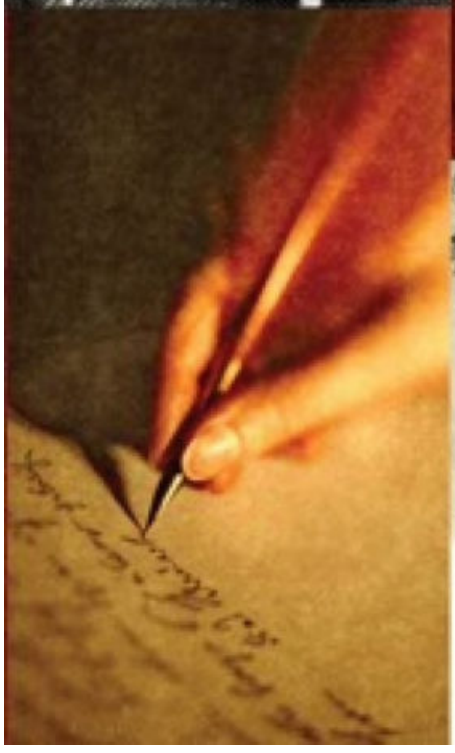
Containing Multitudes: The Biography of a Book



Uncle Tom's Cabin
and the
Battle for America

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

DAVID S. REYNOLDS





With *Mightier Than the Sword*, Reynolds has written the biography of a book, and 2012 might be the perfect time to read it. As the wired world celebrates Twitter revolutions and the cultural power of the 140-character microblog, we citizens of Facebook nation have come to suspect that books will soon be a thing of the past. At a time when the concept of an author's words sandwiched between two covers seems a little quaint, we might finally be ready to rediscover what a really powerful book can do. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is that sort of book, and if Reynolds's study of it convinces readers of anything, it will be that they have somehow underrated the cultural importance of a novel that many already believe launched America's bloodiest war. First printed in serialized form in issues of *The National Era* in 1851 and 1852, *UTC* was quickly published as a bestselling anti-slavery novel. It has been in print ever since—outlasting slavery, its author, and any number of supposedly earth-shattering novels that are now long forgotten.

More important than its life in print, though, is how from its first appearance the novel thoroughly permeated the culture that created it. Within months of its publication it was already being adapted to the stage, and its dramatic productions, as Reynolds points out, would for many decades reach far more Americans than Stowe's novel could. Almost instantly, its compelling characters became the subjects of everything from figurines to children's games. Tom Mania spanned the Atlantic, surging into Britain, the Continent, and even Tsarist Russia, and the story brought a huge number of international readers to sympathetic tears. It did not, however, have the same effect on white Southerners. Rather, its most immediate result was increasing the already heightened sense of sectional divisiveness that defined the last antebellum decade in the wake of the Compromise of 1850 and its strengthened Fugitive Slave Law. As more and more Northerners began to regard the actuality of American slavery through the lens of Stowe's fiction, slaveholders and their supporters dug in their heels and clamored in protest. As the war of words heated up, it would bring new and bloody violence to Western territories and the floors of Congress, and help make the Civil War irrepressible. Stowe's novel had attempted to fight with weapons of the heart and had not called for a war to liberate Uncle Tom and his fellow slaves. Her book helped bring on the Civil War only through a complex chain of powerful responses and reactions that the author herself could hardly have predicted, and which would continue to ripple through the postwar years right up to the present day.

By tabulating complex influences and diverse responses—from Tom shows and white supremacist narratives, to Hollywood films and televised miniseries—[Reynolds] offers readers a richly informative and entertaining work of scholarship, a generation-spanning account of American race relations, and a testament to the power of a book to change history.

This is the story Reynolds wants to tell, and he is not interested in offering merely a new literary interpretation or a sense of historical context. These

are small fry; the big fish he is angling for is indicated in his rather grandiose title. He is seeking an understanding of how Stowe's pen came to be mightier than the sword—or at least came to be the sort of pen that makes swords necessary. As he traces the cultural developments preceding, surrounding, and emanating from one of the most historically significant novels ever written, he is also explaining how literature achieves cultural power. By tabulating complex influences and diverse responses—from Tom shows and white supremacist narratives, to Hollywood films and televised miniseries—he offers readers a richly informative and entertaining work of scholarship, a generation-spanning account of American race relations, and a testament to the power of a book to change history. His book should be of special interest to scholars working in American studies and nineteenth-century literature, but its sparkling and sprawling narrative should also appeal to general readers.

Reynolds's historical descriptions and close readings are engrossing in their own right, but they also support a thesis that helps organize and connect the book's first and second halves. The first three chapters—on antebellum religion, popular culture, and antislavery rhetoric—address Stowe's influences and how *UTC* managed to weave together many important strands of antebellum culture into a uniquely powerful novel. The second half tries to demonstrate the book's monumental impact in three chapters that explore a wide array of adaptations, refutations, and passing references that extend into the twentieth century and beyond.

Although it may not become fully clear until nearly the book's midpoint, Reynolds believes that the two sides of this story are indelibly connected: he argues that Stowe's original synthesis of innumerable cultural forces led to the novel's broad and longstanding influence. The first few chapters describe a dizzying variety of occasionally contradictory elements that Reynolds finds shaping the novel's construction. Yet just as readers are ready to assume this cacophony of contradictory impulses have snuck in while Reynolds wasn't looking, he gathers the squawking brood under his authorial wing. "[T]here is no single source," Reynolds insists. "All kinds of cultural phenomena—visionary fiction, biblical narratives, pro- and anti-Catholicism, gender issues, temperance, moral reform, minstrelsy—contributed to the novel" (87-88). This range of influences, according to Reynolds, helps explain *Uncle Tom*'s later significance. Although many have sought the single "key" to *Uncle Tom*'s construction, Reynolds believes that "to isolate individual sources strips the novel of suggestiveness and diminishes what may be called its distributive power: its capacity for generating varied responses in different contexts" (188).

