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## American literature

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# American Literature

'Diversity' is one of the keywords in American mythology and although respect for the nation's phenomenal differences has often been more evident in political rhetoric than historical reality, the past thirty years have witnessed increasing pluralism on American literature courses. This development includes courses organised by period (from centuries to specific decades, from 'the Colonial Era' to 'Romanticism', 'Modernism' and 'Postmodernism'), by race and ethnicity (Native American and African-American, Latino and Chicano, Jewish and Irish), by gender and sexuality (women's writing, gay and lesbian literature), by geography ('the South' and 'the West', 'the City' and 'the Frontier'), by theme ('the American Dream' and 'Exceptionalism'), by form and genre ('the Novel', 'Poetry' and 'Drama', 'the Gothic' and 'Prison Writing'), by school ('The Transcendentalists' and 'the Wooster Group'), by specific writer and by interdisciplinary combination ('Noir Film and Fiction', or 'the Literature, Music and Movies of Vietnam'). This bibliographical essay could not hope to prepare you for every type of course, but it will aim to provide important leads for the most popular writers and subjects in this increasingly vast and variegated field.

Before we begin, however, a few more words on what you *won't* find here. I have chosen to omit many of the seminal studies in favour of more recent scholarship, not with the intention of challenging the former's significance, but on the assumption that the major critical work is already likely to appear in the course literature provided by your tutors. A further omission which ought to be mentioned: this essay focuses exclusively on book-length studies rather than journal essays. Once again, this hiatus does not imply a devaluation and the serious student is encouraged to explore the cutting-edge criticism offered in the pages of, amongst others, *African American Review*, *American Literary History*, *American Literature*, *Arizona Quarterly*, *Boundary 2*, *Callaloo*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Diacritics*, *Early American Literature*, *English Literary History*, *Journal of American Studies*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Modern Language Notes*, *New Literary History*, *Nineteenth Century Literature*, *Postmodern Culture* and *Representations*. In addition to researching the key journals, your readings of literary texts will be greatly enhanced by consulting the cognate field of American Studies. Bigsby and Temperley's *A New Introduction to American Studies* (2005), Campbell and Kean's *American Cultural Studies* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2006) and Burgett and Hendler's *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (2007) will help you to broaden the cultural and historical

horizons of your literary study. The more ambitious student wishing to engage with recent developments in the field – variously referred to as ‘new’, ‘transnational’, ‘comparative’ and ‘post-’ American Studies –ought to consult George Lipsitz’s *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (2001), John Carlos Rowe’s *The New American Studies* (2002) and Donald Pease’s *The Futures of American Studies* (2002). The most comprehensive contemporary survey of American Literature is provided by Sacvan Bercovitch (ed.), in his monumental eight volume collection, *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (2006). Although he offers a mere 900 pages (as opposed to the Bercovitch’s 6000), Richard Gray’s *A History of American Literature* (2004) is consistently sharp and sagacious. (Gray’s *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American South* (2004), co-edited with Owen Robinson, is another first-rate compendium).

Most American literature courses rarely venture back more than a few centuries, but the continent was home to millennia of oral literature prior to European colonisation. [For further reading on native American literature see the relevant section in this volume (pp.??)]. In *Contemporary American Indian Literatures and the Oral Tradition* (1999), Susan B. Brill de Ramírez excavates links between modern writing and ancient customs. Ramírez’s sense of native American literature as benignly haunted is reiterated by David Murray in *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (1990) and by the contributors to Helen Jaskoski’s collection *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays* (1996). The critics in these volumes use postcolonial theory to interrogate power relations between European colonisers and indigenous peoples and foreground language itself as one of the battlefields on which red and white civilisations collide. These issues feature prominently in Daniel Grassian’s *Understanding Sherman Alexie* (2005), but the critic extends analysis into consideration of visual culture. According to Grassian, Alexie’s writing underscores the role that television, film and comic books play in cultural colonisation whilst simultaneously viewing this cultural space as the potential site of subversion and empowerment for native Americans.

