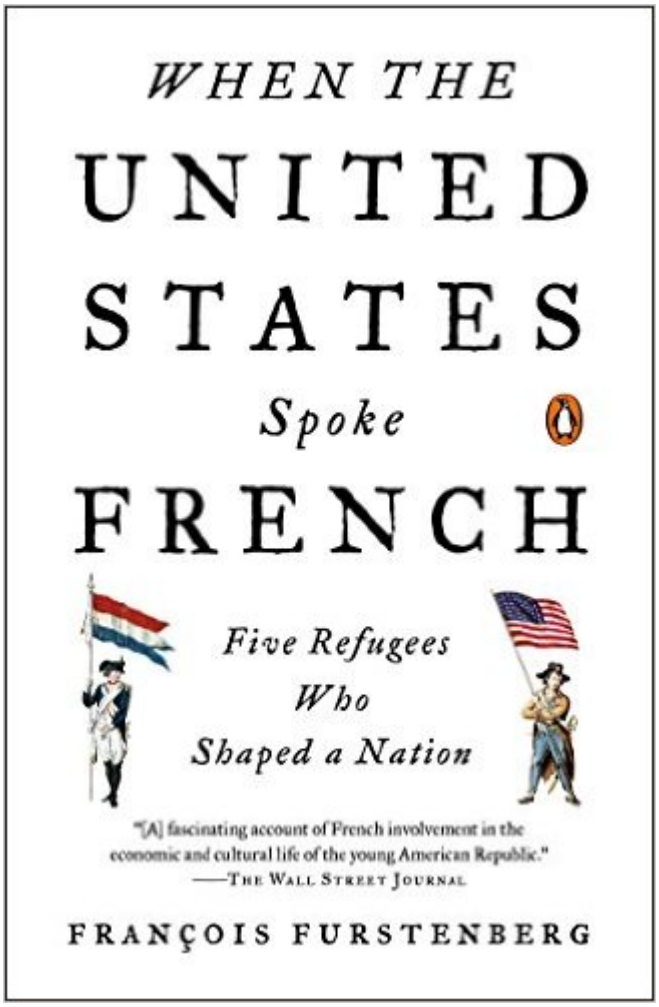
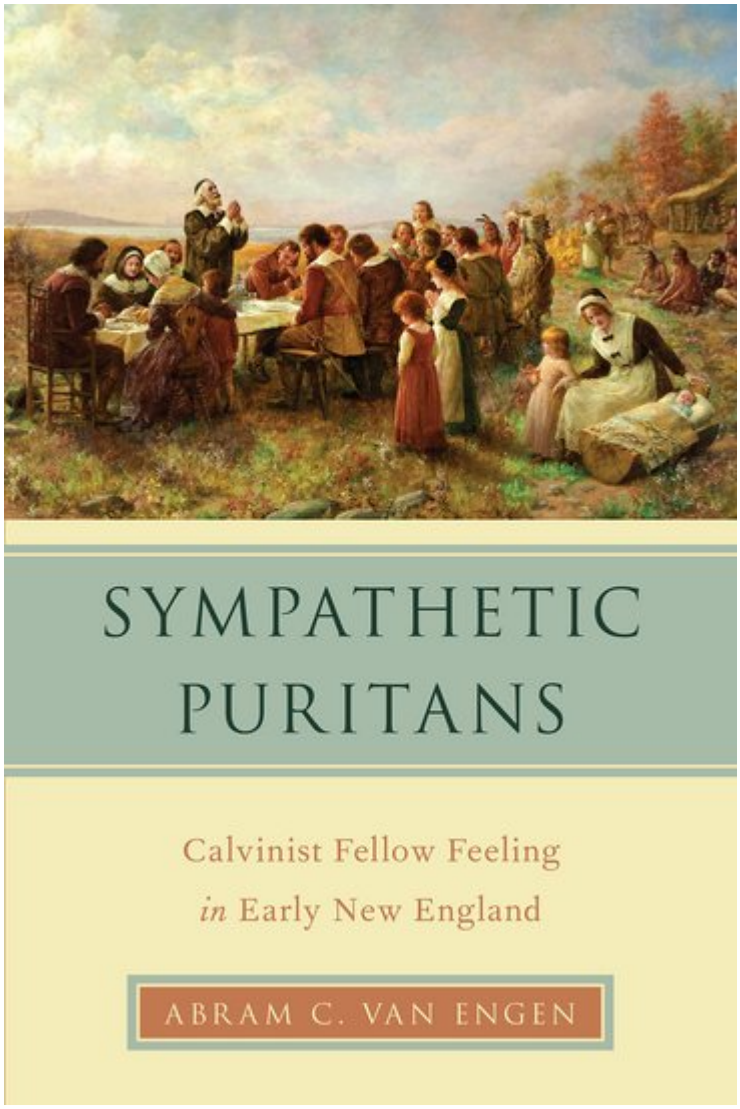
The American Republic and the French Revolution



The birth of a nation is not only or always a national story.

