

16. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 118.
17. Mamie Dickens, *My Father as I Recall Him* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1900), 49–50.
18. David Kurnick, *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 7.
19. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 118.
20. Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (London: Penguin, 1974), 43.
21. Joseph. Mazzinghi, “Ye shepherds tell me: a celebrated glee” (New York: Dubois and Stodart, 1823–1826).
22. Don Michael Randel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 353.



Transatlanticism

LINDA K. HUGHES

FIRST a few words about the collaborative contemplation of this key word. It emerges most directly from the fact that all five of us are currently engaged in editing *Transatlantic Anglophone Literatures, 1776–1920*, scheduled for publication by Edinburgh University Press in 2020. Three of us are Americanists, two of us British studies specialists. But I suggest that collaboration is not merely a pragmatic result of our working as an editorial team; it is intrinsic to transatlanticism itself, a metaprocess, so to speak, answering to the interactive intellectual, material, social, and cultural forces that bring transatlanticism into being.

Transatlanticism extends back in deep time further than we can see, to any humans who traveled across the Atlantic in any direction, by any means, and touched on shores on the other side.¹ But if Victorian-era transatlanticism emerged from prior global passages, it underwent, to pun deliberately, a sea change in the nineteenth century. Altered national relations resulting from revolutions (American, French, Haitian), wars, imperial ambitions, economic development and exploitation on one hand, or reform movements (abolition, expanding citizen rights and aspirations) on the other, quickened interchanges between nations around the Atlantic basin. New ideas—themselves “forms” in

Caroline Levine's sense and catalysts of new literary forms—likewise quickened transatlantic interchanges and circulation whether evolution; theories of nation, history, human nature; conceptions of “literature” and text; entropy; counterfactual imagined worlds; indigeneity; models of liberation; or sexualities.² Quickened circulation, of course, was inseparable from emergent technologies: steam-driven propulsion (of steamships, locomotives, presses, manufactures); technologies of vision (microscopes, techniques of replicating visual images in the press or on hoardings and billboards); the telegraph, and development of laboratory instruments that propelled international collaborative or competing research reported in the expanding press. Capitalism was both the bane and boon of transatlanticism, permitting wealth from selling human beings into slavery, yet generating new opportunities for earning income, whether Frederick Douglass or William Wells Brown lecturing in Ireland and Britain, or Anthony Trollope's friend Kate Field, the American journalist, reporting from the “old world.” Perhaps most important for transatlanticism was the quickened literacy and purchasing power of increased economic opportunity, without which the mass print transatlantic culture that emerged could never have developed.

This massive, interactive dynamism, as well as the multiple sites of transatlanticism, motivate my premise that transatlantic studies and collaboration are inseparable. No individual can have a firm grasp of its constituents, including its social and publishing networks—which is another reason why, in addition to our five-member editorial team, we are relying on a twelve-member advisory board to point out what we five might otherwise miss.

Fundamentally dynamic and multiply interactive, transatlanticism is also fluid, literally so, in the ocean that holds the concept together. Yet this too is a fiction like every other boundary. Where does the Atlantic Ocean end and the Indian begin? Waves cannot be contained but overlap. Putting the Atlantic at the center of transatlanticism, however, provides a heuristic focus. It should also remind us that time, space, and water inform its flow and uneven development and transmission. Often challenging, transatlanticism nonetheless inheres in Victorian and American studies.

SARAH RUFFING ROBBINS

I have a faculty appointment in American literature, but I've never seen myself as (only) an Americanist. If academics are products of training,

it's no wonder I've long resisted borders around American literature and have cultivated transnational approaches (transatlanticism being just one).

Language study going back to secondary school (Latin, for instance, being a transnational force from classical through medieval times, and beyond; French coming later but having its own border-crossing history) set me up to question national frameworks. Studying at UNC with scholars like Richard Fogle, who worked in both British and American literatures, and Donald Kennedy, who promoted comparativist medieval studies, built on that foundation. Reading Dante in dialogue with Augustine—under Aldo Scaglione's tutelage—further undermined national literary traditions. My interdisciplinary doctoral program at Michigan years later included courses from mentors like Julie Ellison, demonstrating that transatlanticism was central to nineteenth-century culture. So, for me, transatlanticism is defined in part as an experience-shaped curricular framework—evident in syllabi and program requirements (such as required language study for doctorates)—for far longer than is generally acknowledged.

I do recognize that disciplinary containers emphasizing the nation are persistent forces. When I codirected a three-year National Endowment for the Humanities project called "Making American Literatures," for instance, every time we sent our title off to a publisher (say, for a conference session or an essay collection), the "s" would get deleted by copyeditors. Thus, I embrace configurations like "transatlanticism," which conjure up a ready mapping for audiences.

