

Contemporary Adaptations of Early American Texts/ Authors/Topics

Compiled by Zabelle Stodola from Postings to the SEA Discussion List, July-August 2011

A bullet marks each person's posting(s), sometimes with related additions of my own. When someone provided a particularly detailed response, I have identified that person at the beginning of his/her post. I have kept all the original responses, so if you want me to tell you who posted what, please contact me offlist and I can provide that information. The order is more or less according to when the responses were posted to the earam list. Since so many responses came in, I have not checked for accuracy and I have not deleted some duplicate suggestions. Thanks to all. Enjoy!

- Salem Witchcraft documents; The Scarlet Letter (and the teen film Easy A partly inspired by it as well as Suzan-Lori Parks' play Fucking A); Hawthorne short stories and various aspects of Puritan history; The Crucible of course; and Maryse Conde's I, Tituba
- (From Steve Thomas) Two additions. First, was Rita Dove's poem "David Walker" mentioned already?

Second, a couple years ago I think I sent to this list-serve a list of contemporary Scarlet Letters (and by contemporary, I vaguely mean stuff published after the 1970s). I can't seem to find that old e-mail, but I will include the list below and update it. In addition to this list below, Leland Person gave a presentation at a Hawthorne conference a few years back about references to Scarlet Letter in mainstream media. I don't know if he ever published that, but it was interesting.

Novels

John Updike, A Month of Sundays, Roger's Version, and S.

Maryse Conde, I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem

Bharati Mukherjee, Holder of the World

Kathy Acker, Blood and Guts in High School

Charles Larson, Arthur Dimmesdale, a Novel

Christopher Bigsby, Hester and Pearl, A Romance

Alain Lindsay, A., a Novel

Deborah Noyes, Angel and Apostle

Contemporary Plays and Opera

Suzan-Lori Parks, In the Blood and Fucking A (together in Red Letter Plays)

Phyllis Nagy, The Scarlet Letter

James De Maiolo, The Scarlet Letter

Terry Quinn (libretto), Hester Prynne at Death

Poems

Toi Derricotte, "Hester's Song"

Kathleen Norris, "Hester Prynne Recalls a Sunday in June"

Young Adult Fiction (recommended by secondary education textbooks)

Elizabeth George Speare, The Witch of Blackbird Pond

Blossom Elfman, The Girls of Huntington House

Laurie Halse Anderson, Speak Film and Television

Roland Joffe, The Scarlet Letter

Will Gluck, Easy A

Season 1, episode 14 of Popular (same director as Glee)

Season 9, episode 4 of The Simpsons

Most of this stuff is actually listed in Wikipedia, but my much shorter list includes a few things not in Wikipedia. Incidentally, I blogged about the movie Easy A when it came out last year, here: <http://eng1243.wordpress.com/2010/10/03/easy-a-and-the-history-of-sexuality/>. If anyone out there has additional material, please e-mail me.

- **(From Michael Ditmore)** This is probably not very close to what you're thinking of, but I've long been interested (distantly, loosely) in adaptations that might be categorized as targeting popular culture, juvenile readers, etc. The Anne Hutchinson story, for example, in the twentieth century was rendered both as an epic poem (Theda Kenyon's Scarlet Anne) and as a soft-porn, time-travel novel (Robert Rimmer's Scarlet Anne). There has also been a spate of books on Hutchinson for younger/juvenile readers (I'd say up through junior high school), usually illustrated in various ways. (Additionally, there are treatments by independent or out-of-the-way publishers.) Then there is Louis Auchincloss's The Winthrop Covenant and other novelizations. There was even a made-for-TV docudrama in the early 1960s. And even the scholarship itself trailed off into fictionalized dramatization (Emery Battis's Saints and Sectaries). And really, virtually all the biographies in one

way or another imaginatively fill in a good deal of detail not strictly warranted by the primary material. For that matter, depending on the kind of class, one could also consider the more rigorous scholarly treatment as well (in David D. Hall's anthology of controversy materials, Hutchinson's centrality is downplayed, I'd say) as opposed that have a more polemical bent.

I found all this interesting because of the small amount of primary materials to work from, as well as the lack of details in those materials (and what many saw as the theological arcana in most of these details). To the best of my memory, virtually all of these accounts at some point or other will dramatize the climax of her civil trial, but in doing so they will make their own "adaptation" in one way or another (compression, embellishment, rewording, etc.). But I can't recall how many even make a nod toward her church trial. (Of course, Hawthorne's "Mrs. Hutchinson" sketch also fits here.) So, here's a place where one might collect all the adaptations of the climax itself for comparison and analysis.