Reynolds's resistance to root causes or uniform effects means, in practical terms, that he can range widely in both sections of the book. Influences proliferate, effects expand to include distant times and lands, and the reader gets to enjoy a decidedly lively literary history. Reynolds's determination to emphasize the novel's capacious dimensions also allows him to take a fuller measure of the cultural complexity that produced it. In the first of the

influence chapters, for example, Reynolds focuses on religion but wisely avoids trying to wrangle the complicated spiritual shifts of the antebellum period into a pat set of categories. Thus he portrays strains of religious thought and feeling that are more varied, convoluted, and dynamic than the reader might expect. The dominant Christianity of Stowe's time and place, Reynolds tells us, was in the midst of a profound transition away from traditional Calvinism and into new engagements with broader social activism and humanitarian passions. Because no family in America seems to have been more embroiled in this religious ferment than the Beechers, it is no surprise that the spiritual voice of *UTC* captures the tone, if not the content, of a surprising combination of half-abandoned orthodoxies. Reynolds shows how the disciples of a new "religion of love" dug the Puritan tradition out of its grounding in Calvinism and redirected its reformist energies toward fresh social causes. While the pragmatic social reform of the sort pursued by Harriet's father, Lyman Beecher, is still hard at work in her novel, it competes with the passionate appeal represented by her brother, Henry, and the era's sentimental preference for the heart rather than the head. In this unruly chapter, a range of reinterpreted dogmas and unexpected interests dishevels the image of the author of *UTC*as a straight-laced Christian crusader. Stowe's staunch scriptural faith is complicated by flirtations with spiritualism and trance writing. The novel's sense of ecstatic vision turns out to be Roman Catholic, but it arrives yoked to the distrust of religious authority that energized the anti-Catholicism of nativists and know-nothings. If this seems contradictory, so be it; as Walt Whitman, another of Reynolds's antebellum subjects, once proclaimed, we are large, and contain multitudes.

Reynolds's refusal to apply modern categories to the messiness of nineteenth-century culture can sometimes yield what seem like excuses for prejudice and oppression, and some readers may be bothered by his tendency to judge works according to the moral standards of their times rather than our own. But that same resistance to contemporary standards also allows him to share some rich connections that otherwise might be difficult to recognize. In a chapter on popular culture, for instance, he refuses to describe the novel's representation of women as either subversive or conservative, but that refusal is no mere shrug. Rather, Reynolds argues that Stowe was intentionally staking out a "middle ground" between available positions on women's roles, while arguing that she did so in *Uncle Tom* in order to deliver "daring ideas and images in conventional wrapping" to a mainstream audience (45). But Reynolds also points out that Stowe derived this strategy from a whole range of nineteenth-century popular literatures that profited by presenting subversive material under the mantle of respectable conventions. Reynolds catalogs titillating antebellum accounts of vice that appeared in print as crusades to reform drunkenness, crime, and Catholicism; these, he suggests, served as models for Stowe's muted but still sensational descriptions of slavery and the treatment of women in *UTC*.

After the first half of his study, Reynolds moves from an effort to identify Stowe's precedents to a celebration of the novel as an unprecedented

phenomenon. The chapters on “Igniting the War,” “Tom Everywhere,” and “Tom in Modern Times” offer deep analyses of some of the more obvious and important responses to Stowe—the move toward war being chief among them. Yet there are more surprising outcomes here as well, as Reynolds traces the novel’s role as a reference point and argument partner for a vast array of cultural productions. Already in the first chapter on the novel’s results, *UTC*seems to have inspired the modern play, the interracial working class, *Leaves of Grass*, “Benito Cereno,” and (I’m fairly sure) vaudeville. While most readers would assume that the novel inspired anti-slavery agitators and Southern apologists alike in the antebellum period, later responses to the novel in the penultimate chapter figure largely in the “mammoth contests over versions of American history” that David W. Blight has found at the heart of postbellum nationalism. Later still, the book becomes a pivot point in the emergence of the American century and the Jim Crow era, and a catalyst for a slew of major national and international events including the Russian Revolution. True, when Reynolds asks the rhetorical question, “Did *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* save Lenin’s life?” readers will likely respond with a fairly unanimous “no” (225). Nevertheless, even such relatively unconvincing claims are suggested by fascinating evidence. Lenin’s Eliza-like escape across breaking ice to Finland was clearly too sumptuous not to include, and Reynolds’s reading of this dramatic flight may be somewhat tongue in cheek. Furthermore, the author more often than not is able to make a surprising connection stick. Reynolds copiously documents communist revolutionaries’ attachments to *UTC*, and finds similarly striking ties to the early leaders of the Niagara Movement and the NAACP.

By the time readers reach the era in which the “Uncle Tom” epithet has become more familiar than Stowe’s character, they may be wondering whether they are still dealing in any substantial way with an antebellum novel’s influence. Is Uncle Tom merely marching in a grand cultural parade or is he leading the band? And is it still Stowe’s Uncle Tom, or someone who only happens to share his name? That question about the degree of literary influence may be only mildly disconcerting when the book arrives at *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, but it becomes more urgent when Tom still seems to be hovering over the martyrdom of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. How much, the reader may wonder, does this really have to do with Stowe’s book? Reynolds wonders about this, too, but the fact that the *same* question has been asked almost without ceasing since 1851 reinforces his point about *UTC*‘s importance. Ever since its first serialized publication, the novel has encouraged serious reflection on literature’s historical effects, a scholarly activity that, as Reynolds’s enriching explorations demonstrate once again, is worth pursuing even if the quest turns out to be endless.

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Poetry over Politics

CATHERINE O'DONNELL KAPLAN

Men *of* Letters *in the* EARLY REPUBLIC


THE PORT FOLIO.

BY OLIVER OLDSCHOOL, ESQ.

VOL. I.] [No. 44.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14th, 1801.

BIOGRAPHY.

THE LIFE OF BARETTI.

Joseph Baretti, a man of letters of some distinction, was born at Turin, about the year 1716. His father was an architect, employed under Don Philip Infanta, a Sicilian, who built several considerable edifices, in and near Turin. Young Baretti received a good education, and some paternal property, which last, from his own confession, he squandered in gaming. Of his early life very little is known. It appears to have been rambling and desultory, and, probably, often subjected to pecuniary distress. In 1748, we find him at Venice, a teacher of Italian to some English gentlemen. Two years afterwards, he came to England, chiefly, as it is said, at the instigation of lord Charlemont; and this island was thenceforth, except with a short interval, his constant residence. A wonderful facility in acquiring languages, together with a

Cultivating Forums of Citizenship

Presented as part of the Special Literature Issue

These groups exhibited several shared traits, most notably adherence to social elitism, masculine identity, and transatlantic modes of polite culture.