These days, transatlanticism is an increasingly formalized scholarly field, confirmed in journals, monographs, conferences, and other markers also feeding into curricular formations like courses. Through those processes, we can identify concepts that organize transatlanticism as a productive heuristic, alongside models like "Pacific Rim," "Hemispheric Studies," or even "Global Literatures."³

All these fields share metaphors, such as currents and networks, and all explore activities that capitalize on and sustain cultural exchange—such as social movements, pleasurable travel or enforced diasporas. One feature distinguishing transatlanticism is, certainly, its particular geographic focus and associated communal experiences of ocean-crossing (as seen in Paul Gilroy's "black Atlantic," Jace Weaver's "red Atlantic," and scholarship on "green" Irish circuitry).⁴ Yet, as the field matures, some early tendencies, such as focusing on English-language texts, are now recalibrating transatlanticism to expand its purview and dialogue with other transnational frameworks. None too soon, perhaps, given the forces now

reasserting a brutally exclusive brand of nativism that can discourage students away from the very intellectual pathways that I've celebrated from my own learning history.

ANDREW TAYLOR

TRANSATLANTIC literary studies has become a prominent, theoretically institutionalized discursive practice within Anglophone scholarship over the last twenty years. Since the so-called “transnational turn,” in which the traditional focus on national literatures as a schema for organizing disciplinary work shifted to a more international framework, the focus on expanded geographical and temporal spaces has established a set of archival, textual and conceptual practices that offer often innovative and radical readings of canonical and hitherto neglected texts alike. The transatlantic becomes, in this guise, an arena in which texts, bodies, objects and ideas all circulate in reciprocal, agonistic, overlapping, or incursive geometries. By imagining the transatlantic not as a static geographical area, but one in which the collision of materials generates new ways to conceive of that area in all its diversity, it is possible to effect a powerful critique of the ways in which literary study, so often determined by the parameters of the nation state, has worked to enforce a false but seductive politics of exceptionalism or coherence.

To practice transatlantic literary criticism is to participate in a form of comparative work, in which the connectedness of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world is acknowledged without at the same time collapsing singularity into sameness. If one of the political critiques of globalization is that it enforces a cultural homogeneity, the distinctive field of the “transatlantic” recognizes unlikeness and particularity, as these qualities are revealed through forms of exchange and travel. The “thinking across” which, etymologically, the prefix “trans-” signifies, excavates embedded critical shibboleths of national priority or temporal progression. Wai Chee Dimock’s powerful assertion of the ways in which texts are linked by multiple chronologies and contexts of reading is just one account that explodes the neat taxonomies of analysis that have structured, and in many ways continue to structure, the shape of our teaching and research.

Of course, a too narrowly-conceived focus on the Anglophone (or, worse, British-USA) literary field runs the risk of institutionalizing an alternative dominant paradigm that constricts the kinds of Atlantic “thinking across” that we undertake. The challenge here is for academic

training and scholarship that is multilingual, or at least theoretically attuned to translation studies, so that the full rhizomatic potential of cultural and literary contact can be explored. To read transatlantically, then, involves a shuttling back and forth between national, regional and hemispheric formations, with a sensitivity to the ways in which the literary text is differently published, read, reviewed, and understood across space and time.

HEIDI HAKIMI-HOOD

EARLY on in my work, I studied literatures categorized according to specific national affiliations. While quite useful in many respects, training in close reading prompted me to see texts as self-enclosed, bound by their own borders, thereby leaving me with subtle impressions that authors were disconnected from one another. Over time, I shifted toward a more comparative, international approach to literary studies, and I learned how authors and their works move across geographic and cultural borders. Cross-cultural literary scholarship, although not new, does permit scholars to defamiliarize traditional perspectives limited by cultural, disciplinary, and national constraints.⁵ Through defamiliarization, one focuses less on what makes British literature, for example, categorically British and recognizes that literatures, much like nations, are constantly in conversation with one another. Defamiliarized readings, in turn, lend themselves to transatlanticism, an approach that centers on networked, international literary figures and movements that have “always, already” been connected to one another.

Transatlanticism advances a nuanced perspective for cosmopolitan literary studies. As part of an expanding literary tradition, Victorian transatlantic scholars highlight instances of cultural exchange among communities represented by indigenous-language, Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone, and Lusophone literatures, among others. Transatlanticism breaks away from emphasizing that texts are written by individual authors in the language of their particular nationality. Transatlanticism reminds individuals to read and research with regard to writers’ cultural, linguistic, and political exchanges.

By taking a transatlantic view, scholars emphasize the cosmopolitan nature of literatures that have emerged from all sides of the Atlantic. Transatlanticism recognizes a literary collective—meaning multiple authors, literatures, and languages convey local and global issues of significance to a particular community or communities. As an example,

transatlantic scholars identify how nineteenth-century authors cooperate with one another by: 1). Illuminating how their individual literary contributions shaped their contemporary cultural moments and 2). Revealing how both local and international histories impacted their writing. Specifically, transatlanticism familiarizes readers with the ways in which Victorian-era authors and their works cooperated with one another through their responses to cultural connections and exchanges motivated by events and movements they experienced as contemporaries: abolitionism, scientific advancements, improvements in communication, political tensions, universal suffrage, education for women, wars, illness and migrations, to name a few. Transatlanticism reveals cultural histories that have always been present but have received limited scholarly exposure. Not rooted to one culture, transatlanticism emerges from a common issue that transforms multiple cultures at particular points in time.

