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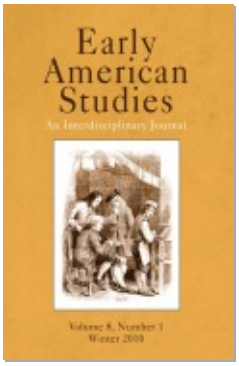
Afterword

David D. Hall



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Afterword

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The case studies in this volume do the work we expect of such pieces: calling received wisdom into question, providing fresh evidence about Benjamin Franklin as printer and intellectual, revisiting a familiar genre, modeling how to connect the particular to the general. All rely on assumptions and methodologies that are the meat and drink of book history, some of long standing, others introduced more recently. Readers actively appropriate a text, booksellers ply their business in a "market" that both satisfies and frustrates writers and readers, the colonists in British America rely on a mixture of imported books and those that are locally produced, like the almanac.

As these essays suggest, book history is anything but static. New questions keep emerging, sometimes in the company of new strategies for answering them. Two such strategies leaven these essays, an interest in the "materiality" of the text and a questioning of the nation (or national history) as a framework for understanding the world of print during the decades when virtually every writer, printer, and bookseller in British North America thought of themselves as members of an imperial culture. To pursue the first of these is to reimagine what we mean by text; to pursue the second is to reimagine what we mean by "colonial" or "American." Implicitly if not explicitly, these essays do not rely as much on the term *print culture* as might have been the case a decade or more ago. What lies behind the newer strategies, and what do they portend for future work?

Materiality is one of those kudzu-like terms that suddenly are everywhere, though a casual survey suggests that it is most commonly evoked by literary historians. To say that it denotes the material features of a printed book is true but also inadequate, for the term has acquired a wider significance as a counterweight to the assumption that literary texts inhabit a timeless realm of their own. Materiality is put to this use in Roger Chartier's insistence that the meaning of a book is "inseparable from the material conditions and physical forms that make the text available to readers." For the literary historian

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David Scott Kastan, the turn toward the circumstances of production and material form changes the meaning of author: "Focus on the documentary particularities of a text frees our reading from the fantasy of literary autonomy. . . . The specific forms of textual embodiment speak the complex history of its making, and speak as well the remarkable productivity of the medium [reminding us that] it is a technology that not merely passively conveys its content but one that actively shapes its very intelligibility." When another literary historian calls for an "unediting" of the Renaissance, she does so in the service of a similar argument: "No single version of a literary work, whether Renaissance or modern, can offer us the fond dream of an unmediated access to an author . . . ; the more aware we are of the processes of mediation to which a given edition has been subject, the less likely we are to be caught up in a constricting hermeneutic knot by which the shaping hand of the editor is mistaken for the intent of the author." Whenever we encounter the term in recent work, therefore, we may find that it evokes a larger discontent provoked in part, but only in part, by a fresh attention to the specific features of a printed text.[1]

The good news is that these evocations of materiality begin to restore descriptive bibliography to a place of honor within book history. The term "print culture" has had almost the opposite effect, for it alienated bibliographers who confined the word *print* to printed images. Weighed down, perhaps, by their awareness of the particularities of each printed book, bibliographers rarely don the wings of culture and take flight, as book historians have been doing since the 1970s under the influence of cultural anthropology. This parting of the ways licensed book historians to say very little about actual books. Here I instance most of the essays of mine that are brought together in *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (1996), centered as they are on a cultural history of reading and my attempts to complicate the relationship between high and low culture in early America.