I've pasted in below a chronological bibliography of book/video sources I began to put together about 10 years ago; even then, it must have been inadequate and incomplete, but with current internet resources, of course, one could easily quadruple or quintuple such sources, I'd guess. (The bracketed items are materials I found reference for but never managed to track down. For instance, the Orson Scott Card reference may turn out to be a cassette tape. If you know Card's sci-fi/fantasy novels, it might be worth tracking down.) Somewhere I may have journal/magazine sources, too, but they also would be dated now. For example, I have one somewhere that describes Hutchinson as gray-eyed and tall, but where could that have come from? To my memory, one of the oddest aspects for later readers of the controversy is the utter absence of physical detail — which is what allows the imagination to fill in.

One final thought, for what it's worth. You're probably familiar with the statue of Hutchinson on the Boston State House grounds — while Winthrop's portrait is safely inside, in a row with other governors. This aspect alone is worth a bit of consideration (I think, but could be mistaken, that we have good reason to believe there is some verisimilitude in the Winthrop portrait, but I don't think we could say the same about Hutchinson's statue). Or again, consider the most recent biographical treatments of these two figures, one by Frank Bremer (Winthrop as "forgetter" founder) and Eve La Plante's (which uses a Dutch portrait of a woman on the cover). And the various visual renderings of Hutchinson from the 19th and 20th centuries — are curious. Again, to my memory, she is often rendered as relatively young (say, in her mid-30s) while her accusers are grim, older men (40s+). The two most famous examples I can think of: Edward Austin Abbey's and Howard Pyle's. Neither strikes me as accurate, however compelling they may be otherwise.

Ellis, George F. Life of Anne Hutchinson. In the Library of American Biography, Conducted by Jared Sparks. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1847.

Hubbard, Elbert. Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Reformers: Anne Hutchinson. East Aurora: The Roycrofters, 1907.

Augur, Helen. An American Jezebel: The Life of Anne Hutchinson. New York: Brentano's, 1930.

Curtis, Edith. Anne Hutchinson: A Biography. Cambridge: Washburn and Thomas, 1930.

- Rugg, Winnifred King. Unafraid: A Life of Anne Hutchinson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930.
- Bolton, Reginald Pelham. A Woman Misunderstood: Anne, Wife of William Hutchinson. New York: The Westchester County Historical Society, 1931.
- Kenyon, Theda. Scarlet Anne. New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1939.
- Battis, Emery. Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1962.
- Profiles in Courage: Anne Hutchinson. Robert Saudek Associates; director, Cyril Ritchard; producer, Robert Saudek; writer, Jonathan Miller. US: Robert Saudek Associates; NBC-TV, 1965-01-10.
- Crawford, Deborah. Four Women in a Violent Time. New York: Crown, 1970.
- Faber, Dorothy. A Colony Leader: Anne Huthchinson. Champaign: Garrard, 1970.
- Auchincloss, Louis. The Winthrop Covenant. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.
- Heidresh, Marcy Moran. Witnesses. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.
- Herzog, Katherine Ann. "Vision and Boundaries: The Faith of Anne Hutchinson." In Trajectories of Faith: Five Life Stories. Eds. James W. Fowler and Robin W. Lovin. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980. 59-91.
- Williams, Selma R. Divine Rebel: The Life of Anne Marbury Hutchinson. New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1981.
- Card, Orson Scott. Roger Williams, the Seeker; Anne Hutchinson, the Freeing of Religion. Eitwanda, CA: Living History Productions, 1982.]
- Rushing, Jane Gilmore. Covenant of Grace. Garden City: Doubleday, 1982.
- Lang, Amy Schragar. Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.
- Fradin, Dennis Brindell. Anne Hutchinson: Fighter for Religious Freedom. Colonial Profiles Series. Hillside, NJ: Enslow, 1990.
- Ilgenfritz, Elizabeth. Anne Hutchinson. American Women of Achievement. New York: Chelsea House, 1991.
- Dunlea, William. Anne Hutchinson and the Puritans: An American Tragedy. Pittsburgh: Dorrance, 1993.
- Howe, Susan. The Birthmark. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1993.
- Long, Huey B. Early Innovators in Adult Education. 1993.}
- Nichols, Joan Kane. A Matter of Conscience: The Trial of Anne Hutchinson. Austin: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1993.
- Cameron, Jean. Anne Hutchinson, Guilty or Not?: A Closer Look at Her Trials. American University Studies 9 ser., History 146. New York: Peter Lang, 1994.

Buckingham, Rachel. "Anne Hutchinson: American Jezebel or Woman of Courage?" George Mason High School (Falls Church, VA) for Ms. Gail Nolan, IBH Americas, Period 6. Oct. 30, 1995.