Native American literature is conspicuous in the ‘transnational turn’ recently taken by American Studies. In *Native American Literature: towards a spatialised reading* (2006), May Dennis offers a postcolonial cartography of contemporary fiction in English by native

authors. Do not be put off by the title of Maitino and Peck's collection, *Teaching American ethnic literatures* (1996). Although this volume is aimed at teachers it provides a valuable resource for students and provocatively juxtaposes native American writers with their African American, Chicano/Latino and Asian American counterparts. Jeanne R. Smith's *Writing tricksters: mythic gambols in American ethnic literature* (1997) offers a more focused and integrated comparative critique of native American, Asian American and African American culture. Smith's work is part of a movement involving critics from diverse disciplinary backgrounds who insist that 'America' cannot be understood from within its own territorial borders and must instead be approached in 'hemispheric' terms that traverse the boundaries between North and South America, the Caribbean, the Pacific Rim, South Asia, Africa and Europe. The forceful critique of the traditional American Studies model by a transnational paradigm is at the forefront of recent work in Borderland Studies, Latino/Chicano, Asian American and South Asian American Studies. In the field of Chicano/Chicana literary studies, the transnational approach is adopted by Elizabeth Jacobs' *Mexican American Literature: The Politics of Identity* (2006), John-Michael Rivera's *The Emergence of Mexican America: Recovering Stories of Mexican Peoplehood in U.S. Culture* (2006) and Ramón Saldívar's *The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary* (2006). King-Kok Cheung's *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* (1996) includes concise but informative chapters on Chinese-, Filipino-, Japanese-, Korean-, Vietnamese- and South Asian-American writers. Shirley Lim and Gina Valentino's more recent collection, *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits* (2006), explores the dynamics of diaspora with essays on, amongst others, Maxine Hong Kingston, Karen Tei Yamashita and Ha Jin. Inderpal Grewel's *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (2005) similarly aims to develop a globalised imaginary by exploring writing by South Asians in India and the US. Grewel's reading of Bharati Mukherjee, as well as some less well-known authors, explores the borderlines between nation and narration (to borrow Homi Bhabha's phrase).

Much of the impetus behind the transnational turn can be traced to work in African American Studies. [For further recommended reading on African American literature see the relevant section in this volume (pp.??)]. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) is especially noteworthy in this respect. Gilroy develops an approach that is 'explicitly transnational and intercultural' (Gilroy 1993, 15) and aims to

critique ethnocentric and essentialist accounts of black identity. Through close readings of an eclectic array of primary sources that includes Frederick Douglass, W.E.B DuBois, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, Spike Lee and rap artists, Gilroy traces ceaseless transatlantic crossings between Africa, America, Britain and the Caribbean. Gilroy's pioneering contributions have been developed more recently by Gesa Mackenthun's *Fictions of the Black Atlantic in American Foundational Literature* (2004) and John Cullen's *Confluences: Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies, and the Black Atlantic* (2005).

Transnational criticism complements and builds on more established areas of interest in African American studies. Audrey Fisch's *Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* (2007) offers an incisive introduction to this subject. The essays in Fisch's collection might be productively consulted alongside more established critical collections such as Eric Sundquist's *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays* (1991) and Garfield and Zafar's (eds.) *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the life of a slave girl* (1996). Henry Louis Gates Jr. has made major contributions to slavery studies that include uncovering *The Bondswoman's Narrative* (1853?). Gates, alongside Hollis Robbins, has edited a collection of essays entitled *In Search of Hannah Crafts: Critical Essays on 'The Bondswoman's Narrative'* (2003) and is also the author of *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley* (2003). His earlier work, including *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (1984) and *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (1988) helped to shape much subsequent scholarship. Recent noteworthy criticism of slave literature includes DoVeanna Fulton's *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery* (2006), Xiomara Santamarina's *Belabored Professions: Narratives of African American Working Womanhood* (2006) and Gwen Bergner's *Taboo Subjects: Race, Sex, and Psychoanalysis* (2005). For a general introduction to the range of African American fiction, Bernard W. Bell's updated edition of *The Contemporary African American Novel* (2004) is recommended. Houston A. Baker Jr's *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (1985) is an influential attempt to ground canonical writers (Dunbar, Hurston, Wright and Ellison) in a 'blues matrix' which underpins the structures of feeling in African American culture. Baker's reading of the Harlem Renaissance are also held in high regard. (See *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987) and *Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic* (1996)). For a reassessment of the Harlem

