explain why they chose to make this particular compromise rather than a number of other possible ones? Having made their choice, the editors would have served scholars if they had produced a full list of *Eagle* items written by Whitman. Lacking such a list, it is difficult to know what is missing from this first installment of Whitman's journalism. Too often the editors laboriously note matters of relatively small importance (hyphenation breaks are scrupulously recorded, for example) while editorial headnotes and introductions go wanting. For the most part, we are left in the dark about the circulation of various papers, about their editorial histories, and about their political orientations. The editors clarify authorship in some instances by disputing the conclusions of Joel Myerson (see lvi), but they lessen our confidence in their rigor by repeatedly misspelling his name. Myerson is so well known in editing and bibliographic circles that mistaking his name would be surprising in any event; it is especially so in an edition granted a seal of approval from the MLA's Committee on Scholarly Editions.

Notwithstanding, then, some limitations, the current volume is a significant achievement because it provides important materials that previously had been available only in very spotty fashion (true of all except the *Eagle* pieces, many of

which appeared in the two-volume *The Gathering of the Forces* [1920]) and in textually unreliable forms (true of all, including the *Eagle*).

As a newspaper editor, Whitman found a platform. He prized this role not because of its grandeur but because of the "curious kind of sympathy . . . that arises in the mind of a newspaper conductor with the public he serves. He gets to love them." In the pages of this volume, we see at first hand the nature of Whitman's education, in the press room and in the tangled multiplicity of urban experience. Here we encounter a poet who lived immersed in paper and type, but always yearned to break through it:

Come closer to me;
Push close, my lovers, and take the best I possess;
Yield closer and closer, and give me the best you possess.

This is unfinished business with me—How is it with you?
(I was chilled with the cold types, cylinder, wet paper
between us.)

Male and Female!

I pass so poorly with paper and types, I must pass with the
contact of bodies and souls.

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