<http://cpcug.org/user/billb/hutch.html>

Leonard, Bianca and Winnifred K.Rugg. Anne Hutchinson: Unsung Heroine of History. Joshua Tree, CA: Tree of Life, 1995.

Glasscock, Sarah, ed. "Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643): An Outspoken Woman." 10 Women Who Helped Shape America: Short Plays for the Classroom. Jefferson City, MO: Scholastic, 1996. 27-36.

Jacobs, William Jay. "Anne Hutchinson." Great Lives: World Religions. New York: Atheneum, 1996. 216-21.

- Mary Rowlandson's Sovereignty and Goodness of God and Sherman Alexie, "Captivity," and Louise Erdrich, "Captivity"
- Two wonderful short stories, Angela Carter's "Our Lady of the Massacre" and Tobias Wolff's "In the Garden of the North American Martyrs," alongside any of the Puritan captivity narratives
- For a longer text, Thomas Berger's novel Little Big Man is an illuminating companion to many of the early captivity narratives
- Honoree Jeffers's poems on Phillis Wheatley along with her Statement of Research, in commonplace 11:1 <http://www.common-place.org/vol-11/no-01/poetry/>
- June Jordan's "Something Like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley" with Wheatley poems
- Affrilachian poet Frank X. Walker's two collections, Buffalo Dance: The Journey of York and When Winter Come: The Ascension of York. They're books of persona poems told from the point of view of York, the slave of William Clark who accompanied the Corps of Discovery
- Olaudah Equiano's slave narrative and the Young Adult novel by M. T. Anderson, The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing
- Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation and Sophie Cabot Black's "Arguments," a series of poems in which she dramatizes the Mayflower landing from the perspective of Dorothy Bradford (William's wife), who died soon after the Separatist Puritans' arrival in the New World. There is also a nice painting of her: <http://www.cullomgallery.com/index.php#mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=4&p=4&a=0&at=0>
- Bradstreet poems and John Berryman's Homage to Mistress Bradstreet
- Sarah Kemble Knight's Journal and Janet Burnett Gerba, "With No Little Regret": An Historical Novel Based on the Journal of Madam Knight
- A huge range of materials on Pocahontas (not just the Disney films and the more recent Terrence Mallick film The New World)
- Stieg Larsson's The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo read alongside Charles Brockden Brown's Ormond; or the Secret Witness.

- Several posts say that Charles Schulz named the main Peanuts' character Charlie Brown because Charles Brockden Brown's Edgar Huntly was his favorite novel (going any further with this connection might be problematical!)
- The Bedford Anthology of American Literature has sections called "Through a Modern Lens" which include a variety of modern responses to older texts. The table of contents is here:

<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/Catalog/product/bedfordanthologyofamericanliteraturevolumeone-firstedition-belasco/tableofcontents>

- (From Kristina Bross) In addition to the Salem-linked works already mentioned, I recommend Nicole Cooley's *Afflicted Girls*, which includes individual poems that respond to other Puritan texts as well as to the trials. Cooley wrote the book out of a research fellowship at the AAS.

For more verse, *Common-Place* has a column (with commentary) on poetry from the archives that I've found really interesting.

Depending on where you start "American literature" and what you assign, Aime Cesaire's *Une Tempete* (available in translation) is easily excerptable and can be paired with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

I've used Mary Doria Russell's *The Sparrow* alongside the Jesuit relations that in part inspired it with good success. It's a Jesuit sci-fi captivity novel (!!) with a broken narrative structure, so a longer piece, but for some students, it'll be a fast read.

For Sherman Alexie fans, his pop-thriller novel *Indian Killer* is interesting in the way it invokes (though doesn't explicitly adapt) early American texts like John Smith's *Generall Historie* and the figure of Cotton Mather.

I really like Susan Howe's creative-critical reworking of 17th-century texts, but my undergraduates haven't found her accessible—I'd love to know if others have used her to good effect.

If you don't mind non-fiction, Tamara Harvey recommended Sarah Vowell's *The Wordy Shipmates* to me, which I've enjoyed using in my classes, particularly the section on Winthrop's *Modell*, which is an accessible presentation of the sermon and its significance.

You said "short," but other novels I've used/recommended include Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (Bacon's Rebellion, Pequot War, Salem, etc., etc.), Bharati Mukharjee's *Holder of the World* (Rowlandson).

For novels that are more loosely connected to our field, but thought-provoking all the same: Octavia Butler's *Wild Seed* ("discovery"; middle passage; colonization; slavery, Salem); Harry Turteldove's *Opening Atlantis* (alternative history of discovery); Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich *Crown of Columus* (Columbus; Occom in the archives).