Renaissance that considers its relation to radical politics in the inter-war years, see Anthony Dawahare's *Nationalism, Marxism, and African American Literature between Wars* (2003).

The first documented arrival of Africans in America took place in Jamestown in 1619. Students studying seventeenth century literature would do well to inspect the website of the Society of Early Americanists (<http://www.mnstate.edu/seabooks/books.html>) for its extensive catalogue of publications and links to key journals. For those working on Puritan literature, Michael Colacurcio's *Godly Letters* (2006) is a scholarly and authoritative survey. In his previous work, *Doctrine and Difference: Essays in the Literature of New England* (1996), Colacurcio contends that Puritanism provides the religious, philosophical and political infrastructure that informs the literature of subsequent generations. In a similar vein, but with an alternate focus on gender identity and sexual politics, Wendy Martin's *An American Triptych* (1984) uncovers affinities between the poetry of Anne Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson and Adrienne Rich. In *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons* (2004), Kristina Bross insists that the figure of the Indian proselyte underpins seventeenth century religious texts and missionary journals and played a critical role in colonial definitions of spirituality and national identity. Consonantly, Rebecca B. Farey's *Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race, and Sex in the Shaping of an American Nation* (1999), argues that the archetypal figures of the Captive White Woman (Mrs. Mary Rowlandson) and the Indian Maiden (Pocahontas) lie beneath colonial discourses of desire, race and space. Intersections between race, gender, national identity and the body also feature prominently in Lindman and Tarter's *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America* (2001). For those inspired by controversy, William C. Spengemann's *A new world of words: redefining early American literature* (1994) may prove stimulating as it sets about deconstructing the very notion of something called 'early American literature'.

Schmidt and Fleischma's *Early America Re-Explored* (2000), sweeps from the colonial period to the mid-nineteenth century and offers some propitious material on eighteenth century writing. Students working in the eighteenth century may also wish to consult the chapters on Franklin and Crèvecoeur in Schueller and Watts' *Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies* (2003). The essays in Barnard and Shapiro's *Revising Charles Brockden Brown* (2004) scrutinize one of America's first novelists and offer critical insights into aspects of culture and politics in the early Republic. In *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism* (2005), Andy Doolen subjects the discourses

of race, nation and empire in Brockden Brown's fiction to postcolonial critique and uncovers, at the birth of American Republicanism, a toxic admixture of imperialist aspirations and anxieties. For those interested in the material and cultural history of books in America, Cathy N. Davidson's *Revolution and the Word: the Rise of the Novel in America* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2004) is detailed and discerning.

A good starting-point for self-consciously politicised readings of nineteenth century literature would be John Carlos Rowe's *At Emerson's Tomb: The Politics of Classical American Literature* (1997). In a similar mode, Bercovitch's collection of essays on *Ideology and Classic American Literature* (1987) offers incisive critique of canonical texts. Michael T. Gilmore's contribution, 'Walden and the 'Curse of Trade'', reappears in the author's *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* (1988) aside chapters on Emerson, Hawthorne and Melville that seek to ground the American Renaissance in social, economic and ideological developments between the Age of Jackson and the Civil War. Gilmore does not find room for Poe, but, for those interested in materialist critique, Terence Whalen's *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses* (1999) manages to be both savvy and scholarly. Michael Paul Rogin's *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville* (1983) maps intricate intersections between Melville's writing, family history and national history. Geoffrey Sanborn's *The Sign of the Cannibal: Melville and the Making of a Postcolonial Reader* (1998) exemplifies the postcolonial turn in Melville studies and Joel Pfister's *The Production of Personal Life: Class, Gender, and the Psychological in Hawthorne's Fiction* (1991) is a virtuoso example of new historicist criticism. For an approach to nineteenth century literature that combines feminism with a new historicist attention to detail, discourse and power, the following texts are indispensable: Ann Douglas's ground-breaking *The Feminization of American Culture* (1978), Jane Tompkins' *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (1986), David S. Reynolds' *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (1989), Gillian Brown's *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (1992) and Richard Brodhead's *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (1995). Each of these studies challenge the canon and offer careful consideration of contemporary discourses in a variety of institutions and movements that includes popular culture, motherhood and the domestic sphere, medicine and religion, abolitionism and women's rights, consumerism and the literary marketplace.