Fortunately for all of us, D. F. McKenzie showed in *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1985) how these different ways of proceeding could be brought together. Fortunately as well, Chartier came under the influence of

1. Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 22; David Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5; Leah S. Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (London: Routledge, 1996), 3. Another excellent example of this turn is Stephen B. Dobranksi, *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

McKenzie and began to promote an attentiveness to material form in a multitude of influential essays and books, including a preface to the French translation of McKenzie's lectures.[2] But the key circumstance may have been a broadening discontent with the assumptions that guided the Anglo-American form of work known as the "New Bibliography," in particular its assertion of authorial intention and its quest for a "pure" text shorn of the errors made by compositors, printers, and other intermediaries. That this quest rested on dubious assumptions was one of the conclusions McKenzie drew from his own scholarship. To refer to the New Bibliography as misguided or fruitless is, however, to overlook the truly extraordinary scholarship on printing house practices and the making of particular books it provided, accomplishments seconded by the control that was gained over the inventory of printed books in English. These achievements remain foundational.

Another aspect of materiality is the attention being paid to those parts of a book that, in contemporary publishers' parlance, constitute the "front matter" (and for some books, the end matter as well). As Gérard Genette observed in his seminal *Seuils* (1987; translated as *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*), a text is "rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations." Naming these features the "paratext," Genette described them collectively as a "threshold," a "zone without any hard and fast boundary" that influences how we receive and read the text that follows (1–2). Genette was not alone in emphasizing the significance of this threshold. In his James Russell Wiggins lecture of 1985 at the American Antiquarian Society, Larzer Ziff called attention to what he termed (in a play on words) the "pretext" to the text proper. Earlier, Roger Laufer had contributed a chapter on materialities of the text to the second volume of *Histoire de l'édition Française* (1984).[3]

This attention to pretext or paratext posed anew the question of an author's role in the making of a book. Who prepared the title page, corrected proofs, and wrote the preface? Who made the decision to omit or provide a writer's

2. Donald F. McKenzie, *La bibliographie et la sociologie des textes,* trans. Marc Amfreville, preface by Roger Chartier (Paris: Editions du Cercle de la Librairie, 1991).

3. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation,* trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Larzer Ziff, "Upon What Pretext? The Book and Literary History," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 95, 2 (October 1985): 297–315; Roger Laufer, "Les espèces du livre," in Henry-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, eds., *Histoire de l'édition Française,* vol. 2, *Le livre triomphant, 1660–1830* (Paris: Promodis, 1984): 128–39.

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name or inserted stage directions for a play or punctuation of a poem? Did authors intervene to make changes? Of even more importance, who provided the copy text the printer was using? For most books printed in England and the North American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the only means of answering these questions is to turn to their production history as it can be discerned from internal and external evidence—evidence that, time and again, demonstrates that the putative author had little to do with the fashioning of the paratext and, to a surprising extent, was not directly responsible for copy text. The printing of Shakespeare's plays in his lifetime is perhaps the most famous case in point. Not that authors were always excluded or inactive; as McKenzie demonstrated in his essay on Congreve in *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts,* they sometimes intervened in the making of a text, as Benjamin Franklin did with the fourth London printing of *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* (1764) when he took advantage of his proximity to the bookseller to correct the sheets.[4] Ordinarily, however, much of what we find in paratexts and the "text" that follows embodies the interventions of printers, booksellers, patrons, and editors.

Attending to these features of a book is also to realize, as Genette explained at length, that each encompasses a range of functions. Anonymity is an interesting case in point, for the bibliographer's "[anon.]" is simply a starting point for exploring its meaning and significance. As Marcy L. North has shown, within the English trade "more than 800 known authors were published anonymously between 1475 and 1640," a figure that does not include pseudonymous authors. A practice used this widely was, as North points out, a "flexible convention" that for some writers was "an act of self-protection," for others "an act of modesty," and for some texts "an accident of text transmission." Anonymity could heighten a reader's interest in knowing the identity of the author and, in doing so, emphasize authorial presence; conversely, it could call attention to the presence of others, sometimes named, sometimes not, who had participated in the making of the text. The practice could serve to separate a writer's value from the marketplace or underscore that connection (if readers were set to guessing, and if guessing was linked with celebrity). Where anonymity was conventional, not political, was in situations of collective authorship and for certain genres.[5] It was in keeping, too, with the as-

4. I. Bernard Cohen, *Benjamin Franklin's Experiments: A New Edition of Franklin's Experiments and Observations on Electricity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), 148–56.