Go on—Have a Good Cry



After reading Van Engen’s iconoclastic work, it is difficult to remember why New England Calvinists are so often caricatured as cold and unfeeling.

My Father in the New World



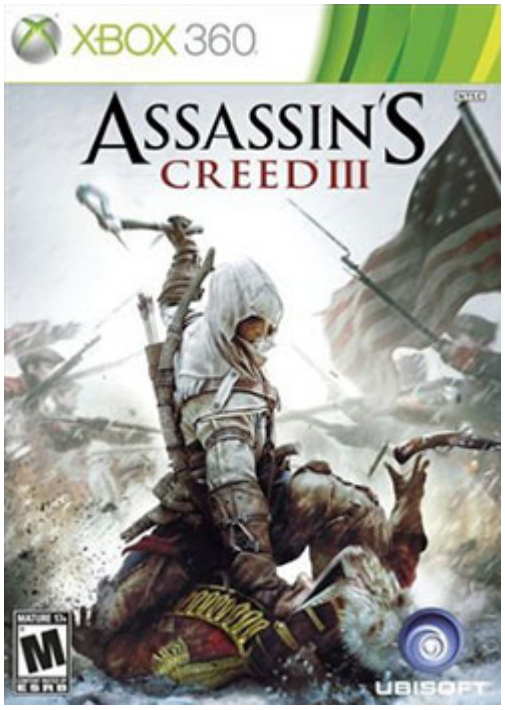
Those Americans will, I am afraid, still fleece you. —John Keats in a letter to his brother George living in Louisville, Kentucky, 1819.

Django Unchained: A Review



What matters most in Django, then, is not the accuracy of the film’s historical claims but how Tarantino’s awareness of his contemporary audience mediates his symbolic enterprise.

Gaming the Revolution: A Review of Assassin’s Creed 3



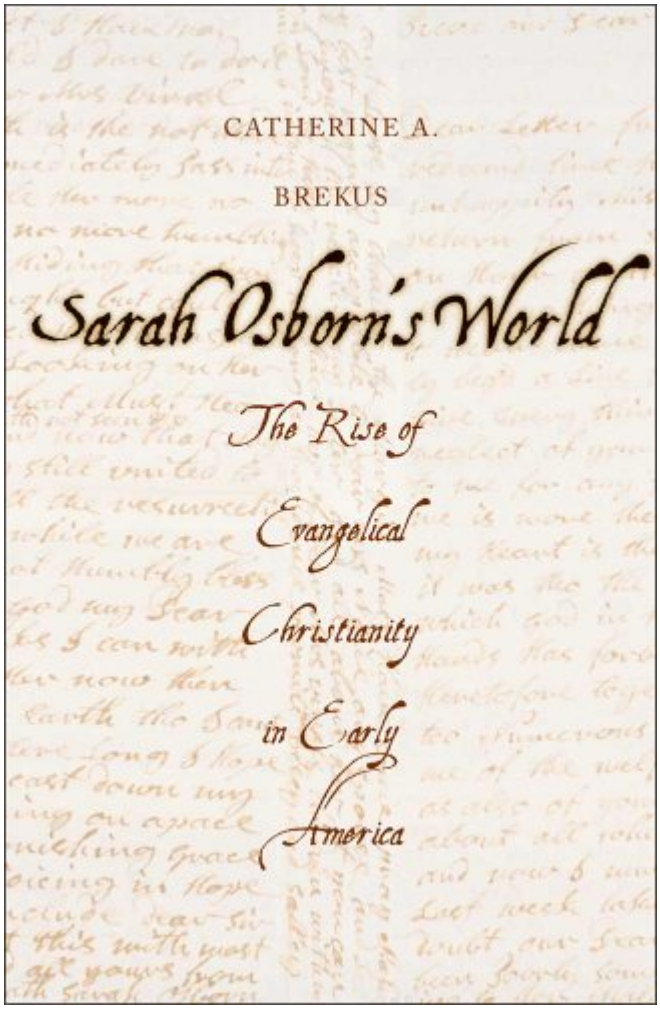
Assassin’s Creed 3 presents players with a large number of both historic and fictional non-player characters, but unfortunately the majority of these come across as little more than plot elements.

Abe Lincoln: Man! President! Vampire-slayer!



Lincoln slowly becomes aware […] that a titanic struggle is going on in the background between free humans and vampires.

One Pilgrim’s Progress



For many readers, the most eye-opening revelation of this book will be Osborn’s evolving position on slavery.