Engendering the City



Reforming Men & Women

Gender in the Antebellum City

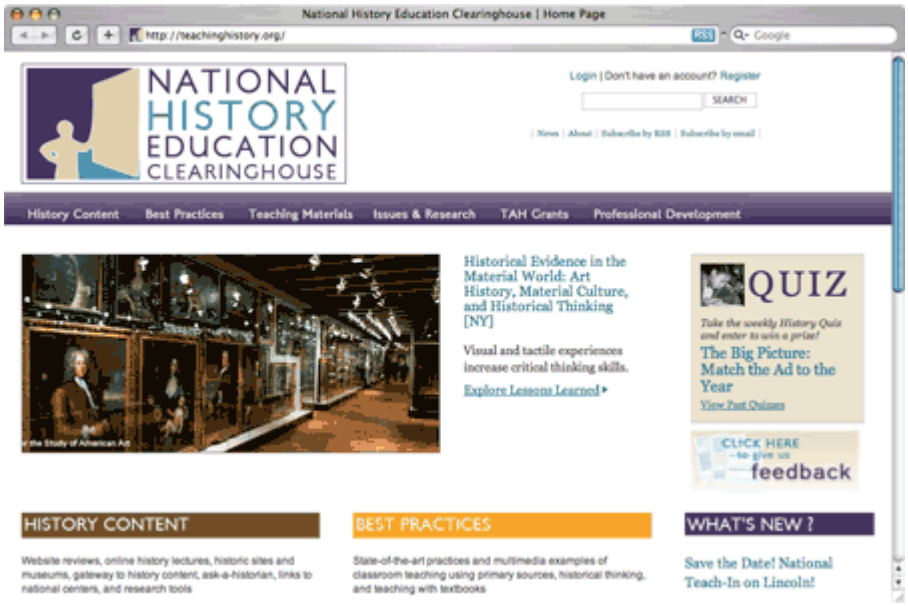
BRUCE DORSEY



Presented as part of the special issue “Early Cities of the Americas.”

“In denouncing drunkenness, “white middle-class men were engaged in a battle over gender identity that was not exclusively an attempt at class domination against working-class men.”

The National History Education Clearinghouse



The Common-place Web Library reviews and lists online resources and Websites likely to be of interest to our viewers. Each quarterly issue will feature one or more brief site reviews. The library itself will be an ongoing enterprise with regular new additions and amendments. So we encourage you to check it frequently. At the moment, the library is small, but with your help we expect it to grow rapidly. If you have suggestions for the Web Library, or for site reviews, please forward them to the Administrative Editor.

Dave Neumann is director of the History Project at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), a K-16 collaborative project dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in history and social science education. A former high-school history instructor, he also teaches pre-service elementary and secondary credential students at CSULB.

Dave Neumann
The National History Education Clearinghouse
http://teachinghistory.org/

At a recent gathering of history-education advocates in California, I chaired a committee of college faculty attempting to suggest opportunities for colleges and universities to support K-12 education. I grimaced—hopefully only internally—as one committee member suggested that we create a list of Websites that would be useful for K-12 teachers. I suggested as diplomatically as I could that we consider other projects, as many such lists already exist, some far better than we could create. A recent examination of the "National History Education Clearinghouse" (NHEC) Website confirmed my suggestion. As the name implies, the site provides a clear, user-friendly clearinghouse of links to some of the best online history education resources—not only history content and lesson plans but materials on historical thinking and research as well. Indeed, though the site seems to be in the developmental stage with room for the inclusion of far more material, it nonetheless exemplifies the most fruitful results of the type of K-12/university collaboration advocated by the American Historical Association, itself a partner in the production of the Website, in its Benchmarks for Professional Development in Teaching of History as a Discipline. Given *Common-place*'s mission of "embracing new scholarship, teaching, and exhibits that explore all aspects of America's past and its many peoples," NHEC should be of great interest to readers.

The "National History Education Clearinghouse" is a product of the federally funded Teaching American History (TAH) grant program, which has distributed more than 800 million dollars to K-12 schools and offices of education nationwide to support professional development in history education in collaboration with colleges and universities. The Website "builds on and disseminates the valuable lessons learned by more than 800 TAH projects designed to raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of traditional U.S. history." (References to "traditional U.S. history" show up repeatedly in TAH programs, as they come straight from the federal grant application.) It was jointly created by the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) and the Stanford University History Education Group. This is a compelling partnership indeed. The CHNM at George Mason University is one of the pioneers in digitizing history content and is cosponsor of *History Matters*, an excellent source for U.S. history content on the Web. Stanford professor Sam Wineburg, executive producer and senior scholar of NHEC, has done groundbreaking work with teachers and students on learning and teaching history. Together, they represent some of the best thinking and materials available to history educators at all levels. The creators explain that they "aim to bring together the many communities involved in improving history education and professional development for history teachers, allowing practitioners, historians, administrators, and history educators to present multiple perspectives, debate current issues, and work together to improve history teaching in classrooms throughout the United States." It is refreshing to see that the site includes testimonials from scholars like USC historian

Karen Haltunnen, who acknowledge that their work with K-12 teachers has enriched their own professional work. Such testimonials help to keep K-12/university partnerships alive and healthy.

The site is organized with six tabs across the top: “History Content,” “Best Practices,” “Teaching Materials,” “Issues & Research,” “TAH Grants,” and “Professional Development.” Each tabbed area has a separate search engine to aid users. The first four tabs are most likely to be of interest to the readers of *Common-place*. “History Content” provides links to history Websites and online primary-source collections, national history centers like the Smithsonian, electronic fieldtrips, and Website reviews. Two hundred and fifty-four sites are evaluated (unfortunately, *Common-place* is not one of them). Each evaluation includes a one-paragraph description of the site, the site’s producers, and keywords for site content. As a test case of this section’s search engine, I decided to look for materials related to Lyman Beecher, who was featured in an article in the October 2008 issue of *Common-place*. Typing *Lyman Beecher* into the search engine yielded some results for sites that were really about Harriet Beecher Stowe or Henry Ward Beecher. Within the first twenty hits, however, were the following: Lincoln/NET, Northern Illinois University Library’s Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project (reviewed in the January 2008 issue of *Common-place*), where a one-thousand-word essay places Beecher in the context of antebellum social reform movements and provides a brief bibliography; the Cornell University Library’s Making of America site, which includes digitized facsimiles of two book reviews of Beecher’s autobiography; and a classroom activity on religion and social reform from the University of Houston’s Digital History site, which includes excerpts from ten primary sources on reform, including one by Beecher.

The most interesting link on the first tab is “Ask a Historian.” When I viewed the site, one of the top questions was, “Was there an African-American President before Barack Obama?” The anonymous reply, presumably by a historian, explains how this rumor may have developed over confusion about John Hanson, president of the Continental Congress, whose great-uncle is labeled a freedman in extant records. The thoughtful reply then continues by offering a reflection on the nature of certainty in history and concludes with a bibliography.

The second tab, “Best Practices,” is much thinner, likely reflecting the relative infancy of the field rather than oversight on the part of the site designers. This area provides links to applications of some of the most interesting work on history cognition, reflecting the best nexus of scholarly research and practical classroom implementation. Given Wineburg’s role in the development of this site, it is not surprising that his work is prominently represented. But other links are provided as well, including linguist Mary Schleppegrell’s application of functional grammar approaches to the reading of textbooks. Schleppegrell has worked extensively with the UC Davis site of the California History-Social Science Project (CHSSP), a California statewide collaborative project for K-12 history professional development, and this article reflects her work with CHSSP staff and Davis-area teachers.

