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Aims and Scope: Formerly *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* (1997–2005), *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780–1840* is an online journal that is committed to foregrounding innovative Romantic-studies research into bibliography, book history, intertextuality, and textual studies. To this end, we publish material in a number of formats: among them, peer-reviewed articles, reports on individual/group research projects, bibliographical checklists and biographical profiles of overlooked Romantic writers. *Romantic Textualities* also carries reviews of books that reflect the growing academic interest in the fields of book history, print culture, intertextuality and cultural materialism, as they relate to Romantic studies.

BOOK REVIEWS



Joselyn M. Almeida, *Reimagining the Transatlantic, 1780–1890* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), ix + 283pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-6967-8; £60 (hb).

THE THEORETICAL RATIONALE for the emergence of transatlantic literary studies has been the recognition of important missed connections under prior modes of critical study and the rectifying power of observing multiple global parties in conversation with each other. In *Reimagining the Transatlantic, 1780–1890*, Joselyn M. Almeida persuasively demonstrates the efficacy of the practical application of transatlantic literary criticism as she expertly weaves together disparate writers and thinkers across national, linguistic and economic borders into a cohesive pan-Atlantic community.

In her introduction, Almeida notes the challenge that the ‘structural pervasiveness of the North Atlantic’ (p. 4) presents to her proposed project. This challenge is one of application rather than theory: Paul Gilroy and Paul Giles offer theoretical models that include transnational and multilingual elements, but their studies ‘remain confined to English-speaking writers’ and ‘Britain and the United States’, and therefore do ‘not fully account for the translations of language, cultural exchanges, and creolisations that emerge from this region’ (pp. 4–5). Almeida’s chosen range of authors and texts, in contrast, emphasises how ‘the prefix *pan-* in *pan-Atlantic* thus designates a multiracial and transnational space in which the ocean’s boundlessness pushes against national narratives predicated upon it’ (p. 6).

Almeida’s first chapter, ‘From New World to Pan-Atlantic: Opening the *History of America*’, examines transnational political debates over liberty and empire by triangulating three very different texts: Scottish historian William Robertson’s *History of America* (1777), Mexican Jesuit Francisco Clavijero’s *Storia antica del Messico* (1780) and former Afro-Briton slave Ottobah Cugoano’s *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (1787). While recognising that criticism of Robertson as a supporter of genocide is ‘unfruitful and hubristic’, Almeida does mark the failing of his *History of America* as an overly narrow text that ‘exposed the limits of Eurocentric epistemology’ (p. 32). She then juxtaposes Robertson with Clavijero’s ‘major Creole voice into that most European of debates’, which ‘redraws a horizon that circumscribes the expansiveness of Robertson’s vision’ (p. 35), a voice that Robertson was forced to respond to in his fifth edition of the *History of America*. Similarly, Cugoano makes use of Robertson’s ‘foundational myth for European expansionism’ to form a critique of the transatlantic slave trade in what Almeida terms ‘an account of colonialism and slavery that counters the narrative of global European expansion and


imagines reform as having both local and transnational scope' (p. 49).

Next, in 'Francisco de Miranda, Toussaint Louverture, and the Pan-Atlantic Sphere of Liberation', Almeida 'examine[s] how nationalist and emancipationist narratives of liberation in the pan-Atlantic refract the discourses of European colonial, revolutionary, and abolitionist agendas' (p. 65). She distinguishes the European—and, specifically, British—responses to their attempts at revolution and self-governance: as Louverture's rebellion was predominately received with fear and hostility, Miranda deliberately differentiated himself through a prodigious literary output. While the 'racially coded reading of liberation' resulted in Louverture's efforts being rendered as 'monstrous' and therefore isolated (p. 65), Miranda's revolution was depicted as part of a common project: 'the transnational imaginary of continental America' (p. 89). Reading the two comparatively, Almeida asserts, 'opens up nationalist cultural histories to show that their struggles were coetaneous with the event that has long been read as the harbinger of modernity and a synonym with the Romantic age' (p. 67).