5. Marcy L. North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3, 14.

sumption that the truth-speaking writer removes himself from the marketplace of print. Ever responsive to this ethics, the prolific Cotton Mather left his name off some two-thirds of what he published. Gender, too, was a factor, for women were charged with keeping themselves "private."[6]

Writers may have made many of these decisions, but as prefaces repeatedly indicate, the choice of copy text or the preparation of "fair copy" for a printer usually involved others.[7] For texts that were distributed in handwritten copies, the crucial intermediary was the copyist—or successive copyists. It is a truism in studies of scribal publication that no two copies are alike, and that writers rarely intervened in the chain of transmission to restore an authorial version of a text. Similarly, studies of the publication history of a printed book turn up variations in accidentals and substantives (and in aspects of the paratext) that emerge from printing house practices. Determined to resolve whether a misprint ("Wine Hills" instead of "White Hills") occurred in the London or Boston printings of William Hubbard's *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (1677), Randolph G. Adams discovered that no two copies of the Boston printing (with the "White Hills" map) were exactly alike, for the printer had indiscriminately mixed corrected and uncorrected sheets as the actual books were being assembled. Had a "customer . . . gone into John Foster's bookstore in Boston in 1677, on the day upon which Hubbard's book appeared for sale, he might have picked up not two or four possibly variant printings, but any one of twenty five. In the fifty copies of the book which we have examined, we have counted at least nineteen textual and typographical differences and emendations, which seem capable of appearing in almost any possible combination." Adams concluded that the variations could not be plotted in terms of a sequence of printings; all emerged from a single moment of production.[8]

Book historians are learning to be comfortable with this instability, but many writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wanted something better, something closer to authenticity and authority. Hence the visionary hope of Cadwallader Colden as described by John Dixon in this volume, the possibility that a particular technology he devised could free a text from instability. Hence, too, a disdain for booksellers that Colden shared with a

6. David D. Hall, *Ways of Writing: The Practice and Politics of Text-Making in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); North, *Anonymous Renaissance,* chap. 7.

7. A process I describe at much greater length in *Ways of Writing.*

8. Randolph G. Adams, "William Hubbard's 'Narrative,' 1677," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 33 (1939): 25–39.

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great many others of his time—Cotton Mather, for one, who quoted in his diary an expression of English provenance, that "booksellers are generally such that a celebrated author, thinks the most opprobrious term he can give unto them is to say, in one word, they are booksellers."[9]

Visionary, yes, but Colden and his contemporaries were also insisting that an author's intentions should figure in any scrutiny of texts. My view is akin to theirs, that the turn toward materiality and the dismissing of intentionality can be carried too far. Intentionality survives—to be sure, not the unmediated intentionality of the author but a cluster of intentions on the part of editor, bookseller, printer, and writer. So does authenticity or authority—subverted when a bookseller declares on the title page that a text has been "corrected" by the author when no such action has occurred, but nonetheless a value or practice within the book trade as well as among writers themselves. As for the bearing of the materialities of a text on the practice of reading, it is easier to assert such connections than to demonstrate how they actually worked.[10] But my cautionary tone goes hand in hand with an appreciation—manifested in these essays—for the ever-growing emphasis on materiality.

GEOGRAPHIES OF THE TEXT

Much that happens in the history of the book is premised on the geography of the nation-state or some lesser political jurisdiction. Imprint bibliographies foreground the book trade of a city or a country. *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, A History of the Book in America, The History of the Book in Canada,* to name but three of the series of this kind, presume a nation-state, although they frequently modify this assumption in the details of the story. But what are the geographies that best capture the workings of book history?