The fourth tab, “Issues and Research,” seems to overlap with the “Best Practices” section, making the distinction between them unclear. Only six “Research Briefs” are provided, including articles by Peter Lee and Bob Bain, and all six involved the application of theory to classroom practice. The paucity of resources in this section is also a puzzle, as there is a substantial body of work by historians like Lee, Bain, Rosalyn Ashby, Gaea Leinhardt, Peter Seixas, Bruce VanSledright, to name a few, who might also have been included here.

“Teaching Materials” provides a gateway to online history lesson plans and a link to state history content standards. It also offers a section entitled “Ask a Master Teacher,” which parallels the “Ask a Historian” section in the first tabbed area and features questions on topics such as the use of primary sources in a classroom with second-language learners. It also provides its own review of lesson plans, though at present there are only ten reviews. The reviews include a helpful lesson-plan rubric designed by NHEC staff, which considers issues like analytic thinking and scaffolding. As a test case, I examined a review of a lesson on antislavery posters (the closest topic to Lyman Beecher included in the ten reviews) from the Gilder-Lerhman Institute’s *History Now* journal. The lesson receives the following comments for analytic thinking:

The Poster Inquiry Sheet provides students with a method for identifying and interpreting historical facts.

During the modeling and the group work, students [*sic*] learn and practice close reading of primary sources.

An evaluation of the use of scaffolding indicates that the lesson is appropriate for its stated audience because, while the “language used in the posters may be difficult for some students…teachers can choose to highlight sections of text to reduce the amount or difficulty of necessary reading.”

One might wonder whether a site generated by TAH K-12/university collaboration would provide a search engine that filters out useless results and returns useful hits on high-quality lesson plans. The answer, in general, is “yes.” While a search for “Lyman Beecher” returned hits for a book review and a College Board introduction to the Advanced Placement U.S. history course, use of more mainstream keywords *antebellum reform* yielded useful returns. Several hits represented effective lessons with primary sources, sponsored by groups like the Organization of American Historians or the National Center for History in the Schools.

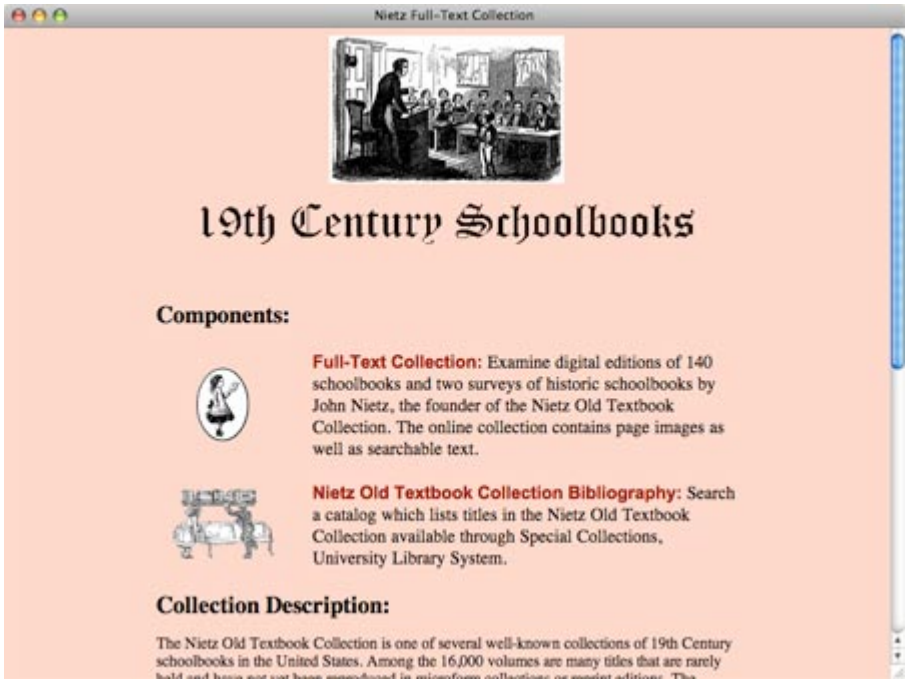
The last two sections, “TAH Grants” and “Professional Development,” are likely to be of more limited interest to many *Common-place* readers. The “TAH Grants” section provides a searchable database of TAH grant awards, a listserv for TAH members, and links to twenty-one articles on “Lessons Learned” by TAH participants that might assist current and future TAH project administrators and teacher leaders. Finally, the “Professional Development” area offers a

calendar of professional development opportunities nationwide as well as a search engine for locating training in or near one's own community.

Apart from the overlap of the "Best Practices" and "Issues and Research" tabs and the thinness of some categories, the site works well. It is clearly organized, intuitive, and easily navigated. Most helpfully for a clearinghouse, it provides an informative synopsis of all major links, so that users can determine the possible usefulness of a linked site right from the NHEC, rather than constantly linking back and forth. Not only does the site provide access to a wealth of primary and secondary sources, but it also provides links to high-quality lesson plans and important scholarship on teaching and learning. All in all, this site fulfills its creators' goals of providing an excellent clearinghouse or starting point for both K-12 educators and university faculty.

This article originally appeared in issue 9.2 (January, 2009).

Instructions for the Young: Nineteenth-Century Schoolbooks



The Common-place Web Library reviews and lists online resources and Websites likely to be of interest to our viewers. Each quarterly issue will feature one or more brief site reviews. The library itself will be an ongoing enterprise with regular new additions and amendments. So we encourage you to check it

frequently. At the moment, the library is small, but with your help we expect it to grow rapidly. If you have suggestions for the Web Library, or for site reviews, please forward them to the Administrative Editor.

Patricia Cleary teaches in the department of history, California State University, Long Beach. She is the director of the Website, The Elizabeth Murray Project: A Resource Site for Early American History.

Patricia Cleary
Instructions for the Young: Nineteenth-Century Schoolbooks
http://digital.library.pitt.edu/n/nietz/

The April 2009 special issue of *Common-place*, "Who Reads an Early American Book?," prompted a search of Websites devoted to nineteenth-century texts directed at youthful readers. Among a number of valuable sites, one that stands out as of potential interest to scholars and K-12 teachers alike is the University of Pittsburgh's Nineteenth-Century Schoolbooks, part of its Digital Research Library. Based on the "Nietz Old Texbook Collection" of sixteen thousand volumes, the online archive contains page images and searchable text for 140 schoolbooks. John Nietz, a professor of education at University of Pittsburgh and student of John Dewey at University of Chicago, began the collection by donating nine thousand volumes of early primary and secondary texts at his retirement in the late 1950s.

Although the quantity of material available online is just a small portion of the print Nietz collection, the multiple means of searching the digitized texts make this site user-friendly. Options include standard subject-title-author and publication-date searches, Boolean and proximity searches, and book browsing.