ADAM NEMMERS

TRANSATLANTICISM is a burgeoning interdisciplinary field populated by historians, political scientists and International Relationists, sociologists, and cultural and literary theorists, represented by both professional organizations (such as the TSA [Transatlantic Studies Association] and the Transatlantic Platform), various university-based centers (on the continent of Europe as well as in the US and the UK) and academic journals (such as *Symbiosis* and *The Journal of Transatlantic Studies*). The field invites us to abandon the silo of nationalist approaches in favor of a more expansive view of the Atlantic World as an interconnected and contested space.

Transatlanticism emphasizes links between Europe, Africa, and the Americas (including the Caribbean), recognizing that before the advent of air and motor transportation, exchange was conducted primarily between maritime nodes, regardless of geographic nationality. Foremost it explores the umbilical relationship between mother countries in Europe and colonies in the Americas, which often took the form of economic and mercantile exchange (including the notorious trade that brought slaves to the New World) and was also influential in the arena of culture, with ideas transmitted through art, literature, and music. The field reminds us that despite the dominant narrative of westward transmission (as in the case of early American dependence upon British novels and periodicals), traffic was inherently a mutual exchange,

with goods, people, and culture flowing back to Europe, sometimes triangulated with Australia, the Middle East, and Asia.

Viewing the Atlantic World through a transatlantic lens opens up horizontal, rather than vertical, space for exploration. It invites us to consider the world in bilateral terms, not only with regards to Anglo-American exchange, but also Franco-, Luso-, and Hispanic-, among others. Transatlanticism shifts critics' focus from nationality to internationality—recognizing the shifting boundaries and borders of nations themselves as well as the liminal no-man's-land that was the high seas. In a way this is not a new worldview, but a return to the way the Atlantic was viewed during the era of Empire, when every adjoining territory was at contest and markers of nationhood were mercurial. Especially given the fluidity of geopolitical relations, including the push/pull between nationalism and cosmopolitan forces, the field of transatlanticism encourages a multilateral perspective of great contemporary value. We would do well to abandon the often isolationist approaches of standalone disciplines for a more expansive consideration of the Atlantic World, both past and present.

SPEAKING COLLABORATIVELY

All the statements above were written individually, honoring the “singularity” as well as multiplicity of our voices. Linda K. Hughes emphasizes print culture and historicizes nineteenth-century transatlanticism. While working from within the globalism of American transatlantic studies, Sarah Ruffing Robbins approaches transatlanticism through her learning story (as does Heidi Hakimi-Hood in part). Andrew Taylor theorizes the field and, as a leading scholar long closely associated with the transatlantic studies series at Edinburgh University Press, takes a broad outlook on the field as it is practiced today. Heidi Hakimi-Hood, from a British studies perspective, and Adam Nemmers from an Americanist point of departure, emphasize the internationalism of transatlantic studies and the need to proceed in full awareness of the multiple languages of transatlanticism, thus resisting Anglophone linguistic imperialism. Our divergences remind us that transatlanticism as an academic study emerges from the many voices interacting transatlantically and the diverse scholarly approaches to transatlanticism today, as well as our ongoing conversations among ourselves and with board members.

We are writing our conclusion collaboratively, however. Adopting the comparative method so essential to transatlanticism itself, we can

see points of connection within our statements, including the very importance of comparative methods, the inherent unevenness and instability of borders, transatlanticism's multilingualism, and its indebtedness to Wai Chee Dimock's notion of deep time.

By now transatlanticism is a well-established rather than nascent field, and perhaps its major challenge is to resist ossifying its parameters or methods, to remain alive to what exists just out of view amidst the competing hemispheres that comprise transatlanticism. To thrive, transatlanticism as a field of academic study must remain open to the new, whether new frameworks, hybridities, or voices previously unrecalled.

NOTES

1. Wai Chee Dimock, "Deep Time: American Literature and World History," *American Literary History*, 13, no. 4 (2001): 755–75.
2. Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 1–23.
3. See Noella Brada-William and Karen Chow, eds., *Crossing Oceans: Reconfiguring American Literary Studies in the Pacific Rim* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004); Caroline F. Levander and Richard Levine, eds., *Hemispheric American Studies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008); Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Unsettling American Literature, Rethinking Nation and Empire," in *The Cambridge Companion to Transnational American Literature*, ed. Yogita Goyal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 19–36; and Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
4. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); and Peter D. O'Neill and David Lloyd, eds., *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the African and Irish Diasporas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
5. See Amanda Claybaugh, "Toward a New Transatlanticism: Dickens in the United States," *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 3 (2006): 439–60.