No single answer to this question seems sufficient, and especially no answer based on imprint bibliographies keyed to national or local printing. Books have proved astonishingly mobile, abetted in their progress across time and space by certain circumstances: censorship in one location but not in another, commercial connections, translocal religious communities, the forming of libraries devoted to "learned" books, personal collecting, book fairs, discrepancies in cost that benefit cheaply printed staples of the trade

9. "Diary of Cotton Mather [Part II], 1709–1724," *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections,* 7th ser., 8 (1912): 331; Kenneth Silverman, *Selected Letters of Cotton Mather* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 190.

10. But see Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

(for example, Dutch-printed Bibles with a false London imprint show up in New England inventories), to name a few of these. Because of this array of circumstances, no community in early America was limited to local productions—quite the reverse, as Hugh Amory demonstrates in his analysis of the inventory of Michael Perry's shop in Boston at the beginning of the eighteenth century.[11]

Should we group all these factors together under the rubric "Atlantic world" as a way of emphasizing the mobility of printed books? The benefits of doing so are significant if it means that we suspend the nation-state as an organizing principle. But unless we are careful, the "Atlantic world" can begin to float free of the particulars of book history and the more precise geographies that it requires. Franklin is a good example of these particularities, whether in his youthful years in Boston as author of the "Silence Dogood" essays, as maker of a series of almanacs specific to readers in the middle colonies, or as author of the opening words of the *Autobiography,* which specify time and place: "Twyford, at the Bishop of St. Asaph's, 1771." As is demonstrated in several of these essays, he was a man of yet other geographies—Passy in France, the international republic of letters, the commercial trade between the colonies and England that linked him with London booksellers and brought David Hall across the ocean to become his business partner.

Multiple geographies, multiple locations, one of which was emphatically local, as Patrick Spero demonstrates in his essay for this volume comparing the contents of Boston- and Philadelphia-printed almanacs. Yet it is not so easy to give up the nation-state or, for colonial America, broad assertions about provincial identity or provincial culture, however helpful these may be for understanding readers and writers at certain moments.[12] Other generalizations have appealed to some historians of the book, especially the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century and the premise of an all-encompassing "market." Yet both can be questioned, for they fail to recognize the networks of clientage on which the book trades relied. For example, the great English Nonconformist bookseller Thomas Parkhurst published approximately 1,100 titles by 275 authors, of whom only 6 were Anglicans;

11. Hugh Amory, *Bibliography and the Book Trades: Studies in the Print Culture of Early New England,* ed. David D. Hall (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), chap. 4.

12. Bernard Bailyn and John Clive, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser., 11 (1954): 200–213.

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and if we parse more finely the Nonconformist community, his commitments to its more orthodox wing become apparent.[13]

I welcome, therefore, Eric Slauter's second thoughts in his essay for this volume about the enumerating of political pamphlets before the American Revolution. Even more telling is the literary historian Trish Loughran's recent assault on the "legend of universal distribution" that, from her perspective, has attached itself to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776) and the conclusion that follows from this legend, of the pamphlet as "inciting American nationalism." For her, the material aspects of Paine's text are at odds with the "virtual" nation we read into it. In her words, such texts "played two different roles in early national culture: on one hand, they served as evidence of unity; on the other, they were actual objects with limited circulation," in which case they dramatize a geography of "locally bound and locally defined communities—'publics' in the most plural, and fragmented, sense of the word."[14]

We can extend her emphasis on the material histories of printed books by reminding ourselves of the hybridities of certain seventeenth-and eighteenth-century imprints, hybrid in the sense of being located in more than one place at the same time. The first two collections of Virginia statutes (1662, 1684) were printed in London but directed mainly at a local reading public in the colony. The obverse is true of items printed in the colonies but intended for the English market, including, it is likely, *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* (or *Bay Psalm Book*) printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1640. Then there is Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), printed in London but distributed in the colonies with a two-page Boston-printed folio insert of errata Mather hastily prepared after he saw how Parkhurst's printers had mangled the copy text.