Anyone ever assigned John Barth's *Sot-Weed Factor*?

- Sophie Cabot Black's "Arguments" is series of poems in which she dramatizes the Mayflower landing from the perspective of Dorothy Bradford (William's wife), who died soon after the Separatist Puritans' arrival in the New World. There is also a nice painting of her: <http://www.cullomgallery.com/index.php#mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=4&p=4&a=0&at=0>
She isn't an author so that may not work unless you want to include voices from women who weren't recorded. If you were interested in this motif, there are a bunch of poems from the perspective of La Malinche.
- Mary Jemison's narrative alongside Deborah Larsen's novel, *The White* (2002)
- *Mason and Dixon* by Thomas Pynchon, which reworks material from various early Americans, including Byrd's *Dividing Line* and Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly*, and *The Sot-Weed Factor* by John Barth, which reworks Ebenezer Cooke's poem by the same name as well as John Smith.
- (From Theresa Strouth Gaul) The Society for the Study of American Women Writers (SSAWW) listserv had a discussion along these lines a while back, and the resulting list, entitled "Parallel Texts," is posted at <http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/ssaww/paralleltxts.htm> (actually I, Zabelle, initiated that SSAWW discussion thread too! But Theresa has kindly extracted the suggestions for early American texts below)

The Bedford Anthology of American Literature, Vols I & II. Eds. Susan Belasco and Linck Johnson (contains many contemporary adaptations and responses to earlier works)

John Smith's and John Rolfe's accounts of Pocahontas/Matoaka with Michele Cliff's "No Telephone to Heaven" and excerpts from Paula Gunn Allen's biography of Pocahontas

William Bradford's texts with Sophie Cabot Black's Arguments (poems about the landing of the Mayflower from the perspective of Bradford's wife)

Mary Rowlandson's Narrative together with Louise Erdrich's "Captivity" and Sherman Alexie's "Captivity," or Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*, or Angela Carter's "Our Lady of the Massacre" (Carter would also go with *Moll Flanders* or Hannah Swarton)

Anne Bradstreet's "The Author to Her Book" with Denise Duhamel's 1995 "My First Book Of Poetry Was Like My First Baby"

Phillis Wheatley's poems with James Richardson's "On Seeing Your Portrait, Phillis Wheatley" (Callaloo 22:4, 1999, p. 975) or June Jordan's "Something Like a Sonnet for Phillis Miracle Wheatley"

"The Sot-Weed Factor" (Ebenezer Cook) with John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor*

James Seaver's *Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* with Deborah Larsen's *The White*, or Lois Lenski's children's book, *Indian Captive*, or Louise Erdrich's "Captivity"

- Jonathan Edwards' Edwards's Faithful Narrative in conjunction with Susan Stinson's "Spider and Fly" in the current (9.1) issue of Early American Studies
- Robert Lowell wrote several poems that might be useful for your purposes, e.g., "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," "After the Surprising Conversions," "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts," "Tenth Muse," "The Worst Sinner, Jonathan Edwards' God," as well as some (sonnets?) on classic 19th-C American writers.

I also like to use chapters from D.H. Lawrence's Studies in Classic American Literature (esp. his chapter on Benjamin Franklin) and W.C. Williams' In the American Grain.

- A brief poem that comes immediately to mind is Anthony Hecht's "Samuel Sewall," which plays delightfully with one of the most frequently anthologized episodes in the Diary.
- There is a list of films about early America that might provide some interesting comparisons. <http://www.lehigh.edu/%7Eejg1/SEA/EAL-FeatureFilmComprehensive.html>
- About ten years back, T. Coraghessan Boyle published a fantastic short story in The New Yorker, "Captured by the Indians" in which a pregnant woman in a failing relationship is reading a paperback collection (!) of captivity narratives. And Common-place recently uploaded a series of poems by Honoree Jeffers (<http://phillisremastered.wordpress.com/about/>), part of her project to "remaster" Phillis Wheatley.
- The pairings that have been most productive for me in the classroom, in terms of helping students see their presumptions and projections and engage with the texts, are Deborah Larsen's 2003 novel based on Mary Jemison's 1758 captivity (a poetic and even gripping first-person novel that does and doesn't fulfill expectations set up by reading 18c captivity narratives first), and (in a seminar explicitly set up to focus on method) Phillis Wheatley with Monica Sone's autobiography Nisei Daughter. The latter focuses on Sone's internment with her family during WW2 and often frustrates students who want Sone to be angry and reject the U.S. as hypocritical, helping to alert us to ways that patriotism (and/or assertions of patriotism) are historically and culturally specific and also to the ways that "African American" often sets up expectations and projections that can impede grappling with what texts meant when they were first written and consumed (as well as how unknowable the latter is, in many ways, in relation to Wheatley).
- I'm not sure if this will help with undergraduates, but Rosmarie Waldrop does an interesting sort of palimpsest with Roger Williams' A Key to the Language of America (ISBN-10: 0811212874).
- In my early American lit survey course I have taught Diane Glancy's "Stoneheart" (a book-length poem narrated from Sacagawea's point of view) alongside excerpts from Lewis' and Clark's journals. Glancy's work is fascinating and powerful in many ways. An easy example is that excerpts from Lewis' and Clark's journal are juxtaposed throughout on the page with the narrator's poetic lines. Glancy's poem and Sacagawea's experience, I think, also readily complemented discussions and analyses of captivity, language and politics, and gender in early