Almeida focuses on 'the relations between liberationist discourse and cultural capital' in Chapter 3 (p. 15). She begins by reading José Blanco White's translation of William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and other abolitionist writings, *Bosquejo del comercio en esclavos* (1814), as a work with two purposes: following 'the political calculation of the first wave of British abolitionists who supposed that abolishing the slave trade would lead to the attrition of slavery in plantation societies', and the more 'radical strain' in which he 'advocated unequivocally against the law that required *pureza de sangre* [purity of blood] for Spanish citizenship' (p. 107). This interpretive act functions 'as a translation of sorts' and 'recognizes the interdependence between philanthropic abolitionist writing and the experience of the enslaved person' (p. 114). It also exposes a rupture in Blanco's adherence to Jeremy Bentham's notions of property, which he subverts as he 'attacks the rationale for considering Africans as less than human, or *semi-brutos*' (p. 120). Almeida reads White's work as a forerunner for Richard Robert Madden's translation of Juan Manzano's *Poems by a Slave in the Island of Cuba* (1840). This leads to problematic presentation, however: while the abolitionist Madden depicts himself as expanding Manzano's audience, Almeida invokes Jacques Derrida to demonstrate how Madden's position as a government official and the problematic exchange between author, patron and translator 'involves Madden's appropriation of Manzano's cultural labor' (p. 140), and 'reifies the position of the British subject as interpreter and consumer of the lives of others' (p. 141). Reading these two accounts together may suggest a disparity between Spain and the Spanish language as 'oppressive' when compared with 'the freer umbrage of Britain and English', but it also 'exposes the limits of the liberationist discourse [...] Madden's translation reveals that though Britain frees its slaves, it does not free itself from slavery' (p. 109). Almeida acknowledges that Blanco and Madden 'can be understood within the political context of British interests', but that 'such a Eurocentric focus' misses the larger role that these works play as 'part of the pan-Atlantic

crossings of British Romanticism' (p. 123).

In 'Positioning South America from HMS *Beagle*: The Navigator, the Discoverer, and the Ocean of Free Trade', Almeida turns to Charles Darwin's voyage to 'examine the discourses of freedom and commerce in relation to the *Beagle*'s hydrographic and "discovery" missions to analyze Britain's positioning of geopolitical, economic, and cultural relations across the pan-Atlantic in the early Victorian period' (p. 154). After reading the political and economic ideology of free trade alongside narratives of emancipation and liberation as a 'confluence [that] fulfilled the fantasies of humanitarian capitalism' (p. 154), Almeida analyses 'Darwin's positioning of South America as a space whose imaginative proximity can be mediated through narrative' (p. 155). She places Darwin's voyage within the 'centrality of the navy in Britain's national narrative' (p. 169) to show how the voyage of the *Beagle* 'recalibrates discourses of navigation, discovery, trade, and empire' (p. 170).

Finally, Almeida reads Thomas Carlyle, Edward Eastwick and W. H. Hudson to explore the jarring contrast of 'the symbiosis between the free market and slavery' and 'the liberationist discourse that portrayed Britain as the emancipator of the Atlantic world' (p. 197). Her focus is on extending the clash between free trade and free labour which 'is taken for granted in relation to Britain's relationship with the United States in the mid-Victorian period' (p. 196). *Reimagining the Transatlantic, 1780–1890* should be of great interest to scholars examining any of the individual authors or historical figures under consideration. It is also of great value as a practical example of transatlantic literary criticism, as Almeida expertly fulfils her goal of matching a theoretical framework to concrete literary analysis. 

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Teresa Barnard, *Anna Seward: A Constructed Life. A Critical Biography* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 208pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-6616-5; £55 / \$99.95 (hb).

ANNA SEWARD: A CONSTRUCTED LIFE is the first biography of the 'Swan of Lichfield' since Margaret Ashmun's 1931 account of the writer and her famous literary friends. However, this critical biography is more than just a long overdue study of one of the most fascinating women of letters of the eighteenth century; Teresa Barnard's biography of Seward (1742–1809) uncovers extensive archival material and manuscript sources that substantially alter our understanding of and appreciation for this extraordinary woman. As Barnard notes in her introduction, Seward had 'a confident awareness of the fascinating life she lived' and 'she decided that her correspondence would be her autobiography' (p. 1). Barnard's careful recreation of that autobiography, through a comparison of