Encountering Daguerreotypy in America



Marcy J. Dinius's new book, *The Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype*, is the latest contribution to a growing body of scholarship committed to addressing the intermediality of nineteenth-century American culture. More than anything else,*The Camera and the Press* wants us to recognize how "language's role in structuring the practice of photography makes the two cultures—print and visual—visible as one" (3). To this end, its six chapters document the ubiquity of the daguerreotype in antebellum American culture—both as a material object and as an idea—and they explore how "written descriptions of the daguerreotype as unmediated, mechanically objective, natural, and permanent" shaped people's experience and understanding of "subjectivity, temporality, democracy, and art when each category was under significant cultural pressure" (33).

The Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

The book opens by establishing how photography first came into view verbally, not visually. Before anyone saw daguerreotypes in America, they first read about their "natural" and "mechanical" aspects in the press. That daguerreotypes were taken to be unmediated, objective, and scientific, Dinius argues, has more to do with their textual mediation than their materiality. These initial written descriptions of the new medium—developed in France in the late 1830s—used "the scientific ideal of mechanical objectivity" to distinguish the daguerreotype from prior forms of image making (such as painting, drawing, and engraving), and they "effectively reversed the aesthetic ideal of an

artist's subjective influence" (49).

The remainder of *The Camera and the Press* traces the effects of this textual mediation of daguerreotypy on mid-nineteenth-century American literature and daguerreotypy. Chapters two and three explore how print descriptions of daguerreotypy's material characteristics—particularly how they served as a point of contact in discussions of the role of mechanical objectivity and artistic subjectivity in image making—would shape the encounter with the new medium in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* and Herman Melville's *Pierre*. The intermedial references to daguerreotypy in these two novels as well as the actual daguerreotype practice of Gabriel Harrison and the firm of Southworth & Hawes are shown not only to "defend the aesthetic value of subjectivity in art," but also to "define art—from image making to novel-writing—as essentially subjective and thus, opposed to science and the growing influence of mechanical objectivity" (50). Dinius's close reading of Hawthorne's "Governor Pyncheon" chapter as a kind of narrative daguerreotype within *The House of the Seven Gables* reveals how his novel refutes "the argument that all forms of representation be mechanically faithful to an objective idea of reality" (60), and it powerfully discloses the extent to which the novel's intermediality extends beyond mere reference to literary practice itself.

The fourth chapter of *The Camera and the Press*—on Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—connects the interests of the first half of the book (on how daguerreotypy mediated debates about artistic subjectivity and mechanical objectivity) to those of the second (on how those same debates inflected discussions of race and slavery in antebellum America). Where chapters two and three attend to how Hawthorne and Melville rejected "the idea of mechanical objectivity as the new standard for all image making" (113), chapter four demonstrates how Stowe embraced it in order to activate its characters' and readers' subjectivities. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* generates affect for Eva and Tom, Dinius claims, by trading on "written descriptions of the daguerreotype as both a mechanically objective and a sentimental fetish object and by evoking the optical and affective effects of the medium" (127). The idea that daguerreotypy, as the least mediated form of representation available, offered direct access to its subjects, Dinius suggests, allowed sentimental authors like Stowe to lend materiality to its otherwise fictional characters.

The Camera and the Press closes with two chapters that examine how the notion of daguerreotypy's perceived objectivity would continue to inform discussions of race and slavery in antebellum America. Chapter five describes how daguerreotype portraits made by the black Liberian colonist Augustus Washington utilized the prevailing idea of the medium's representational power to render Liberian politicians "real" and their feeble government legitimate in the eyes of their viewers. Chapter six shows how Frederick Douglass's writings and lectures on daguerreotypy—as well as daguerreotypes of him—adopt "the popular idea of the medium as both a natural and a mechanically objective form of representation to figure some of his most important arguments about personhood,

race relations, and material and moral progress" (194). *The Camera and the Press* reproduces for the first time all six known daguerreotypes of Douglass (including a fascinating profile portrait of him) to support its claim that these images "both represent and enact the dual racial identity that Douglass embodied and experienced" as a mixed race individual (215).