American literature. I was reluctant at first to mess with the packed syllabus of a early American survey course to teach a "modern" text, but I learned as much as the students did from this experience. I look forward to reading others' suggestions on this matter!

- The recent novel by Mat Johnson titled Pym that certainly could be taught alongside Poe.
- John Edgar Wideman's short story, "Fever," pairs nicely with A Narrative of the Proceedings by Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, as well as Charles Brockden Brown's Arthur Mervyn. Laurie Halse Anderson also has a young adult novel out called Fever 1793. And it may already have been mentioned, but Robert Hayden and June Jordan have poems/prose that should probably be on this list alongside Wheatley, Douglass, and Dunbar.
- Margaret Atwood's narrative poem "Half-Hanged Mary" about Mary Webster's punishment for witchcraft works quite well with any reading on Salem, AND there's a one-act opera by Tom Baker, The Gospel of the Red Hot Stars, based upon the poem, too. An operatic Cotton Mather, who could ask for anything more

Sarah Vowell's The Wordy Shipmates is a great way to really get undergrads to engage those theological tracts in the Williams/Cotton debate and the Antinomian Controversy.

- (From Ivy Schweitzer) Several years ago, I did an Early American Literature course called "Visions and Revisions" with many parallel texts. There is a modern version of The Scarlet Letter called Arthur Dimmesdale that worked well, and there is also the Updike Scarlet Letter trilogy. And there is Miller's The Crucible, Petry's Tituba of Salem Village, and Maryse Conde, I, Tituba. Believe it or not, the Disney film Pocahontas is really great to do with other accounts of the first Jamestown colony, such as Smith, of course, but also Wingfield and Percy--"Percy" is the name of the villainous governor Ratcliffe's effete lap dog in the film, so someone at Disney was reading their EA history! My other all-time favorite revision is Michael Dorris' YA novel Morning Girl (story of a Taino girl and her family that ends with her swimming out to meet the boat carrying Columbus and his men) and Columbus' letters or Las Casas' accounts of his voyages. And now there's Morrison's A Mercy.
- Extracts from Columbus with Michael Dorris' and Louise Erdrich's detective novel The Crown of Columbus
- There are certainly many text to film adaptations to consider including The Scarlet Letter and the Demi Moore/Gary Oldman version. In fact, looking at different film versions of TSL at different cultural points is quite illuminating (though time-consuming to watch several films). There's also The Last of the Mohicans with the recent film starring Daniel Day Lewis.
- T.C. Boyle also has a story called "The Doubtfulness of Water: Madam Knight's Journey to New York" in his Tooth and Claw collection of short stories.

- There are several graphic novel adaptations of early American texts, including a Marvel-comic edition of Last of the Mohicans and an adaptation by George O'Connor of Harmen Meyndertz van den Bogaert's Journey into Mohawk Country, 1634-1635.
- To add to the graphic novel adaptations thread: Kyle Baker's Nat Turner.
- Julia Golding's five-book Cat Royal series is set in the 1790s Atlantic world and includes a number of titles that would pair up well with early American texts and topics: *Cat Among the Pigeons*, for instance, includes Olaudah Equiano and Granville Sharp as characters, and *The Black Heart of Jamaica* treats the Haitian revolution. M.T. Anderson's two-volume *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation* is an account of a slave in revolutionary Boston and in the context of Enlightenment rationality and science. These works of historical fiction are pitched at readers in the 10-16 year range, but they are fantastic reads for any age.
- (From Ed Griffin) As Karen Roggenkamp requested in an earlier post, here's some info on the courses I've done on this topic. Maybe some of these ideas could be smuggled into the survey course, though I chiefly did these adaptations in seminars. And I'll bet all of us will kidnap some of the terrific suggestions already sent to the discussion list. Below is the "blurb" for a seminar called "20th-Century Literature Encounters Early America." That was in 2006. (The E-mail system I'm using doesn't capture italics, so here I put titles in quotation marks. Sorry about that.) I also taught a course for American Studies called "History, Literature, and Culture." I think that's the one Karen took. After the "blurb" below, I'll list the topics for the AmSt course.