A much earlier attempt to go 'beneath' the American renaissance can be found in Leslie A. Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960). At the time of publication, Fiedler's book caused quite a stir in academic circles for its bold accusation that homoeroticism and misogyny were rampant in classic American fiction. In the wake of feminism and queer theory, *Love and Death* now appears prescient and still stands up alongside subsequent cognate work such as, for example, Louise DeSalvo's *Nathaniel Hawthorne: Feminist Readings* (1987) and Chris Packard's *Queer Cowboys and Other Erotic Male Friendships in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2005). Another example of Fiedleresque polemical psychoanalysis can be found in Daniel Hoffman's (a)cutely titled *PoePoePoePoePoePoePoe* (1971). Three recent critical assessments which are more restrained than Hoffman and Fiedler, but share their predecessors' sense that nineteenth century American literature was peculiarly 'modern' are Tony Tanner's *The American Mystery: American Literature from Emerson to DeLillo* (2000), Cesare Cesarino's *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis* (2002) and Edward Cutler's *Recovering the New: Transatlantic Roots of Modernism* (2003). In different ways, Tanner, Cesarino and Cutler confirm Gertrude Stein's assertion that America, having given birth to the twentieth century, is in fact the oldest country in the world. For an excellent introduction to trends in contemporary criticism of canonical nineteenth century writers the following are highly recommended: Robert Levine's (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville* (1998), Richard Millington's (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne* (2004) and Messent and Budd's *A Companion to Mark Twain* (2006).

Some of the most exciting recent work on American Romanticism has focused on green issues. In particular, the contemporary relevance of transcendentalist literature for ecopolitics and environmental criticism is underlined by James C. McKusick in *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (2000), Richard J. Schneider in *Thoreau's Sense of Place: Essays in American Environmental Writing* (2000), M. Jimmie Killingsworth in *Walt Whitman and the Earth: A Study in Ecopoetics* (2004) and Lance Newman in *Our Common Dwelling: Henry Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and the Class Politics of Nature* (2005). Issues of class identity are central to Andrew Lawson's *Walt Whitman and the Class Struggle* (2006) and the politics of transcendentalism are investigated in Peter J. Bellis's *Writing Revolution: Aesthetics and Politics in Hawthorne, Whitman, and Thoreau* (2003), Jay Grossman's *Reconstituting the American Renaissance: Emerson, Whitman, and the Politics of Representation* (2003) and Kris Fresonke's *West of Emerson: The Design of Manifest*



*Destiny* (2003). Vivian R. Pollak's *The Erotic Whitman* (2000) is representative of recent work that reads transcendentalism in relation to gender and queer theory. For a dexterous and cultivated appreciation of transcendentalism as philosophy no less than social criticism, see Stanley Cavell's *The Senses of Walden* (expanded edition, 1992), Cavell's collaborative work with David Hodge in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* (2003) and also Lawrence Buell's *Emerson* (2003). In *Emily Dickinson* (1986), Helen McNeil proposes that the Belle of Amherst's poetic was profoundly anti-transcendentalist, however, Daneen Wardrop contends in *Word, Birth and Culture* (2002), that there are unexpected sexual, scientific and aesthetic affinities between Dickinson, Whitman and Poe.

