

# Editorial: Transnationalism in Long-Nineteenth Century Literature and Twenty-First Century Heritage

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'[A] different kind of transnational study is now in order, one where the cultural and economic hegemony of the metropolis is no longer dominant, so that other circuits and relations, long-obscured in the centre-dominated model, become evident.'<sup>1</sup>

THE TURN TO transnationalism in critical scholarship is not new.<sup>2</sup> But in the summer of 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic, after the death of George Floyd, amid calls to decolonise, and in the light of the evermore urgent climate crisis, transnational research and working were given new impetus. Perhaps one of the most compelling recent works which takes a transnational approach is Jessie Reeder's *Forms of Informal Empire* (2020). In her monograph, Reeder goes beyond the European, African, North American and South Asian limits that are so often the boundaries of works on British Imperialism. Instead, she centres her study on Latin America, and the British influence and informal Empire in this region throughout much of the nineteenth century. Further to adjusting her geographical scope, however, Reeder also adapts her textual focus, analysing Spanish texts (including the novels of Vicente Fidel López and the letters of Simón Bolívar) alongside canonical Anglo-centric works, such as those of Anthony Trollope, Anna Letitia Barbauld and H. Rider Haggard. However, Rosina Visram's much earlier 1986 *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700-1947* – which 'was the first account of the ordinary people in Britain' – along with the works of Priya Joshi,

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<sup>1</sup> Priya Joshi, 'Globalizing Victorian Studies', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 41 (2011), 20-40 (p. 21).

<sup>2</sup> See: Joshi; Kate Flint, 'Why "Victorian"?: Response', *Victorian Studies*, 47 (2005), 230-39; and Regenia Gagnier, *Literatures of Liberalization: Global Circulation and the Long Nineteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Kate Flint, Regenia Gagnier and countless others demonstrates that the call for transnational nineteenth-century studies is of long-standing duration.<sup>3</sup>

The articles published here analyse a guidebook, an international library, a transnational composer and a group of pirates, and are complimented by a commissioned thought piece that explores how transnational and decolonial approaches are active in the heritage sector beyond academia. Together, these articles illuminate only a minute sample of the heterogeneous ways in which empires, nations and individuals physically, imaginatively and intellectually interacted across cultures and boundaries throughout the nineteenth century. However, in doing so, they map the interplay of national and individual power struggles inherent in imperial and inter-imperial lives, whether that be through the subversive and frictional intra-European representation of French culture, or the necessity of creating a new nation on Atlantic water in order to live freely. Or, indeed, the struggle between 'systematisation and liberty, conformity and individuality, objectivity and subjectivity' that Helena Drysdale argues characterises both the process of writing, and the finished publication, of George Bowen's 1854 Murray *Handbook for Travellers in Greece*.<sup>4</sup>

With evidence from both the *Handbook* and Bowen's personal journals, Drysdale argues that throughout the publication of the *Handbook*, Murray's stringent requirements for objectivity challenged Bowen's individual creativity and limited his freedom to include more expansive and descriptive passages. Drysdale sees this tension mirrored in the changing mid-century travelling practices which pitted the 'traveller' or 'wayfarer' against the 'supposedly sheep-like tourist': the first free to find their own path, and the second following proscribed routes.<sup>5</sup> These changing travel practices reflected the globalisation of capitalism and as a result, Drysdale writes, the *Handbook* is a 'product [...] of the interconnected global circulation of people, commodities and ideas'.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, though the product of the tensions between individuality,

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<sup>3</sup> Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700-1947*, Routledge Revivals (London: Routledge, 2015), half title.

<sup>4</sup> Helena Drysdale, 'George Bowen and his 1854 Murray *Handbook for Travellers in Greece*', *RRR*, 4 (2022), 10-34 (p. 33).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

objectivity, and commercialisation, it does, she argues, form a record of one white British man's experience of Greece at a particular mid-nineteenth-century moment.