Recently, I also had great success capitalizing on the remarkably comprehensive website constructed by Ed Gallagher at Lehigh: The Pocahontas Archive. I taught an undergraduate course called "Representations of Pocahontas," and the website was at the center of it. Check it out at <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/>. After the course finished, Ed Gallagher graciously added my syllabus to the site, so you can see what I tried to do.

By the way, students tell me that one of the surprise "hits" of these courses is Esther Forbes's short novel "A Mirror for Witches."

20th Century Literature Encounters Early America . This spring, the seminar in early American literature departs from my usual practice. The topic under investigation will be "Twentieth-Century Literature Encounters Early America." We shall read the literature of early America through certain filters provided in many genres by writers of our time, both American and British, who have recovered the colonial and national periods for their own literary (and often political) purposes. What cultural work, we shall ask, have early American literature and history done in "the American century"? How and why have writers living three centuries after British colonization and the war for American independence chosen to seize those early days for their subject matter and even for their forms? The reading list is selective but broadly representative. John Berryman's long poem "Homage to Mistress Bradstreet" takes us back to the seventeenth century and Anne Bradstreet, the mother of American verse in English. While

Berryman meditates on the first great American poet, Peter Ackroyd's novel "Milton in America" transplants her contemporary, the great English poet John Milton, to seventeenth-century Massachusetts. Robert Lowell's verse drama "Endecott and the Red Cross" rewrites Hawthorne to reconsider, in the 1960s, the issues of power in those very early years of the British colonial enterprise.[2011 Note: I built this unit on Merry Mount, and I also looked at the opera version by Richard Stokes and Howard Hanson.EMG] Ackroyd's fellow English novelist Christopher Bigsby, like Lowell, retells Hawthorne in his novel "Hester," a speculation on how Hester and Arthur got together before they arrived in seventeenth-century Boston and before Hawthorne's romance even begins.

The 1692 witchcraft episode, at the end of the century, receives its most famous modern literary treatment in Arthur Miller's play "The Crucible," but Esther Forbes's 1928 novel "A Mirror for Witches" may be even more compelling because of its superior historical accuracy. Moving into the eighteenth century, "Hanging Katherine Garret," a recent novel by U of M Ph. D. candidate Abigail Davis [2011 Note: now Dr. Davis!], captures the ongoing ramifications of the Pequot war a century after the battles.

Lowell's one-act play "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," follows Hawthorne's lead about revolutionary America but reads that story in light of concerns of the mid 1960s. And two mammoth, "post-modern" novels, John Barth's "The Sot Weed Factor" (based on Ebenezer Cooke's eighteenth-century satirical poem) and "Thomas Pynchon's Mason & Dixon" (based on that duo's manifold adventures) will challenge the reading and interpretive skills of each of us.

The seminar will be challenging, for it requires everyone to cross many boundaries of history and literature, but border banditry can often be exciting, and I hope that this adventure will offer its share of thrills and chills.

The History, Literature, and Culture course did a version of the Merry-Mount unit, but it added the document "The Confessions of Nat Turner" with Styron's novel of the same name--along with the ensuing controversy, represented in the course by "Ten Black Writers Respond." Additionally, we did the escape of Margaret Garner with Morrison's "Beloved" and did Doctorow's "Ragtime" and Linda Hogan's novel "Mean Spirit" which relates to the historical documents of the Osage oil-rush murders. In other versions, I've also used the Lowell poems on Edwards.

In case anybody's interested, a few years ago, I published a long essay on the Merry-Mount episode as it has been recast since Hawthorne. "Dancing Around the Maypole, Ripping Up the Flag: The Merry Mount Caper and Issues in American History and Art." *Renascence* 57:3 (Spring 2005): 177-202.