If you are working on late nineteenth century and early twentieth century fiction, Walter Benn Michaels' *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism* (1987) and Amy Kaplan's *The Social Construction of American Realism* (1992) are practically prerequisites. Michael Davitt Bell's *The Problem of American Realism* (1993), Donna M. Campbell's *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915* (1997) and Fleissner's *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* (2004) offer alternate perspectives on the relationship between narrative form and gender identity. Steven J. Belluscio's *To Be Suddenly White: Literary Realism and Racial Passing* reads prose from this period through the frame of 'whiteness studies' whilst Mohamed Zayani's *Reading the Symptom: Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, and the Dynamics of Capitalism* (1999) fashions a densely Deleuzean reassessment of naturalism.

For anyone working on American modernist literature, Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (1994) is strongly advised as one of the most lucid mappings of this notoriously difficult terrain. (And for a discriminating dissection of modernism's 'difficulty' see Leonard Diepeveen, *The difficulties of modernism* (2003)). David Ayers' *Modernism: A Short Introduction* (2004), is accessible and its first third is devoted to American writers (Pound, H.D, Eliot and Stevens). The essays in Walter Kalaidjian's *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism* (2005) focus almost exclusively on literary texts aside from a robust contribution by Michael North which attempts to situate visual culture, rather than the written word, at the centre of the modernist maelstrom. David R. Jarraway's *Going the Distance: Dissident Subjectivity in Modernist American Literature* (2003) charts

philosophical and political connections between modernist writers and their Romantic predecessors in relation to one of the defining themes of American literature: self-definition.

Lying 'in-between' realism and modernism, not to mention America and Britain, Henry James is notoriously difficult to pin-down. Tim Lustig's elegant deconstruction of James' gothic fiction, *Henry James and the Ghostly* (1994), traces this 'in-between' quality in intricate detail. Criticism of James since the 1990s has been especially drawn to indeterminacy in relation to gender and sexual identity. Following the lead given by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's influential *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) are Kelly Cannon's *Henry James and masculinity: the man at the margins* (1994), John R. Bradley's *Henry James and Homo-Erotic Desire* (1998), John Carlos Rowe's *The Other Henry James* (1998), Leland S. Person's *Henry James and the Suspense of Masculinity* (2003) and Donatello Izzo's *Portraying the Lady: Technologies of Gender in the Short Stories of Henry James* (2007). An ambitious attempt to integrate analysis of desire with political economy in a reading of *The Bostonians* can be found Richard Godden's *Fictions of Capital: The American Novel from James to Mailer* (1990) (Godden is also the author of two challenging but densely suggestive monographs on William Faulkner: *Fictions of Labour: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution* (1997) and *William Faulkner: An Economy of Complex Words* (2007)). Ruth Prigozy's *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald* (2001) offers a more gentle introduction for the undergraduate with essays which are broadly sociological and thematic as opposed to rigorously theoretical. Recent criticism of Hemingway, like that of James, has concentrated on gender issues. Nancy Comley, and Robert Scholes's *Hemingway's Genders: Rereading the Hemingway Text* (1994) and Carl P. Eby's *Hemingway's Fetishism: Psychoanalysis and the Mirror of Manhood* (1998) are emblematic and instructive in this regard.

If you are working on mainstream twentieth-century poetry the following surveys will prove serviceable. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (2003), Christopher Beach offers a methodical and concise outline of canonical figures and key movements. Christopher MacGowan's *Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (2004) is similarly systematic and offers a biographical dictionary of poets, sketches of social and historical contexts, close readings of seminal poems and a summative section on key themes. The essays edited by Stephen Fredman in *A Concise Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry*

(2005) are more selective and often probing with trenchant contributions on topics such as war, the academy, queer cities, the New York art scene and blues and jazz influences on African American poetry. Charles Altieri's *The Art of Twentieth-Century American Poetry: Modernism and After* (2006) is more restricted in range but perhaps the most impassioned and idiosyncratic of these volumes.

