

Howsam, Leslie; Raven, James (Hrsg.): *Books Between Europe and the Americas. Connections and Communities, 1620-1860*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2011. ISBN: 978-0-230-28567-5; 318 S.

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The early twentieth-century mathematician, philosopher of science, and educationalist Alfred North Whitehead, once remarked that everything connects. Contemporary historians acknowledge that connections, whether expressed metaphorically as webs, networks, honeycombs, or kaleidoscopes, have always been a defining feature of globalisation, both past and present. The documentation of such interconnectedness through time as well as across space pervades this landmark collection of essays that explores facets of the Atlantic World between 1620 and 1860 through the lens of book culture. By adding books to the traditional mix of mobile people, ideas, technology, and commodities, the fourteen authors claim a legitimate place in the established transatlantic studies industry for these vehicles of cultural transfer. The collection is also notable for its timely inclusion of hitherto under-represented groups, genres, and discourses in book culture, moving beyond the predominately British Atlantic World to embrace French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and Irish communities and identities.

The editors' introduction, a substantial and significant chapter in its own right, offers an excellent overview of the richness of transnational book history, and how it can usefully complement new imperial history, migration and contact studies, and historical geography, to name but a few cognate fields. Howsam and Raven also emphasize the interconnectedness of speech, script, and print, and suggest how language and translation are implicated in the formation of cultural authority and social capital. Books are a mnemonic for a variety of communication forms, from pamphlets and newspapers to letters, diaries, chapbooks, manuals, and periodicals. As evidenced by the essays that follow, the production and re-production, distribution and transmission, reception and consumption of

text all contribute to a nuanced narrative of identity politics whose margins are brokered if not policed by the tyranny of distance.

The first half of the collection offers several microstudies that affirm or reposition prevailing orthodoxies of book history and transatlantic studies. Catherine Armstrong's exposé of various misleading accounts of the 1622 Virginia Massacre demonstrates the power of print in contradiction to manuscript or oral testimony to shape public opinion back home. Similarly, the assumption that the arrival of the printing press in the New World is somehow coterminous with literacy, identity, and culture is contested by François Melançon in the context of New France and the Ancien Régime. Phyllis Whitman Hunter provocatively investigates the little-researched role of foreign news in the American colonial marketplace while Jennifer Mylander traces several New England reading experiences of the perennially popular educative text, the *History of Dr. Faustus*. Nicholas Wrightson's fusion of the European Enlightenment's 'Republic of Letters' with the Anglo-American book trade represents the best of contemporary scholarship in the history of science.

The volume really comes into its own with a series of groundbreaking essays that explode any neat assumptions based on an Anglophone transatlantic model. Joyce D. Goodfriend's examination of the Dutch book trade in colonial New York City rewrites the demographics of eighteenth-century readers and their books' complex and sophisticated global networks of exchange. The ongoing currency of Latin and Greek with their capacity to link and symbolically legitimate communities, both old and new, is the focus of James Raven's far-reaching and masterful essay which exemplifies the potential and power of understanding the role of language in shaping cultural authority. In a more focused example, Sandra Guardini T. Vasconelos reveals how English novels influenced Brazilian writers through a complex process of French and Portuguese inter-translation. And rounding out the Latino contributions, Eugenia Rolán Vera demonstrates superbly how the early nineteenth-century Western European trade in educational textbooks to Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and the Columbian confederati-

on, plus the importation of the monitorial pedagogical system by Spanish American elites has impacted both education and politics to this day.

The entire volume would not be complete without either an explicit focus on those technologies that facilitated communication or instances of the how those technologies enabled the reverse migration of ideas, values, and business practices. Aileen Fyfe's account of how the Chambers' publishing dynasty developed and retained a significant American market edge through the early adoption of steam printing demonstrates just what a successful formula this Edinburgh firm found in exploiting the potential of new communication technologies and networks. Likewise, according to Robert J. Scholnick, the steam press and the steamship combined to fashion a voice for the anti-slavery movement that was sustained over time and ultimately eclipsed the great Atlantic divide. Finally, in an expository *tour de force*, Michael O'Connor reveals that fraternal ties between Belfast and Philadelphia printers and booksellers reshaped the meaning of the local and enabled an Irish provincial entrepreneur to challenge the collective power of the Dublin book trades.

Howsam and Raven's „new history of trans-oceanic *livres sans frontières*“ (p. 1) aspires to unsettling some key assumptions, analytical frameworks, and terms of engagement with the scholarly industry of transatlantic studies. Yet, by proposing the existence of „transatlanticism,“ (p. 17) or as Hunter terms it „an Atlantic history paradigm“ (p. 64), a species of exceptionalism creeps in the back door to replace the national bias of book history the editors are at pains to refute. With scholars currently engaged in international research programmes on the Indian Ocean World, the Baltic Sea World, and the Pacific World, such exceptionalism, it can be argued, is symptomatic of the maturity of the field of transatlantic studies even as it reinforces, yet again, the role of Europe in the colonisation of the Americas. However, as many of the essays in this collection demonstrate, reciprocity and mutual impact offer a salubrious reminder of the two-way flow of cultural exchange. Howsam, Raven and their contributors deserve accolades for a collective and connected

work that probes deeply the roots of Atlantic World studies, the transatlantic impulse, and how the study of communication forms whether book, manuscript, or speech links and fashions communities across distance and over time.

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