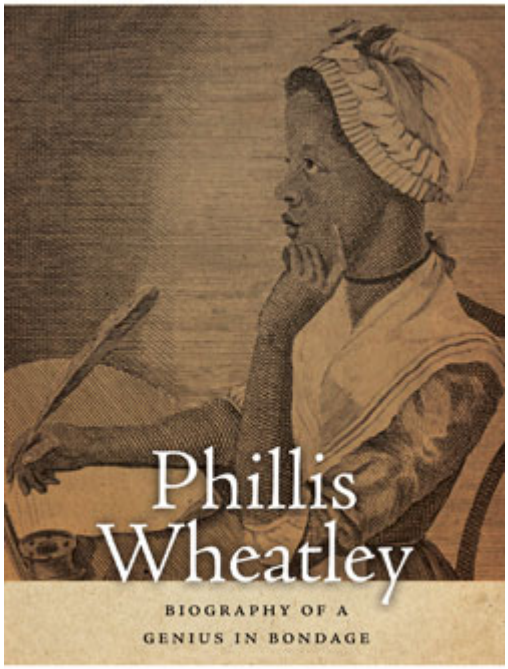
The book's twin conclusions—that "media are never isolable" (238) and that "our relationship to the past is always necessarily mediated" (238)—will sound familiar to students of media and visual studies and, in some ways, they speak to some of the limitations of *The Camera and the Press*. While Dinius clearly wants to "move beyond the limited paradigms of literature and photography and photography in literature to recognize the history of media as a form of literature and to understand narrative and literature themselves as forms of media" (11), the book—with the exception of chapter one—does not always do so. Despite its invocation of a media studies/theory approach, its method (predominantly close readings of intermedial references within literary texts) and its leading terms of analysis remain largely literary. Chapters two and three, for example, ultimately return to the customary terrain of aesthetics and what's "understood as art" (88). The issue is not that *The Camera and the Press* fails to attend to literature's media encounter with photography, but rather that it refrains from thinking of literature as media strongly enough. The stakes of literature's media encounter with photography, in other words, are imagined as and frequently return to literary terms—aesthetics and art—rather than media terms—images, information and the technical means of producing them (words and minds on the one hand; light, chemistry, and eyes on the other). Similarly, the larger argumentative framework of *The Camera and the Press*—particularly its central analytical terms of "subjectivity" and "objectivity"—might strike some readers as incongruous with theoretical approaches in which media might be considered as helping to constitute those very terms. This may explain why*The Camera and the Press* is unable to consider the possibility that the subjectivity which it frequently understands as expressed by or opposed to nineteenth-century media might not actually be anterior to it.

That *The Camera and the Press* solicits a more expansive conversation about literature's relationship to media (among other subjects), I hope, is evidence that its limitations are really a sign of its many strengths. While its larger contributions to literary and media study and, more broadly, to the relationship between them remain somewhat circumscribed, there is little doubt that *The Camera and the Press's* careful recovery of the reception of the daguerreotype in mid-nineteenth-century popular print and literary culture will change the way we discuss the history of photography in the United States. It makes the strongest case I know for how and why we need to understand the medium of daguerreotypy as a material social practice. Yet, perhaps the book's most immediate contribution may be in what it has to say about how culture and technology intersect. Dinius's study suggests that while newer media forms may remedy prior technologies, they are also mediated by them in ways that go beyond reception and extend into the practice of the medium itself (as her

sections on the daguerreotypy of Southworth & Hawes and Augustus Washington amply demonstrate). In short, *The Camera and the Press* is a smart, well-researched, and provocative study of photography and nineteenth-century American literature, one that will speak to anyone with an interest in literary, visual, and media studies, but particularly to those interested in how we might best articulate the relationship between print and visual culture in nineteenth-century America.

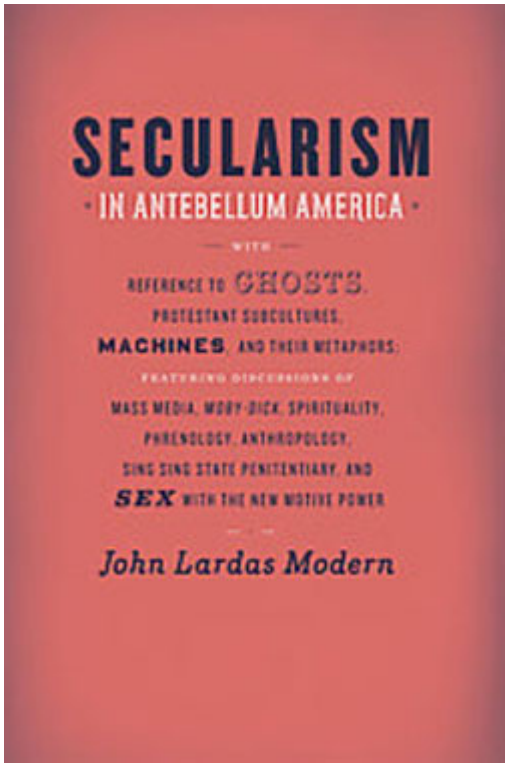
Christopher J. Lukasik is an associate professor of English and American Studies at Purdue University. He is the author of *Discerning Characters: The Culture of Appearance in Early America*(2010) and is currently working on a new book project entitled *The Image in the Text: Intermediality, Illustration, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*.

The life of Phillis Wheatley, finally!



Despite the limited extant documents penned in Wheatley’s hand or published in her name, Carretta finds her almost everywhere, in church records, letters, newspaper articles, subscription lists, and elsewhere.

Comfortable in our Unbelief?



Modern seeks a difficult balance: he simultaneously looks to explain the methods, meanings, and effects of secularism in the antebellum United States and to assert that its discursive presence could never achieve its own universalizing goals.