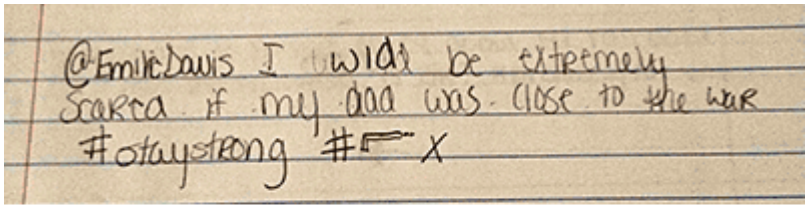
Typing *Phillis Wheatley* into the search engine generates just one result: a brief biography from an 1872 work, *A manual of American literature: a text-book for schools and colleges. Slavery* turns up 445 hits. Pursuing *Crispus Attucks* leads to William Holmes McGuffey's *Fifth Eclectic Reader* (1879)—one of several McGuffey readers on the site—which offers a gripping take on the Boston Massacre, one that can be instructively compared with Samuel G. Goodrich's 1843 version in *A pictorial history of the United States: with notices of other portions of America*. Although searching for specific topics generates interesting results, perhaps more fascinating are the insights to be found from browsing through texts, such as Thomas Kimber's 1815 *The American class book, or, A collection of instructive readings lessons: adapted to the use of schools: selected from Blair's class book, etc.* In addition to sections on natural history and religion, the text ranges across such subjects as "Of Fire and Its Application to the Preparation of Food," the speech of Seneca, the cultivation of taste, and the "Phenomena of Winter in the Polar Regions."

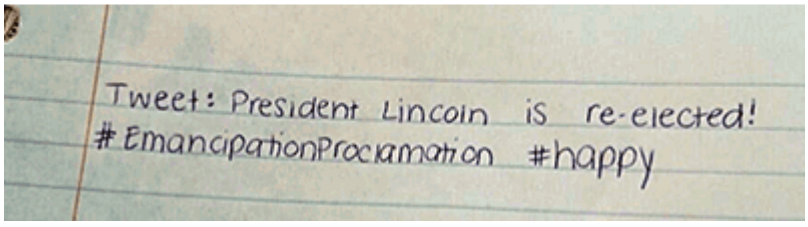
A bibliography of secondary materials on textbooks, how to read them, and how the practitioners of various disciplines have analyzed them is included. Although it contains no works published after 1999, the bibliographic coverage of twentieth-century scholarship and brief abstracts would nonetheless make it a useful starting point for working with the collection. Similarly helpful for more sustained research is the overview of library collections, microfilm, and Web resources, which directs visitors' attention to notable collections holding tens of thousands of volumes relevant to the history of education. Also included are two comprehensive surveys by Nietz, available and searchable in full online: *Old Textbooks* and *The Evolution of American Secondary School Textbooks*, both covering the evolution of texts at both the primary and secondary levels in multiple disciplines up to 1900. As the online archive does not offer introductory remarks for each work, these two volumes provide welcome context for the evolution of subjects treated in the textbooks.

In short, this straightforward site possesses a clearly defined focus, a useful archive of nineteenth-century sources on education, a good survey of secondary and archival materials, and an effective set of search tools, rendering it helpful to scholars, teachers, and students interested in investigating how subjects from spelling, rhetoric, and penmanship to American history, geography, and art were presented in the past.

This article originally appeared in issue 9.4 (July, 2009).

The Emilie Davis Diaries Project





Digital History and Civil War Commemoration

I saw Emilie Davis's diaries years ago—three leather-bound volumes, small enough to fit comfortably in a pocket, no bigger than a smart phone. I thought then that I would get back to them some day, when other deadlines had been met. I thought again about Emilie in 2011, after listening to an inspiring talk by Jill Lepore about Jane Franklin, a story that Lepore pieced together with small scraps of evidence—such as the diary Franklin kept of the births and deaths of (all but one of) her twelve children and the surviving letters she exchanged with her brother Ben—and a good deal of imagination. In Lepore's hands, Jane Franklin came alive, as did her era. Audience members imagined a middle-aged woman picking up a pen and sitting down to record her own thoughts, to enjoy the life of the mind that her brother had lived for decades and that Jane was now tasting for the first time. Seeing the joyful loops that formed the "J" and the "a" in her name, I remembered that Emilie also carefully wrote her name on the blank first page of her 1863 diary in big open letters, looping each end of the "E" and dotting the "i" with a flourish (fig. 1). She wrote her name on subsequent pages, too, though not with the exuberance implied in the series of loops and the long diagonal mark over the "i." Opening the book and writing her name in it the first time was an act of becoming.

In her diaries, Emilie—a young free black woman living in Philadelphia during the Civil War—remarks on the progress of her education and reflects on the challenges of living as a half-citizen of a slave nation. We do not have much to remind us that women like Emilie and Jane Franklin existed. But we do have their names written carefully on the inside covers of their diaries, laying claim to pen and book, and the thoughts expressed in them. Beginning in January 2012, I began transcribing and annotating the diaries with a talented and energetic group of graduate students—namely, Rebecca Capobianco, Ruby Johnson, Thomas Foley, Jessica Maiberger, and Theresa Altieri. We learned that doing so would make it possible to tell a new story about the Civil War. Emilie's diaries, available in transcriptions and original text on the Memorable Days Website, offer fresh perspective on the arrival in Philadelphia of black refugees from south-central Pennsylvania during the Gettysburg campaign (June 27-29, 1863), jubilant celebrations in black churches accompanying the news of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (January 1-3, 1863), and the deep anxieties that free blacks like Emilie felt when Union advances nearly became reverses (April 13-15, 1865). Over the next year and a half, we explored the meetings Emilie attended, the street fights she witnessed, the anxieties and personal tragedies she experienced. We saw the Civil War through her eyes.

> Digital history offers opportunities to democratize access to the past and to invite users into the research process

In building this Website we learned about the process of recovering and telling the story of women of color who left behind a deafening evidentiary silence,

and the joys that can come in working collaboratively. Because it requires various levels of comfort with Wikis, blogs, html, tags, and social networking, creating an open-access research site is intensely collaborative and vastly more rewarding than the history we make alone. We were surprised and delighted to see how digital history has the potential to transform texts like a letter book or a diary, by revealing subtle contours and hidden patterns. When we began to encounter audiences and Website users, we realized that perhaps the most important thing we were doing was providing a new point of access for the creation of Civil War history.

Digital history offers opportunities to democratize access to the past and to invite users into the research process. “Digital history,” William G. Thomas III explained in a special issue of the *Journal of American History*, “possesses a crucial set of common components—the capacity for play, manipulation, participation, and investigation by the reader.” We saw our collaboration grow in concentric circles, beginning with me and a small group of graduate students at Villanova (“Team Emilie”); then a team of digital librarians and a web designer; students in undergraduate, middle school, and high school classes; and finally Website users and audiences at commemorative events. Instead of working for years on a project before “releasing” it to the public, much of the work was done in public, as we invited students to take a stab at transcription and to identify points at which the diary should be annotated. The collaboration continues on our site, where users participate and join in the investigation.