- For a fun alternative, magic realist version of EA history, try the first two volumes of Orson Card's Alvin Maker series, Seventh Son and Red Prophet. Great fun. David Liss's recent novels, especially The Whiskey Rebels (2007) do a nice job of post-Revolutionary America as a site of intrigue.
- **(From William Heath)** Since our discussion has expanded into ways to use contemporary literature to illuminate the colonial period, permit me to suggest my own historical novel,

Blacksnake's Path: The True Adventures of William Wells, as a recreation of the Northwest Frontier, circa 1770 to 1812. It tells the true story of William Wells, who was captured by the Miami at age 13 and grew up to be a Miami warrior, fighting for his father-in-law Little Turtle at St. Clair's Defeat in 1791, the biggest victory the Indians ever won against the U.S. Army. He then switched sides and became head scout for Anthony Wayne and the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, served as the interpreter at the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, and went on to be the Indian Agent for the Miami at Fort Wayne for the next ten years. He died at the Battle of Fort Dearborn in 1812. Because Wells was on both sides of the conflict, my book is able to present the perspective of both the Miami and the settlers. Richard White noted that Wells is perhaps the best American of his time to represent the shrinking "middle ground" of the period. Teachers with a serious interest in using my novel can request an examination copy from me: heath@msmary.edu. Meanwhile, I'm enjoying the many helpful suggestions on this topic.

- I'd like to second the recommendation of M. T. Anderson's Octavian Nothing series (excellent!) and add Laurie Halse Anderson's **Chains** and **Forge**, novels which tell the story of two slave sisters owned by a Loyalist family in Revolutionary New York. These are also young adult novels.
- I don't think I've seen Terrence Malick's film *_The New World_* mentioned yet. I use this film alongside primary texts from Smith and Rolfe and many of the great images on the Pocahontas Archive. I also have the students poke around the Preservation of Virginia website ("Rediscovering Jamestown") which has some interesting "interpretive" takes on the whole Jamestown crew. Students generally enjoy this unit and it makes for great classroom discussion.
- Yes, the M.T. Anderson Octavian Nothing books are excellent!! I also just read a book called The Heretic's Daughter by Kathleen Kent, which is about the Salem witch trials and Martha Carrier. I have not taught it, but I have taught Maryse Conde's I, Tituba, which is excellent with original witch trial documents AND The Scarlet Letter since she includes the character Hester Prynne.
- On the Salem theme, there is also Katherine Howe's recent popular novel, "The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane." The protagonist is a grad student writing her dissertation, no less! As I recall it gets a little Harry Potterish/magical toward the end.
- Along these lines, Robert Conley's Real people series, a set of historical novels about the Cherokee Nation, would be an interesting addition, as would Daniel Heath Justice's Kynship novels. One could pair these novels with their scholarship about Cherokee history and literature as well as eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Cherokee texts by Nancy Ward/Nanye'hi and Elias Boudinot, etc.
- Depending on how broadly you are defining *American*, Paul Anderson's Hunger's Brides, a massive (1000+ pages long) dialog between past and present involving Sor Juana.
- (From Lisa Logan) Hello colleagues, I use Judith Ortiz Cofer's essay "Taking the Macho," which presents the story of native women's resistance to Columbus (from the collection *_Woman in*

Front of the Sun: On Becoming a Writer_). Also, the passage in Mary Lee Settle's _I, Roger Williams_, in which the fictionalized Williams and his wife carry all their worldly belongings in a wagon down to the wharf, and another, in which Williams talks about the voyage, work really well to "humanize" the Puritans for students. I second the recommendation of Katherine Kent's _The Heretic's Daughter_ (gorgeous, and the prison scenes were really vivid--students don't understand what prison was in early New England). For Jamestown, I use excerpts from Jill Lepore's essay on Jamestown ("Our Town") that appeared in the _New Yorker_ 4/2/2007. I also rely on PBS "We Shall Remain" videos, which one can watch online. Ed Gallagher's Pocahontas Archive and History on Trial have worked pretty well.
<http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/>

Is anyone reading Geraldine Brooks' _Caleb's Crossing_ right now (about first Native American at Harvard)?