The two strategies I have described thus converge, the attention to materiality intersecting with a skepticism about any generalized market or nation-state as contexts for understanding book history. But let me bring to bear these threads of practice on the literary and religious life of someone who does not figure in these essays, the Reverend Samuel Davies. Born in 1723 in Delaware of Welsh parents, educated at a Presbyterian academy

13. I owe this data to Professor Peter Lindeman (Indiana University, Bloomington). See also Sara Prescott, "Provincial Networks, Dissenting Connections, and Noble Friends: Elizabeth Singer Rowe and Female Authorship in Early Eighteenth-Century England," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25 (2001): 29–42.

14. Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770–1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 12–15.

founded by Scotch Irish immigrants, and ordained into the Presbyterian ministry in 1746, Davies moved to Virginia in 1747. There he preached to Scotch Irish who had little sympathy for Anglicanism, the official religion of the colony. His success as a preacher in Hanover County and the connections he made with William Hunter of Williamsburg, who ran the only printing office in the colony, enabled him to publish sermons extolling the late George II and encouraging the Virginia militia during King George's War. In 1753 he accepted the invitation of the trustees of the College of New Jersey to solicit funds in England and Scotland for the newly founded institution. Off he went in the company of the older minister Gilbert Tenant, still controversial in some circles because of a sermon he had preached and published in 1740, *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry.* Together and separately, the two men secured pledges that may have totaled more than £3,000 during the months they spent abroad. Davies resumed his preaching in the colonies until he was elected to the presidency of the new college in 1758. He died in Princeton in 1761.

Five years later, a London bookseller issued a handsomely printed three-volume collection, *Sermons on the Most Useful and Important Subjects, Adapted to the Family and Closet;* eventually, two more volumes were added to these three. As best as I can tell, this series was the first example of a "collected works" or its near equivalent for a colonial American writer. The 1766 printing is arresting as well because it contains a printed list of subscribers, some British, others American. Who would have wanted to buy these sermons, and why would someone in London undertake to see them through the press? Is the *Sermons* an American book, an artifact of the Atlantic world, or something else altogether? To answer these questions we must look closely at the details of Davies's trip abroad in 1753–54, the publishing history of sermons that appeared during his lifetime, his own reflections on religion and empire, and, last but not least, the paratext of the *Sermons.*

Davies belonged to the wing of colonial Presbyterianism that sympathized with the itinerant preaching of the Anglican evangelist George Whitefield and practiced fervent evangelicalism. For Davies, the Anglican clergy in Virginia were like most of the laity in their parishes, indifferent at best in their observance of the duties of worship and lax in how they preached. As word got around that he was voicing these opinions in print and preaching, he found himself being labeled a "New Light" and "enthusiast." To those who tarred him with these epithets he responded that he declined to preach the "raw innovations of the New Lights," choosing instead to voice "the generous truths of catholic Christianity . . . the good old

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doctrines of the Church of England, of the Reformation, and to say all in a word, of the Bible." Writing to the commissary of the Church of England in Virginia in 1752, he insisted that, contrary to hostile rumor, he had no intention of converting everyone to Presbyterianism. In one of his sermons he insisted that the true Christian should never assume a partisan identity. All he claimed for himself was, he declared, "the sacred name of Christian."[15]

