



The Part and the Whole in Early American Literature, Print Culture, and Art

Edited by Matthew Pethers and Daniel Diez Couch

DESCRIPTION

The essays in this pathbreaking collection consider the significance of varied early American fragmentary genres and practices—from diaries and poetry, to almanacs and commonplace books, to sermons and lists, to Indigenous ruins and other material shards and fragments—often overlooked by critics in a scholarly privileging of the “whole.” Contributors from literary studies, book history, and visual culture discuss a host of canonical and non-canonical figures, from Edward Taylor and Washington Irving to Mary Rowlandson and Sarah Kemble Knight, offering insight into the many intellectual, ideological, and material variations of “form” that populated the early American cultural landscape. As these essays reveal, the casting of the fragmentary as aesthetically eccentric or incomplete was a way of reckoning with concerns about the related fragmentation of nation, society, and self. For a contemporary audience, they offer new ways to think about the inevitable gaps and absences in our cultural and historical archive.

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