While Drysdale analyses one Murray handbook, Kathy Rees writes of what has been described as 'a series of spiritual Baedekers and Murrays': the Heinemann International Library.<sup>7</sup> In her article, Rees explores this transnational European collection of translated texts that were distributed throughout the British Empire, 'as is evident in the half-page advertisement in the endpapers, listing booksellers who stocked the volumes in Paris, Nice, Leipzig, Vienna' and many other cities.<sup>8</sup> Similarly to Drysdale's view of Bowen's *Handbook*, Rees sees this library as 'a cultural, material, and economic object produced by transnational collaboration' that was 'facilitated by technological advances in the production, distribution, and consumption of books'.<sup>9</sup> Thus, both articles speak to the influence of globalisation and capitalism over book production and reception. They highlight the nineteenth-century growth of transnational literary sources, the increasing reach of printed material and the ideologies it contained, and the knowledge networks they created. Central to Rees' study of this transnational library is the figure of the 'woman reader' of the French novel, and the manipulation of that gendered motif by both male and female authors to 'demonstrate a nation's vulnerability to the influence of the Other, or as an active force interrogating and creatively recreating narratives.'<sup>10</sup> For Rees, these women readers become variously national allegories onto which national fears are projected, or advocates for the agency of the New Woman. Ultimately, she argues that these novels together create a transnational 'counter-culture to [...] nationalist impulse[s] by acts of translation' that transcend geographical, linguistic, and ideological barriers.<sup>11</sup>

Tensions between nationalism and transnationalism resonate throughout the articles published here, and questions over the sometimes-intangible criteria of nationhood, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism are at the heart of the remaining two articles. For Victoria C. Roskams, *Daniel Deronda's* composer Klesmer, is situated

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<sup>7</sup> Edmund Gosse, 'Editor's Note', quoted in Kathy Rees, 'Transnationalism, Translation, and Transgression in the "Heinemann International Library" (1890-97)', *RRR*, 4 (2022), 35-57 (p. 37).

<sup>8</sup> Rees, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 37.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

at the crux of these questions, amid a 'mixture of musical nationalism and transnationalism'.<sup>12</sup> As with Rees, Roskams' article is centred around the place of language in what she calls 'transnational living'.<sup>13</sup> For, as Roskams notes, music is a transnational language: 'audiences who could not read the works of renowned European authors because of a language barrier, [...] could nonetheless experience the music of Beethoven.'<sup>14</sup> Entering into a substantial body of work on the subject, Roskams sheds new light on the debate over whether Klesmer is a cosmopolitan or a nationalist, by bringing this transnational lens to focus on Klesmer's comparative musicians, other characters' descriptions of him as well as his own, and his final decision to settle in London as a music teacher. More than just a transnational figure, Roskams argues that Klesmer is a character who 'is integral to the globalising processes Eliot exposes'.<sup>15</sup> For Roskams, Klesmer's role as a music teacher – 'a more professionalised post than that of the composer' – points to the fact that 'Jewish people are integrated into British society on capitalist grounds' at the potential risk of 'erasure'.<sup>16</sup> Again, the interplay between capitalism, globalisation and transnationalism (and the effect of each on the individual) resounds throughout Roskams' work, speaking to both Drysdale and Rees.

As Olivia Tjon-A-Meeuw notes when writing of Maxwell Philip's *Emmanuel Appadocca* (and gesturing to Paul Gilroy), 'the formation of modernity was not only a European project but very much involved Africa as part of the Atlantic world, connected through slavery and other economic ties'.<sup>17</sup> Here, Tjon-A-Meeuw moves beyond European transnationalism to analyse 'a proto-nation made up of pirates' that is constructed by a Trinidadian man of African descent and exists in the Caribbean: a 'heterotopia' in the 'atopia' of the ocean.<sup>18</sup> While Rees posits the Heinemann International Library as a 'counter-culture' to nationalist ideals, Tjon-A-Meeuw reads Appadocca's pirate ship as 'an alternative space to the British Empire, as it not only has