1. Advertisements in The Christian Recorder (February 1, 1868), p. 3. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

The site launched just after midnight on January 1, 2013, marking the day 150 years ago when Emilie began the diary, with the words, “Today has been a memorable day,” in reference to the Emancipation Proclamation. Very soon after we began receiving comments from users offering commentary and advice and sometimes suggesting leads on unidentified people in the diary. Because the site features our transcription alongside each original diary page, readers tell us what words we misidentified or offer us clues on those that we have not transcribed. “The word for the empty brackets seems to be ‘reading,'” a user explained about Emilie’s January 2, 1863, entry. Of Emilie’s entry for March 14, 1863, a reader who had done his or her own research suggested that “Lizzie” might be “Elizabeth White (born about 1840), the younger sister of Emilie’s future husband, George Bustill White.” Additionally, we have received a number of inquiries about the woman Emilie refers to as “Nel” or “Nellie” in the diary—Emilie’s closest confidante, who as yet remains unidentified. This summer, a Website user helped us to solve the mystery of what became of Emilie’s nine-year-old nephew, Frank, when his mother died while his father was serving in the U.S. Navy. Little Frank, whom we had hoped had gone to live with

his uncle, turned up in the files of a Quaker orphanage (December 6-8, 1863). Welcoming Website users into the process of discovery has expanded our knowledge of Emilie's life and her family connections.

The project's success, therefore, relies on our ability to get the word out about the site and its subject, drawing in potential users. This approach gives us the chance to combine the tools of academic history with those of digital history to reach new publics. We turned to both social media (namely, Facebook and Twitter) and "old" media, such as radio and television interviews, public talks, and classroom lessons, to bring teachers, students, and amateur historians into the project. We found in both of these contexts opportunities for impromptu, unfiltered comments, for play and manipulation. For example, middle school students responded to the diary entries in a series of blogs; our favorites were the eighth-grader who defended Emilie's idiosyncratic spelling ("I am not very good at spelling either, but that doesn't mean I am not smart") and the kid who worried that Emilie was "stalking" Vincent, her love interest. High school students "tweeted" responses to the entries—on small scraps of paper, no bigger than the diary pages. "President Lincoln is re-elected," wrote one high school sophomore: "#EmancipationProclamation #happy" (fig. 2). "@EmilieDavis I wld be extremely scared if my dad was close to the war," tweeted another, "#staystrong" followed by a symbol of a gun and an "x." As we "played" on the site with students, we found new ways to think about Emilie, her classmates, and her friends.

Online discussions also took a more serious turn. In a series of early Facebook comments, two Website users engaged in a brief debate about racial identity, asking whether a white professor and a group of white graduate students could handle the job of reading and interpreting Emilie's diaries as well as a person of color. Here was a discussion about identity politics that we might have in our college classrooms, played out in social media.

22. In an in-class activity, high school students tweeted responses to Emilie Davis' diary entries.

As we interacted with teachers, students, and various author audiences, we began to see that the site was bridging the gap between Civil War history and African American history. This point was brought home to us in February 2013 when we attended a daylong event celebrating the beginning of Black History Month. Depending on how you count it, we have had nearly five *years* of the Civil War sesquicentennial—this if you count from 2009, the year of the Lincoln bicentennial and the 150th anniversary of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry—but in many places black history remains a *month*. In a YMCA gym serving several black neighborhoods in Philadelphia, we crowded in with more than 300 attendees to cheer community activists, scholarship recipients, and local ministers for leadership in their communities. We took turns reading Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"; afterwards, people stayed around

to hear us introduce them to Emilie Davis and her generation. After we shared several pages of Emilie's diary, in which she described her fears for her father's safety when rebel slave raiders were sighted near his home in south-central Pennsylvania in June 1863 (June 23, June 29, June 30, and July 9, 1863), attendees commented on the need to remain vigilant and active in promoting and protecting civil rights, lest the progress made by one generation be lost by another. These thoughts and comments seemed as apt for understanding Emilie's fear that her father—a free black man living in a state that had outlawed slavery—would (once again?) be a slave as they were for thinking about the context of the August 2012 Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision upholding the state's new voter identification law, a measure that aimed to restrict the voting power of immigrants, the poor, and people of color.

We learned a lot spending the day with teachers, students, and community leaders, and we have continued to talk about Emilie's diaries with the participants in this meeting. In the summer of 2013, I received a letter from a woman wanting to lay claim to a Civil War ancestor; she had heard about our genealogical work on Emilie Davis and her family. "My paternal grandmother's mother's father was a 'boy slave,'" eighty-five-year-old Lillian Loatmen Boggs wrote, "he rose to become a principal of a one-room school house." When I told her I might have found a man named "Loatman," who shared her maiden name (but with a different spelling) and who was drafted in Baltimore in September 1864 into the First Regiment, United States Colored Troops, Lillian wrote back to say she thought it was the right guy because, like herself and others in her family, Edward was short, or as she put it, "vertically challenged." Edward's draft record indicates that at age thirty-five, he stood five feet, three and a half inches tall.

The First Regiment served in the Petersburg Campaign and charged into the confusion after the explosion of the Union mine under the Confederate works on July 30, 1864—the Battle of the Crater. The following January, Loatman was with the regiment when the men helped capture Fort Fisher, North Carolina. He died in March 1865, before he could witness the surrender of Confederate forces in North Carolina and the final collapse of the Confederacy. Edward Loatman's enlistment records indicate that his name is included on the African American Civil War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

I am guessing that, like other African Americans of her generation, Lillian Boggs has not traveled to Civil War battlefields or other sites where she might recognize a name or identify with a description. As the historian Tiya Miles explained at a conference at Gettysburg in March 2013, her grandparents packed their car with food and blankets before going on road trips in anticipation of not finding a hotel that would take them. They would not have planned a family trip to a national park then—and those fears survived until at least the next generation. Additionally, in an era of shrinking school budgets, fewer school-aged children will visit Civil War sites today, although the National Park Service has never been more committed to telling an inclusive story of the war. Digital projects such as *Memorable Days*, on the other hand, have the capacity

to bring Civil War history home to people like Lillian Boggs, and this is one of the things we hoped to achieve in researching Emilie Davis's diaries.



