This is a book, then, that does not seem quite comfortable in its own skin—an interesting fate for a text devoted to exploring struggles for self-expression. It is, nonetheless, a useful addition to both the history and the literary studies of the period, one that will no doubt inspire scholars to seek out overlooked narratives and to ponder the issues that Arch has productively raised.

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Strange, brilliant, and maddening, Studies in Classic American Literature (1923) dramatically influenced the interpretation of American literature, and Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen are to be commended for this excellent edition of D. H. Lawrence’s (1885–1930) important book. Everyone interested in American literature and criticism will benefit from the expert job they have done.

American literature is now such a vast enterprise that we tend to forget how long it took the field to gain acceptance. During the first decades of the twentieth century—I am drawing here upon the account I give in volume 5 of the Cambridge History of American Literature (2003)—American literature was typically perceived as a branch of English literature. When critics and teachers paid attention to American writers, they asked how these writers contributed to English culture and letters. A specifically “American” literature, a body of texts different in a crucial way from that of English literature, was not a recognized entity. In the 1920s, the members of the American Literature group pondered whether they should secede from the Modern Language Association and form their own organization; even as late as 1930, American literary history still appeared under the heading of “English XI” or “English XII” at the annual MLA meetings. It was sometimes said in the mid-1930s that American literature was the orphan child of the curriculum.

By midcentury, American literature had become an established field—there had been a revolutionary change brought about by American critics and scholars inside and outside the academy, including H. L. Mencken, V. L. Parrington, Perry Miller, F. O. Matthiessen, Constance Rourke, and Alfred Kazin. But the pioneer was the English novelist, poet, and essayist D. H. Lawrence. With exotic eloquence, he emphasized in Studies in Classic American Literature the double meaning, symbolism, and subterfuge of American writing at its most supreme and argued that Americans had to remap the literary landscape that they thought they already knew—a landscape then dominated by Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Greenleaf Whittier, and other Boston, Cambridge, and Concord worthies. Lawrence identified Edgar Allan
Poe, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Walt Whitman as not only the originators of American literature, but also innovative and disquieting modernists. Lawrence offered a language freighted with dark mythic overtones and symbolic majesty, and the New Criticism, emerging in the 1930s and 1940s, supplied an exacting analytical technique. A new canon was formed, and Melville, in particular, who was little valued at the turn of the century, steadily grew in stature. Lawrence was one of the very first to honor this writer’s haunting power. As early as February 1916, Lawrence spoke of his admiration for *Moby-Dick* (1851). He devoted a chapter to *Moby-Dick* in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, describing it as “a great book” (131). Melville, affirmed Lawrence, “was a deep, great artist, even if he was rather a sententious man. He was a real American in that he always felt his audience in front of him. But when he ceases to be American, when he forgets all audience, and gives us his sheer apprehension of the world, then he is wonderful, his book commands a stillness in the soul, an awe” (135).

Lawrence had delved into American literature throughout 1916 and planned a series of essays about it, a project of sustained reading and inquiry that extended into mid-1917. He wrote and revised twelve essays from 1917 to 1919, publishing eight of them in 1918 and 1919 in the *English Review*. Lawrence made further revisions and tried unsuccessfully to interest a publisher in issuing the essays as a book. He then continued with revisions and attempted to publish new versions of the essays that had not been published earlier. *Studies in Classic American Literature* took its final shape between October 1922 and June 1923. It was published in the United States in August 1923 and in England in June 1924.

Greenspan, Vasey, and Worthen have prepared an authoritative text of the 1923 book, which opens with a foreword, moves next to a meditation on “the Spirit of Place,” and then proceeds to chapters on Benjamin Franklin, St. John de Crèvecoeur, James Fenimore Cooper (two), Poe, Hawthorne (two), Richard Henry Dana Jr., Melville (two), and Whitman. The editors even reprint the essays published in the *English Review*, as well as those written at the same time but not published there; they give an “intermediate” version of the book, from 1919; and they supplement all of this with Lawrence’s “reading notes” for *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), another version of the essay on *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), and two versions of the essay on Whitman. There is, in addition, an eighty-page introduction, more than one hundred pages of detailed notes and annotations, and “textual” and “variorum” apparatus.

Lawrence’s claims about and insights into American national identity remain potent and unnerving, as when he says, “America is tense with latent violence and resistance. The very common-sense of white Americans has a tinge of helplessness in it, and deep fear of what might be if they were not common-sensical” (55). “The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer,” he declares. “It has never yet melted” (65). Sharp, brooding observations of this kind alternate with passages of pointed satire and humor. “Whitman,” Lawrence maintains, “was everything and everything was in him. He drove an automobile with a very fierce headlight, along the track of a fixed idea, through the darkness of this world. And he saw everything that way. Just as a motorist does in the night” (152).

Lawrence loves to preach, and sometimes he is hectoring and oppressive. But he knew he was a compulsive sermonizer who had a hard time restraining himself. We
sense an element of self-characterization in his critique of Melville: "Nobody can be more clownish, more clumsy and sententiously in bad taste, than Herman Melville, even in a great book like *Moby-Dick*. He preaches and holds forth because he's not sure of himself. And he holds forth, often so amateurishly" (133).

It is often said that Lawrence imposed his own ideas upon American literature. But it is more the case that the writers whom Lawrence studied inspired him to articulate and develop these ideas: he felt the force of Melville, Whitman, and the others driving him to a new conception of his own vocation and a message for the modern world. In my view, the greatest English novel of the twentieth century is *Women in Love* (1920), which Lawrence worked on and revised while he was in the midst of his rapt engagement with American literature. Born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, but in literary terms a descendant of Melville and Whitman, Lawrence is perhaps best understood as an American writer.

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Founded in 1841 in rural West Roxbury, Massachusetts, by George Ripley (1802–80) and his wife, Sophia Willard Dana Ripley (1803–61), Brook Farm has long been regarded as unique. "The first nineteenth-century secular utopian community" established in New England (39), Brook Farm attracted numerous visitors—curious, hopeful, and skeptical. It remains the best-known of sixty-six utopian socialist communities that dotted the American landscape during the 1840s (334n13, 368n27, 373n18). Most communitarians had economic or sectarian motives. George Ripley's distinctively ethical goals were articulated in an 1840 letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom he was recruiting as a shareholding member: to "insure a more natural union between intellectual and manual labor" and "combine the thinker and worker . . . in the same individual" (61). Ripley and his faithful followers sought a liberating alternative to industrial capitalism: a society in which cooperation replaced competition, exploitation of laborers yielded to egalitarianism, and universal freedom and tolerance made way on earth for the millennial "city of God."

It was a noble conception, and the recollections of individuals who treasured their experiences at Brook Farm generated a persistent nostalgic haze. For no more than ten hours a day (that, at least, was the ideal), residents performed varied work, often of their own choosing and not externally dictated by gender. They made time for hot chocolate parties and dances, sledding and long walks by moonlight, and fine music, at the farm and on excursions to Boston. Besides indulging in extravagant jokes and punning, they attended lectures and read classic and contemporary literature.

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