- A few of my colleagues have paired Rowlandson's *Narrative* with Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* as captivity narratives.
- Did anyone suggest BLINDSPOT by Jill Lepore and Jane Kamensky yet?
- The pairings in the *Bedford Anthology of American Literature* may be helpful. Many of the entries have sections called "Through a Modern Lens" with poems or something short that do exactly what you're suggesting. For example, Anne Bradstreet is paired with a contemporary poem (and in another edition, with a John Berryman poem, I believe). I tend to know mostly novels, so I'm not much help on short stories. For Phillis Wheatley, I love the poem by Naomi Long Madgett. Here is a link to some ideas on Wheatley from *Ebony* magazine:
http://books.google.com/books?id=K94DAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA94&lpg=PA94&dq=naomi+madgett+%2B+phillis+wheatley&source=bl&ots=43o9mj5wFn&sig=WDFoBLpACX32Krir6cMoCN_5NjU&hl=en&ei=5wcvTqXIO8mutwe3qeSjCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=naomi%20madgett%20%2B%20phillis%20wheatley&f=false
- Kathleen Kent also published a "prequel" to *The Heretic's Daughter* in fall 2010—*The Wolves of Andover*—which gives the back story on Martha Carrier. It is also quite good.
- Alongside *Moby-Dick* pair *Ahab's Wife* by Sena Jeter Naslund.
- I've taught Rita Dove's play The Darker Face of the Earth during a C19 slave narrative unit. The students loved the pairing, and the two centuries' texts helped the class understand the enduring legacies of slavery.
- **(From Rebecca Harrison) Caroline Gordon** wrote a short-story called "The Captive," published in *Hound & Horn* in their final issue of 1932, in direct response to William Elsey Connelley's *Eastern Kentucky Papers: The Founding of Harmon's Station*. Gordon came across the text at the Vanderbilt library, and, identifying with the absences in his narrative, she decided to "finish it" by giving primacy to Jennie's subjective experience. She was particularly drawn to the black and white drawings that render Jennie at different stages of her captivity. I have had great success pairing the two texts (along with Jennie's legend) in my class; I'm actually writing about them as we speak.

(FYI—You, personally, might find Gordon’s frontier novel *Green Centuries* fascinating; it is more-or-less a national brotherhood Cain and Abel story of sorts. Rion Outlaw, a colonist who flees British Colonial forces, eventually collides with his brother Archy, who was taken captive and raised by the Cherokee.)

Beatrice Witte Ravenel has a fascinating (and rather lengthy) unpublished poem called “Sanute the Chief” where she employs the voice of the historical figure, James Adair, and his take on the origins of Native Americans to narrate Chief Sanute’s contemplation of taking a settler’s wife captive. Ravenel compares Sanute’s actions with those of David and Bathsheba to flip the civil/savage binary. In this poem, Ravenel is countering Gilmore-Simms’s use of the Sanute/Fraser story in his novel *The Yemassee: A Romance of Carolina* (1835) where he uses the historical legend of Sanute’s warning of the settlers as part of his own agenda. (The historical reference for Sanute most likely arises out of Alexander Hewitt’s *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia* (1779). My piece on “Sanute,” which includes a transcription of the full poem, won’t be out until the next issue of the *Mississippi Quarterly*. If you would like a copy of the poem to look at for your class, I’ll be happy to email you the pdf I use for my students.

FYI—Ravenel also uses the captivity of the Jesuit missionaries in her short poem “The Jesuit Missionaries,” which was published in her collection *The Arrow of Lightning* (1926).

Specific Pedagogical Observations about How to Use Contemporary Texts

- I've been following this thread with interest and I really appreciate all of the suggestions. I do wonder, though, if anyone has suggestions for how to make this work in a survey setting where, if you're like me, you already have a hard time fitting in all the early American lit. I'd love to incorporate at least some of these contemporary titles, but I don't know how that is practically possible given time constraints. It seems you'd have to sacrifice some coverage. Any ideas/suggestions?
- I've been enjoying the thread, too, while feeling curmudgeonly about my unwillingness to replace some early American texts on my syllabus with contemporary adaptations. The compromise I've used for awhile is to give students a list of contemporary adaptations & then briefly review the list in class. I've found that students tend to then seek out one or more of the contemporary adaptations on their own (especially when I've put the list on Blackboard & have been able to supply some links), to share with each other, & to reference them in class. The compromise is that we don't have the full class discussions about any of the contemporary adaptations that we'd be having if they had an official place on the syllabus. On the other hand, I don't have to take Michael Wigglesworth or Sor Juana off the syllabus, authors I feel that students might be much less likely to seek out on their own.
- I am joining the post a bit late (greetings from the Archivo Nacional in Sucre, Chuquisaca, Bolivia), but I have very much enjoyed the suggestions and I look forward to seeing the list.

This past spring I organized my survey of "American" literature around the idea of postcolonial retellings of colonial-era narratives. We spent the first part of the semester working with pre-columbian - 18th and 19th c. accounts from North, South, Central America & the Caribbean, and then we spent the final month of the term on Faulkner's *A Wash*, Morrison's *A Mercy* and Marlon James' *The Book of Night Women*. (The latter was recommended by Kristen Block, who teaches 18th c. history of the Anglo & Spanish Caribbean, and has a fantastic book coming out soon.) My sense was that this structure enabled the students to appreciate the complexities of the postcolonial works precisely because we had spent time with the primary documents that Morrison and James recuperate. Many of my students said that it also made them appreciate the early works more, too, if only in hindsight.