3. Signature on inside cover of 1863 Emilie Davis diary. Image courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

Lillian Boggs's typewritten letters to us highlight the distance between historians who sigh about the challenges of wrangling the "infinite archive" that digital history has produced and, well, most other folks, particularly those who see in this explosion of information new opportunities to answer questions about family history. Stricken by a case of "*Roots* envy," as Henry Louis Gates has called it, African Americans have become avid genealogists in the past three decades, turning eagerly to Ancestry.com and DNA testing in an effort to fill in the gaping holes that slavery left in their family trees. I am not sure Mrs. Boggs knows that we have created and maintain a Website tracing one black family's move from slavery to freedom, but she hoped that I might be able to help her solve some mysteries about her own family. "[D]o you know if there is a list, (or place)," she wrote, "where I could find out if I had an ancestor in the Civil War?" While no one comprehensive list exists, we now have many new digital sources, like the University of Virginia's Geography of Slavery site that uses information from runaway slave ads to map the suspected trajectories of fugitives' flights, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's ambitious digitization of William Still's massive list of fugitives who passed through Philadelphia.

Another as-yet untapped source for similar information is the potential of digitizing the hundreds of "Information Wanted" ads that appeared in black newspapers during and after the war. According to my count, nearly 1,900 such missing persons ads were printed in Philadelphia's *Christian Recorder*—a newspaper published by the African Methodist Episcopal Church—between 1866 and 1890: mothers looking for children, husbands looking for wives, and children looking for parents. The ads began as early as 1863 and continued for years after many others had likely given up hope of finding families separated or lost in slavery, escape, or wartime dislocation. By digitizing these ads, we may be able to fill in some of the holes that slavery has left in the genealogical records of African Americans.

While we figure out how to make all of these new digital tools talk to one another and to us so that we can unlock the mysteries of families separated in slavery, we ought to stay alert for opportunities to engage audiences in schools, churches, and gyms and invite people like Lillian Boggs into the process, and to bring multiple experiences together. Historians have never been so keen or better equipped to integrate the fields of women's, African American, and Civil War history. Digital history produces new points of entry for people to lay claim to—and to make—Civil War history, engaging and interacting with sources that challenge avid genealogists to look beyond their

own family tree to explore the environment in which it grew.

While we were annotating Emilie's diaries, we discovered all sorts of new ways the Civil War was experienced in Philadelphia, the city where Lillian Boggs has spent nearly her whole life (she now lives just north of downtown). In 1860, the city was home to 13,008 "free colored women" and 9,177 men, who supported a web of religious, cultural, and political institutions. Emilie's attendance at the Institute for Colored Youth, the premier school for black youth, and her affiliation with several black churches, indicated that she was part of a politically active community in an exciting time. Reading her diary allowed us to imagine her excitement (mixed with regret) when she helped send off a regiment of young black volunteers (June 15-17, 1863) who signed up to help drive the Confederate army out of the state—before the state was ready to accept their assistance. We could also see why she might attend lectures delivered by the former slave and fiery Baptist minister, Reverend James Sella Martin (January 25, 1865), Frederick Douglass (February 16, 1865), the poet and former slave Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (February 27, 1865), but decline to go the last lecture in the series, delivered by William D. Kelley, a Pennsylvania Congressman (March 22, 1865). At the time, Kelley was enthusiastically campaigning for a bill enfranchising black men in Washington, D.C. While Emilie might have been interested in the issue, Kelley was known for giving long orations on the history of suffrage rights in the state—perhaps not an appealing way to spend the evening. Although she could not vote—nor could the black men in her life—Emilie liked to predict the outcome of elections (November 8-10, 1864). Notably, Emilie took care not to go out on Election Day, for there was always trouble in the streets (October 13-15, 1863). There was trouble on other days too, like on September 24, 1864, when Emilie noted "excitement this afternoon mr. green was molested and defended himself" (September 24-26, 1864). Green's "molesters" surely regretted their act, for Alfred Green, Sergeant Major in the 127th USCT, fended off the men first by pistol-whipping them and then by shooting one of them in the leg.

And we learned a great deal about cultural life in Civil War Philadelphia, discovering a cast of characters who made the city and time come alive. Emilie attended concerts, learned to play the guitar, and frequented performances by celebrities who we were delighted to meet. On May 11, 1864, Emilie noted that, "Nellie did not come up as i expected this evening a Miss Greenfeilds concertcomes off to night." Upon further investigation, we learned that Emilie attended a concert performed by Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, a former slave from Natchez, Mississippi, known as the "Black Swan." Some time before the war, Greenfield moved from Mississippi to Philadelphia, where she was freed and raised by Quakers. Greenfield was well known for her enchanting voice and classical repertoire, and she became a favorite in particular of Frederick Douglass. Indeed, she regularly opened for Douglass, warming up the audience with her music before Douglass took the stage. If Edward Loatman had come to Philadelphia in the spring of 1864, he too might have bought a ticket to see the Black Swan.

Through Emilie we were also introduced to Blind Tom. In September 1865, Emilie attended a performance given by Thomas Wiggins, a former slave who toured concert halls performing musical numbers he learned from memory. A complicated figure, Blind Tom inspired awe with his talent—performing two different songs on different pianos, while singing a third song—but he frustrated critics with his deep loyalty to his former master, who controlled all the proceeds of Tom's popular shows. Emilie declared herself "much Pleased with the performance excepting we had to sit up stairs wich made me furious" (September 14, 1865). To have to shuffle up to the balcony at the same venue where she had attended lectures by Frederick Douglass and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was too much for Emilie who, by late in 1865, expected more from white Philadelphians than a segregated performance venue. "The prejudice against blacks extends to every class," an 1860 article about Philadelphia in *Douglass' Monthly* explained, "and may be remarked in pleasure and in business. At theatres and concerts, lectures and churches, the negro is restricted to a remote gallery." Emilie was well positioned to remark on the changes the war wrought on Philadelphia and its inhabitants—and what had stubbornly remained the same. Engaging in digital history opened our eyes to these lived realities of urban life in the North during the Civil War.

And then there was the ice cream. In the process of building the Website, we tagged each entry in order to populate the word cloud that appears at the bottom of the page; this process revealed things that we had not even thought to look for. Like keyword searching in period newspapers, digitizing a source like a diary can help to uncover hidden patterns, preferences, and even unspoken thoughts. Tagging Emilie's complaints about foul weather allowed us to think about how her movement around the city became circumscribed, how outbreaks of illnesses increased in the winter, and how fighting in the eastern theater stalled in the midst of nor'easters. Had we not been tagging, we would likely never have discovered that Emilie liked ice cream. Indeed, during a time of intense worry, loss, and fear, Emilie recorded going out for ice cream on four separate occasions. Emilie enjoyed ice cream at a "saloon" with her friends after a particularly "dull day" working as a domestic (May 13, 1864), then again the next week after a children's concert (May 19-20, 1864), on an unseasonably cool day in August (August 27, 1863), and even after a crowded church choir concert in February (February 16, 1863). Admittedly, this is a slim evidentiary basis from which to make any assumption about Emilie—and also, who doesn't like ice cream? But Philadelphians of color did not generally take such luxuries for granted. In the summer of 1857, for example, Charlotte Forten and a friend were refused service at three Philadelphia ice cream parlors before they gave up. Emilie's regular enjoyment of the cold treat in 1863-1864 stood as evidence of the expanding space that black Philadelphians inhabited during the Civil War. Pushed to make our academic research meet the structural requirements of digital history, we saw something new in the diary every time we looked. Working together to transcribe and annotate Emilie Davis' three slim diaries, and to build the *Memorable Days* Website, allowed us to see fluctuations in morale in the Civil War North, to witness through her eyes events of enormous political significance, and to enjoy the small victories war

made possible—writing your name in a diary, for instance, and going out for ice cream with a friend.