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<sup>12</sup> Victoria Roskams, 'Between Nationalism, Transnationalism, and Cosmopolitanism in *Daniel Deronda's* Klesmer', *RRR*, 4 (2022), 58-80 (p. 59).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Olivia Tjon-A-Meeuw, 'An Oceanic Nation of Pirates in *Emmanuel Appadocca or Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaniers*', *RRR*, 4 (2022), 81-100 (p. 82).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 90.

a place for the mixed-race Appadocca, but actually allows him to become the leader of this nation.<sup>19</sup> For Tjon-A-Meeuw, what may be central to an idea of transnationalism is not in fact traversing boundaries or negotiating different manifestations of cross-cultural existence, but existing outside the conventional idea of a nation at all: 'far removed from the laws of the land, or, in other words, other political communities'.<sup>20</sup> In analysing a novel which 'tries to imagine how a child might respond to' a parent 'enslav[ing] his own child and put[ting] them to work in the fields', Tjon-A-Meeuw speaks to Roskams' and Rees' works that see individuals as allegorical for nations, races and other groups, in this case descendants of slavery as they face the trauma of our shared history.

Together, these articles address some of the key threads of transnational studies within academia: the relationship between nation and transnationalism; between individual and nation; the tensions between globalism, capitalism and transnationalism (and their liberating or effacing consequences); representation and cultural memory; and historiography. But these debates stretch beyond the academic world, as Christo Kefalas shows.

As with each of the previous articles, central to Kefalas' discussion are the uneven power structures and struggles that were, and are still, at the heart of western (particularly British) knowledge production about itself and about the rest of the world. The heritage sector is intricately bound up with the politics of historiography, a space where 'the interplay between heritage, politics, and the tensions presented in the histories communicated to the public, [...] can become a battleground for how power is ideologically exercised.'<sup>21</sup> Who tells stories, which stories they tell, and how they tell them is a key concern for Kefalas who writes that 'the histories we tell ourselves shape our understanding of the world and our place within it, but every history is a story shaped by us as well'.<sup>22</sup> She is acutely aware of the crucial part each of us has to play in the writing, re-writing and effacing of cultural histories and personal and group identities. While Drysdale is concerned with Bowen's *Handbook* as a record of a cultural

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>21</sup> Christo Kefalas, 'Heritage as Contestation and Change: Decolonisation in Practice', *RRR*, 4 (2022), 101-129 (p. 110).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

experience, Kefalas sees the results of such nineteenth-century knowledge production that have become part of a national history which is now beginning to be seriously challenged by programmes of determined decolonial work. 'Even the earliest private collecting through the "cabinet of curiosity" concept within the home was not without political impact', she argues, and the structures and language which have historically been used in collecting practices such as this are still largely the organising principle of many museum collections.<sup>23</sup> As she argues, 'The problems around the catalogue are the entrenched constructs that have been standardised around its use', including 'the imposition of western epistemologies onto global material cultures and traditions.'<sup>24</sup> But it is clearly not just the cataloguing of items which causes issue: 'The removal of art and artefacts from colonial territories and peoples functioned as a means of celebrating the prowess of colonising nations.'<sup>25</sup> Questions around the future of such colonial objects in UK heritage institutions occupy the second half of Kefalas' piece. Consultation and collaboration with source communities (indigenous as well as communities of colour), repatriation, and exchange are each explored. Thus, Kefalas' piece can perhaps be seen as a corollary to more conventional academic research such as Tjon-A-Meeuw's article, as both confront the traumatic legacy of the British Empire. In fact, Kefalas' piece may be seen as the corollary of each of these works in turn as she draws out the themes of cultural or racial effacement and trauma, historiography, and (trans)national narratives.

The articles in this issue of *Romance, Revolution and Reform* aim to contribute to the ever-developing field of transnational studies at a time when such studies and outlooks appear increasingly more crucial not only to academia, but to our understanding of the world in a far broader sense. Through this issue's combination of interdisciplinary research with a thought piece from an author working in the heritage sector, it is this Editor-in-Chief's hope that this issue can, in a modest way, contribute to Joshi's call for 'a different kind of transnational study'.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 114

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 112.