

**The Intersectional Convergence of the Atlantic and the Global**

*Transatlantic Literary Exchanges, 1790-1870: Gender, Race, and Nation*. Edited by Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. 216 pp.

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<1>In the last three decades, scholars of the Atlantic world have documented its volatile, interdependent histories and economies. *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges* offers finely nuanced analyses of the cultural interactions that shaped this world. As editors Julia Wright and Kevin Hutchings explain, the essays build on the “diversifying sense of the multinational Atlantic” in recent scholarship, tracking the “dynamism” of the Atlantic world through close study of genres and textual relations in Anglophone literature (7).

<2>The collection reveals the degree to which every exchange or text was a site of contestation. Some essays bring forward relatively unknown authors, and some draw out new interconnections among a diverse range of activists and authors. It is true that the collection’s “multinational” awareness is in practice mainly binational (Britain and the U.S.) and the map of transatlantic intertextuality remains mainly white Anglo-Atlantic. In this way, some essays here show a field still in transition from a “transatlantic” model focused on literary exchanges between white U.S. and British authors to an “Atlantic” model that is more circum-Atlantic and multiethnic in its reach and more intersectional in its treatment of race, class, sexuality, and religion.

<3>Taken as a whole, *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges* fosters the transition toward a fundamentally intersectional, circum-Atlantic literary scholarship. Organized into three main sections, it brings together essays, respectively, on gender and sexuality, on race, and on the economies of circulating cultural artifacts. The first section highlights the effects of the Atlantic world’s dislocations and battles on gender identity, (non)normative desire, and, in turn, aesthetic conventions. Thus, in the opening essay, Jared Richman considers late eighteenth-century British fiction for its representations of veterans of the American Revolutionary War, such as in Charlotte Smith’s *The Old Manor House* (1793). He persuasively argues that the visibility of maimed or traumatized veterans in Britain after the war fed anxieties about imperial failure and masculine vulnerability. In this light Richman reframes the trope of the “sentimental man,” which he links to a de-romanticizing strain in transatlantic British fiction about America.

<4>The next two essays turn to the combined experiences of “desire and displacement [that] . . . sometimes structured the nineteenth-century transatlantic imaginary” (61), to borrow a

description from Daniel Hannah's essay in this section, where he joins other recent scholars exploring a queer Atlantic. Hannah's unexpected pair of authors — Felicia Hemans and Herman Melville — nicely indicates the range of texts that, he argues, are “mobilized” by traumas of lost or betrayed male intimacy in the Atlantic world, despite apparently heterosexual surface plots. In her essay in this first section, Charity Matthews considers the travel writing and aesthetic theory of Anna Brownell Jameson, who emigrated for a time to Canada to rejoin her estranged husband. Matthews shows Jameson undercutting the standard masculinization of the sublime and feminization of the beautiful and instead highlighting their dynamic interdependence. Matthews concludes that Jameson is “challenging and recontextualizing Eurocentric aesthetic ideology” (59) by way of a gender consciousness, implicitly against the grain of her otherwise largely unquestioned imperial consciousness.

<5>All of these essays contribute to a nuanced picture of gender in the Anglophone Atlantic world, and all of them prompt us to wonder further about the racial and multinational ordering of these gendered discourses, not as “add-ons” but as terms that affect the stakes of desire in such “zones of displacement” (62). For instance, what else might we see in Jameson's reflections on the sublime and the beautiful if we took account of the racialization of these discourses in this period? Might we be able to track more precisely how and whether Jameson's re-gendering of these discourses is also a de-imperializing of them? Or, in the case of Richman's study of male longing, what additional stakes might come into view if we paused to consider the exact causes and strange *geopolitical* bedfellows of those Peruvian wars that provide the backdrop for Hemans's text — narrated by a survivor of them? Might we discover some further connections between homoeroticism and the battle for power in the Americas? Likewise what might emerge if we gave full attention to Melville's cross-racial and international framings of queer desires? The essays by Richman, Matthews, and Hannah provide rich material for further exploration along these lines.

<6>Wright and Hutchings encourage us to combine such racial, geopolitical, and sexual questions via the second set of essays, under the heading “Reconfiguring Race.” Tim Fulford includes research on the Native American leaders who built alliances and for a time held the line against Anglo-European massacre and land-grabbing, most especially the Delaware military leader Pontiac and the Delaware prophet or shaman, Neolin. Fulford's account of the complex alliances and events that shaped Native American history during and after the Revolutionary War effectively anchors his reading of Robert Southey's *Madoc* (1805) and substantiates his account of the text's multinational “competition of voices and ideologies” (96).

<7>Bridget Bennett's essay recovers a longer genealogy of the critical discourse of the “color line,” a phrase usually attributed to W.E.B. DuBois. Unearthing Frederick Douglass's 1881 essay “The Color Line,” together with the writing of other nineteenth-century activists, Bennett invites us to look across the borders of periodization as well as nation and race. Doing so, she argues, we can follow the “call and response” debates through which African Atlantic writers created counter-discourses, including, for instance, their strategic reappropriations of the Anglo-Saxonist discourse of freedom. She concludes that when we link nineteenth-century to twentieth-century African-Atlantic writers' “diasporic and transnational activism” (113), we better grasp the

“complex ways in which black activists developed a set of transatlantic, transnational and international political alliances” (102) over a century.