Digital tools are rapidly making possible the integration of African American and Civil War history, as they allow users to search for bits and pieces of information buried under—and preserved within—the mountains of paper produced during the Civil War. In addition to the admittedly few diaries written by African Americans during the Civil War, there are traces of lives left behind in the census, enlistment rolls, and the fugitive slave and information wanted advertisements. Through online transcription and annotation—and the dissemination of these sources—digital tools are allowing historians to write new chapters in the history of the Civil War. Freed from the restraints of institutional memory, digital history sites are particularly well equipped to commemorate the Civil War as an important period in African American history.

Further Reading:

Emilie Davis's original diaries are located at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The online transcription with contextual annotations can be found at the Memorable Days Website:http://davisdiaries.villanova.edu. Mrs. Lillian (Loatmen) Boggs' letters (May 23, 2013 and September 25, 2013) are in the author's collection. The Information Wanted advertisements in *The Christian Recorder* are digitized as part of Accessible Preservatives' African American Newspapers, but they do not retain their original format. The *Recorder* is available on microfilm at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The University of Virginia's Geography of Slavery tracks fugitives through runaway slave ads. And the Historical Society of Pennsylvania has digitized William Still's list of fugitives who passed through Philadelphia.

On digital history, see the essays in the special issue, "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History," *Journal of American History* 95:2 (September 2008).

Edward Loatman's enlistment records are available on Ancestry.com, U.S. Colored Troops Military Service Records, 1861-1865 (Provo, Utah, Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2007; by subscription). The 1st Regiment USCT's history of Civil War combat is available at this National Park Service site (accessed 09/15/2013). On the history of U.S. colored troops, see William Dobak's *Freedom by the Sword: The U.S. Colored Troops, 1862-1867* (Center for Military History, 2011). For more information on the speakers and entertainers whom Emilie saw in person, see *The Black Swan at Home and Abroad; Or, a Biographical Sketch of Miss Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, the American Vocalist* (Philadelphia, 1855); *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké*, ed. Brenda Stevenson (New York, 1988).

Henry Louis Gates describes "'Roots' envy" in "My Yiddishe Mama," *The Wall Street Journal* (Feb. 1, 2006). Jill Lepore's new book on Jane Franklin is *Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin* (New York, 2013).

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The American Jeremiad after Thirty-Five Years



Before writing these remarks I re-read *The American Jeremiad* for the first time in quite a while. I believe in reading, so let me start with a reader's report. Beyond and before the special theoretical or methodological contributions Bercovitch's book offers, in reading his classic work the first impression that arises is of an extremely rare combination unmatched among Americanists: erudition across an extraordinary range of materials, combined with intellectually scintillating prose. Ideas flash and crackle that would seem mere speculation were they not warranted by the density of citation that plumps the footnotes. The literary scholar reaches out and pulls in history and anthropology and specialized religious works, the Americanist aptly quotes an astonishing array of British and European writers.

But to go beyond the experience of reading the book, let me speak as someone who has paid close attention to patterns of academic careers, especially in the area of my passion, literary studies. The historian of American literary study observes a striking parallel, which I believe has not been remarked, between two of the most brilliant and influential figures of the 1970s, men then in their forties who happened to be colleagues at Columbia. In 1975 Edward Said, the Palestinian-American, published his dazzling *Beginnings*, an enduring monument of the late-twentieth-century theory boom, and Sacvan Bercovitch, the Canadian-American, published his dazzling *Puritan Origins of the American Self*, which culminated four decades of recovering Puritanism as the foundation of American literature. Then in 1978, Said published *Orientalism*, which initiated what became post-colonial studies, and Bercovitch *The American Jeremiad*, which initiated what became American cultural studies.

> It testifies to the strength by which our subfields shut themselves off from each other that these two masterworks have been placed so infrequently in dialogue with one another.

In both cases, the 1975 books are marvels within the established field of literary studies, and the 1978 books break the frame. They're very different from each other, as they would have to be, but both strongly interdisciplinary. Even more than that, both are fighting books. Perhaps not ideology-critique—since neither is exactly Marxist—but perhaps something else. I'd put it this way: Said offered a critical genealogy of "The Orient" and Bercovitch a critical genealogy of "America." It testifies to the strength by which our subfields shut themselves off from each other that these two masterworks have been placed so infrequently in dialogue with one another.

Both Bercovitch and Said put to good use their immigrant status, their insider/outsider perspective, to make visible a structure of knowledge, belief, and practice that seemed natural to those within it but bizarre to a Palestinian encountering what was asserted of the Orient, or a Canadian encountering what he had thought to be the United States which then proved to conceive itself as "America."

Consider the divergent histories that follow from these dramatic openings. Both Orientalism and Americanism depend on exclusion. Yet Bercovitch was already on the mark back in 1978: he recognized a crucial pattern of growing inclusion—from the Half-Way Covenant of the second-generation Puritans all the way up to the more recent claims of women and people of color to count as American. This is a huge difference: the identity of "American" may be a prize to claim as well as a strait-jacket to be struggled free from, while no one, I think, has fought to be included as "Oriental."

Even more crucial, the ideal values of "America," Bercovitch has argued, are most cherished by those who oppose what the American state and people are doing. This is like the condition familiar in the 1970s and 1980s in another sphere of discourse, when those on the left in many parts of the world distinguished "actually existing" Communism in the USSR or Eastern Europe from what should be the fundamental values of Socialism or Communism or Marxism. Well, that problem is gone, but it makes all the more challenging the task of assessing "The State of the Americanist Field" thirty-five years after a book that might have had the effect of persuading us to keep a wary distance from the term "America." "What if we then dissociated America from the United States?" Bercovitch asks in the preface to the new edition. For some years the presidential addresses at the American Studies Association have asked this question in different forms, but how do we actually do it?

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The Little Picture



Who, in our own post-postmodern age, would dare to ask a question as simple as: What does America mean?

Why Biography?



How did women, with multiple daily obligations to family, reconcile a seemingly contradictory Transcendentalist imperative to cultivate “self-reliance”?

Unruly Origins



I treasure many of the conversations I had with my fellow citizens at their doorsteps, and I think if I had been blessed with musical talent, I could have waxed as lyrical about suburbanites as another Woody did about hoboes and Okies.