



Suspense/Desire/Repetition: Serial Poetics and the Early American Novel

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While literary critics have increasingly addressed questions of temporality across a wide range of early American genres, book historians have yet to fully consider the role that temporality played in the production, distribution and reception of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century texts. In beginning to redress that oversight, this talk will consider three interrelated models of print time – Narrative Time (formal and thematic chronologies), Reading Time (sequences and durations of consumption) and Market Time (aggregate publication rhythms) – as they were articulated during the post-Revolutionary period via the staggered material embodiments of early American literature. More particularly, I intend to analyse the serialized novel, and how its distinctive dynamics of progress and delay were connected to the interconnected poetics of narrative suspense, readerly desire, and market repetition that underlie the crucial role periodical and fascicule publication played in the development of American fiction. Examining texts such as Judith Sargent Murray's sentimental novel *The Gleaner* and Hugh Henry Brackenridge's picaresque novel *Modern Chivalry*, I will explore how early American authors and publishers tried, and at times failed, to use the extended temporalities of serialization to legitimate and commercialize the culturally suspect novel-form.