This way of representing himself had something to do with the political situation in Virginia, where anyone outside the Church of England had to secure a license from the government to preach. Davies got such a license, perhaps because he passed himself off as a mediating figure. He certainly knew how to voice themes that had nothing to do with his Presbyterianism, as when he urged a county militia to be resolute in their combat with the French or celebrated British victories in an ode that mourned the passing of George II. Both these sermons were printed in Scotland or England before being printed in any of the colonies, no mean feat for an essentially unknown minister. Yet Davies was also ministering to immigrants with allegiances similar to his own. One of the benefits of doing so was that he had a receptive reading public not only for printed sermons but also for a collection of verse, *Miscellaneous Poems, Chiefly on Divine Subjects,* that the Williamsburg printer-bookseller William Hunter printed in 1751. Hunter had little interest in belles lettres. Sales were slow in the bookstore he ran as part of his business, and he spent most of his energies as printer producing the annual almanac (the only one of its kind for Virginia), assorted imprints for the government, and the *Virginia Gazette,* the sole newspaper in the colony. For him to risk his capital on a collection of verse was unusual. The sales ledgers of the bookstore help explain why he did so, for a single upcountry Presbyterian ordered 200 copies. Another 111 were taken by three men who, like the first block purchaser, were clearly acting as distributors to the immigrant community Davies was serving as minister. As this and other evidence suggests, the market for printed books in mid-eighteenth-century Virginia must be described not as something that operated impersonally but as made up of specific reading communities.

During his Virginia years Davies thus preached and wrote amid explicit geographies of culture. He was indisputably an evangelical Presbyterian who earned a living from the congregations he helped organize in the colony.

15. Samuel Davies, *The Reverend Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–1755,* ed. George W. Pilcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 57, 60–62.

The success he had as a preacher made him known outside Virginia and, in turn, he admired others cut from the same cloth, mentioning in particular Jonathan Edwards. But when Davies learned that his brother-in-law John Holt was going to England, he responded with a near classic expression of provincial desire and projection, a poem in which he casts himself as constrained by an

> uncultivated Land,
> Where Ignorance usurps supreme Command,
> Where raw, unripen'd Wit, & infant Sense
> Produces nothing but Impertinence.

England was wholly different, a place where he could finally become the writer he aspired to be:

> Wou'd I pass o'er the boisterous Ocean too!
> And dare the Dangers of each distant Shore,
> The Works of Nature & of Art t'explore!
> Glad wou'd I visit every knowing Sage
> In Countries ripen'd into Sense by Age.

The final couplet of the stanza sums up the contrast:

> Here, unimprov'd, I must my Moments spend,
> And the bright Pearl [i.e., 'Knowledge'] forever unobtain'd."[16]

Then came the fund-raising trip to England and, to his dismay, the revelation of bitter conflict within the world of English Nonconformity. The diary he kept during the months he crisscrossed England and Scotland and hobnobbed in London coffeehouses shows him learning to recognize which coffeehouse was favored by which faction of ministers. Not to know this geography was to jeopardize the mission he was on, a mission already tainted by the presence of Tenant and the tag of New Light he bore himself. "There are so many parties here," he noted in his diary, "that it is very perplexing to us, how so to behave as to avoid offence, and not to injure the

16. Samuel Davies, *Collected Poems,* ed. Richard Beale Davis (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968), 141, slightly corrected from the original manuscript in Samuel Davies to John Holt, November 25, 1749, Library Company of Philadelphia, Benjamin Rush Papers, 24:65.

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business of our embassy." At the Amsterdam coffeehouse he listened to Independents (Congregationalists) complain of Presbyterian laxness on matters of doctrine; at the Hamlin he heard Presbyterians critical of high Calvinism. When George Whitefield invited the two colonists to "make his house our home," Davies was almost paralyzed, knowing all too well that the rationalistic wing of English Dissent detested the Anglican evangelist. Yet it soon became apparent that he was not being invited to preach in Presbyterian churches, they, "being generally Armenians [*sic*] or Socinians, seem shy of us."[17]

The English mission was threatened by the very question that made his ministry in Virginia so complex: how could he find his way among these competing geographies? On a happier note, he formed a strong friendship with the London minister Thomas Gibbons, an Independent and sometime litterateur. Gibbons opened his pulpit to Davies, but of more importance, he offered to "publish" the sermon Davies preached that day as part of a collection of his own. When the moment came for parting, Gibbons agreed to oversee the London printing of a collection solely of Davies's own sermons. On shipboard Davies worked on the manuscript, undoubtedly by expanding the notes from which he customarily preached. Back in the colonies, Davies wrote to Gibbons that in his will he intended to specify that "my notes, which are tolerably full, might be sent to you to correct and publish such of them as you might judge conducive to the public good." Nothing more seems to have happened (although the two men remained in touch) until after Davies's death, when at someone's agency, probably Davies's wife, manuscripts were forwarded from New Jersey and, via Gibbons, transmitted to a London bookseller.