<8>In the last essay in this section, Sarah Ficke studies the figure of the black or multiracial pirate in order to trace an implicitly intertextual, cross-racial debate about legitimacy, authority, and rights. Treating texts by white author Frederick Marryat and mixed-race Trinidadian author Maxwell Philip, Ficke notes first that the colored pirate figure emerged just after British abolition (1834, effective 1838) and amid revolts aboard the slaving ships of the *Amistad* (1839) and the *Creole* (1841). She argues that they register “anxiety in Britain over the role that ethnicity should play in the emerging definitions of British national identity” (115). Most importantly, like Bennett and Fulford, she brings into view the multiracial dynamics and agency that shaped the history and literature of the Atlantic world. Although readers might wish for more discussion of gender in this second set of race-focused essays, the collection’s first two sections, taken together with the third, offer much food for future intersectional thought.

<9>The third set of essays, “Cultural Exchanges: Print, Tourism, and Politics,” focuses on questions of circulation and economy in the Atlantic literary world. Hutchings’s study of Niagara Falls continues in the geopolitical and racial vein of Fulton’s, Bennett’s and Ficke’s, while also analyzing the economy of tourism. He first establishes the presence of implicit debates between Native American and Anglo-European authors in their descriptions of the Falls, such as their contrasting reflections on land, religion, ownership, and social subjectivity. He then highlights a further tension across many of these texts as they vacillate between embrace of the Falls’s “Romantic status as an icon of North American wilderness” and their “utilitarian exploitation as a source of tourist revenue” (162). Reading Hutchings’s essay beside Matthews’s interpretation of Anna Brownell Jameson, we glean a strong sense of Niagara Falls as “a site of numerous discursive tensions” (162) amid the interacting communities and market forces shaping Atlantic-world discourses.

<10>The other two essays in the last section focus on Charles Brockden Brown, with Eve Tannor Bannet’s nicely establishing the intertwining of gender with international circulation and politics. Bannet analyzes Brown’s fiction in relation to the Minerva Press, typically considered for its profitable publication of women’s writing. Pointing out that this press also published Brown and other male authors, she argues that Brown carefully shaped his fiction to appeal to the female and populist audiences of this press as well as its male and more formally educated readers. In particular, she shows, Brown was concerned to foster reflection on how the young nation would manage its international relations, and she suggests that he did so implicitly through his plots about “adulterous triangles” in which one participant is typically a foreigner. Bannet’s essay thus implicitly highlights how the growth of presses that published women’s writing also served a range of U.S. writers seeking influence on the international stage. Wil Verhoeven’s essay pairs well with Bannet’s in its attention to Brown’s international orientation. On one level, Verhoeven revisits the question of Brown’s political orientation, as republican, nationalist, or imperialist; on this point, he concludes that Brown was less an ideologue of any kind than he was a pragmatist concerned about the nation’s viability in the “new global economic order” (171).

<11> Yet more broadly, Verhoeven's essay is important for the way it invites scholars to take stock of the global contexts of all of these contested sites and interlocking gender and racial discourses. Verhoeven follows Stephen Shapiro, whom he cites, in his appreciation of Brown's prescient representations of a capitalist world-system. I would add that both of their analyses, as well as those of the other essays in the collection, could be further enhanced by a global sense not only of economy but of political economy, or what I have elsewhere discussed as an inter-imperial economy. These many authors' concerns over gender, sexuality, race, and economics take form within a world-system reshaped dramatically in this period by a field of competing states and empires—reaching from the Chinese, Russian, Safavid, and Ottoman empires to the western European empires—in which the U.S. was an aspiring newcomer. In their introduction, Wright and Hutchings quote Peter de Ponceau, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs during the Revolutionary War, who in 1834 advises U.S. authors to follow the practice of U.S. politicians: “When we were struggling with Great Britain for our political independence what did we do? We sought foreign alliances . . . Let us seek foreign alliances in the literature and science of other nations than Great Britain” (5). Many literary critics would think immediately of France and Germany as the obvious “foreign alliances.” Yet recent scholarship beckons us to widen our historical horizons and take note of the fact, for instance, that Russia supplied weapons to the American revolutionary side and ignored the British embargo on the colonies, partly motivated by its own desire to lessen British imperial strength, while China signed preferential treaties with the U.S. for similar, competitive reasons. Verhoeven points us in this direction when he observes that following the publication of Captain Cook's voyages, “Britain and France joined Spain and Russia in the renewed scramble for the Pacific Northwest” (174).

<12> In other words, what Verhoeven calls the “imperial struggle between America and Europe” (176) was also a wider, older struggle. Many other states participated in this inter-imperial competition and they sometimes abetted U.S. successes and crimes while also exerting pressure on U.S. discourses. Literary critics wishing to work on questions of gender, sexuality, economics, or race transnationally could learn much from recent international histories that document these dynamics, such as Jeremy Black's *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony: the World Order since 1500* (2008); Sanjay Subrahmanyam's *Explorations in Connected History* (2005); Thomas Bender's *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History* (2006); and essays in the *Journal of World History*, to name just a few possibilities. In short, new historiography is available for literary scholars who wish to develop more precise global accounts of the cultural formations of the Atlantic world, and in turn of contestations over gender and sexuality. This historiography can help scholars elaborate on the contexts and intertextual insights of the essays in this collection.

<13> For certainly *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges* adds nuance to our understanding of the many agents and texts shaping the Atlantic world, including its gender dimensions, and it gestures toward the more international, diasporic, and global forces underlying these texts. The editors and contributors have enriched the ground for future work in Atlantic literary studies.