Compared to poetry and prose, drama is significantly underrepresented in literary criticism. In *American Drama: The Bastard Art* (2006), Susan Harris Smith investigates the institutional and ideological factors which undermine the status of dramatic literature inside and outside the academy. Chris Bigsby and Don Wilmeth have sought to enhance the status of drama by editing the 1750-page *Cambridge History of American Drama* (1998-2006). This three volume collection covers American theatre from its inception through to the 1990s and has quickly established itself as the definitive reference work in this field. If the *Cambridge History* is not held by your university library two recent texts by David Krasner will provide a decent if less encyclopaedic alternative. *American Drama 1945-2000: An Introduction* (2006) offers a neat synopsis of developments in post-war theatre and in *A Companion to Twentieth Century American Drama* (2007) Krasner has assembled over thirty essays covering leading playwrights (O'Neill, Williams, Miller, Mamet, Albee, Shepard, Mamet), influential movements, drama by different racial, ethnic and sexual minorities as well as varieties of experimental theatre. For a more explicit engagement with the avant-garde you should consider Marc Robinson's *The Other American Drama* (1994), Arnold Aronson's *American avant-garde theatre: a history* (2000), David Savran's *A Queer Sort of Materialism: Recontextualizing American Theater* (2003) and Walter A. Davis's *Art and Politics: Psychoanalysis, Ideology, Theatre* (2007).

If drama is the poor relation of American literature then contemporary fiction is the chosen son. Post-war prose receives more critical coverage and appears on more university courses than any other area of American literature. This survey will conclude with a brief glance at one of the most conspicuous subjects in this field: postmodernism. [For further recommended reading on postmodernism see the relevant section in this volume (pp.??)]. Tim Woods offers a serviceable and student-friendly guide to the subject in *Beginning Postmodernism* (1999) with chapters on literature complemented by material on visual

culture, architecture, philosophy and music. Alan Bilton's *An Introduction to Contemporary American Fiction* (2003) includes sections on key postmodern authors, a glossary of key terms and helpful hints for further reading. Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) is tough going but essential reading for the serious student. Jameson's influence is apparent in three critical texts published in the late 90s which are representative of overlapping strands in the criticism of postmodern fiction. Josh Cohen's *Spectacular allegories: postmodern American writing and the politics of seeing* (1998) examines Mailer, Didion, Coover and Ellroy through the frame of recent work on visual culture. James Annesley in *Blank Fictions: consumerism, culture and the contemporary American novel* (1998) analyses sex, shopping, violence and commodification in the writing of Bret Easton Ellis, Susanna Moore and Dennis Cooper. Brian Jarvis, in *Postmodern Cartographies: the geographical imagination in contemporary American culture* (1998) maps power relations in Pynchon, Auster, Morrison and Jayne Anne Phillips through the lens of the 'new geography'. Pynchon and Auster are assessed in relation to cognitive science and media ecology in Joseph Tabbi's interdisciplinary study *Cognitive Fictions* (2002). In *Paul Auster* (2007), Mark Brown offers a more conventional but also more detailed examination of identity, language and urban space in the author's fiction, essays, poetry and film work. Alongside Auster, Don DeLillo is currently regarded as the pre-eminent practitioner and critic of the postmodern in American writing. In *Don DeLillo: The Possibility of Fiction* (2006), Peter Boxall assesses the impact of globalisation and US military and economic hegemony on the author who would act as social critic. Elise Martucci, in *The Environmental Unconscious in the Fiction of Don DeLillo* (2007), suggests that DeLillo's fiction is precisely engaged in an ecocritical commentary on the collision between and increasing integration of nature and technology. Although it hardly mentions DeLillo and Auster and studiously avoids the term 'postmodern', Paul Giles' *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (2002) is worth mentioning here partly for its chapter on Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*, but mainly as a dynamic and influential example of the 'new American Studies'.

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