Like so many other printed books of its time, the *Sermons* exhibits the mediations that literary historians find so fascinating. Booksellers in London, Glasgow, and Edinburgh had already issued a dozen of Davies's sermons without his being able to supervise the printing process or, for some of them, provide a fully written-out copy text. As he remarked in passing, one of the Glasgow-printed sermons was based on "imperfect notes" that someone associated with the bookseller "corrected, in general, to my taste."[18] Making allowances of this kind was an everyday experience for authors on both sides of the Atlantic, so when Gibbons declared in his preface to the *Sermons* that he had improved the copy text to his own satisfaction, no contemporary would have protested. His first act as mediator

17. Davies, *Samuel Davies Abroad,* 46, 43, 54.
18. Ibid., 131.

had been to select among "the very considerable number" of sermons the ones he thought most suitable for a general reading public or, as he put it, "such as relate to the common conditions, duties, and interests of mankind." No hint here of Davies's New Light associations! To the contrary, Gibbons declared that Davies was "more a Christian than a Presbyterian." Then it was a matter of fixing the prose, which Gibbons characterized as "Mr. Davies's usual popular" way of speaking. Doing so demanded "patient and accurate revisal in order to their publication." Evoking himself as "the Editor" burdened with a "duty" to the reading public, Gibbons acknowledged having made some "occasional alterations and amendments as to the language, and especially of adjusting the pointing [punctuation]." The reassurances he offered were entirely conventional: "These liberties I have taken, and have endeavoured to execute my trust in the same manner which I have reason to think Mr. Davies, if he had been living, would have approved and commended; and in which I should with my own Sermons, should I leave any behind me worthy of the public view, might be corrected and sent into the world."[19]

Who bought the three volumes of sermons? I have not been able to identify more than a small fraction of the colonial subscribers.[20] It should not come as a surprise, however, that two-thirds of them had been associated with the College of New Jersey. We may safely generalize from this data that the core readership remained what it had been for the *Miscellaneous Poems* of 1751, the intercolonial network of Presbyterians, the College of New Jersey at its epicenter. But the breadth of the list and the willingness of booksellers on both sides of the Atlantic to print his sermons demonstrate that Davies's version of the "religious sublime" he learned from reading the immensely popular English writers Edward Young and James Hervey (whom he visited in London) appealed to a wider audience. From his Virginia years onward, he was experimenting as a writer with forms of identity that were less constraining than the tag of "Genevan doctor" a local critic applied to him in the *Virginia Gazette*—experimenting in his verse, in how he represented himself to English Nonconformity, and posthumously, in how Gibbons cast him as addressing Christians in general. Would it be misleading to align him with Franklin in this regard? Even so, Davies was

19. Samuel Davies, *Sermons on the most Useful and Important Subjects* (London: Printed for the benefit of the Author's Widow, 1766), 1:iii–v, xli.

20. I am grateful to James McLachlan for information on subscribers who had graduated from the College of New Jersey. Subscriptions were collected in twelve of the colonies, in particular Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Virginia.

irretrievably a Dissenter on the English side of the Atlantic and an evangelical on the American, someone who had to rely on patrons who shared his affiliations.

As was true of so many other writers in the eighteenth-century colonies, Davies's literary career is inexplicable unless we take account of the multiple geographies of culture and politics embedded in the material form of his books. His story reinforces the lesson, now so central to literary history, that texts are mediated in ways that modify the meaning of "author." Each in its own way, the essays in this volume make manifest how the history of the book continues to absorb new energies and new questions.