

Joselyn M. Almeida, *Reimagining the Transatlantic, 1780–1890*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. Pp. 294. £66.00. ISBN 9780754669678.

In recent years, the field of transatlantic studies has gained significant momentum. It received special currency, in particular, when it challenged rigid linguistic and political divisions in the academy. It has also remained strong because of its capacious theoretical space for transnational and transcultural critical work. When the term ‘circum-Atlantic’ was introduced thereafter, the term ‘trans-Atlantic’ suddenly seemed delimiting and not altogether inclusive of the Atlantic world’s tri-continental scope. In *Reimagining the Transatlantic, 1780–1890*, Joselyn M. Almeida returns her readers to this discussion by critiquing the shortcomings of both these terms, in fact. In the process, however, she offers us a new approach. She proposes the pan-Atlantic as a multivalent framework that comprises both the Anglophone and non-Anglophone worlds and disrupts ‘monolingual transatlanticism’ (5). Her work captures the authentic portrayal of the interpenetrating intellectual, cultural, and social forces from 1780–1890.

This is not the first time that Almeida offers an influential and groundbreaking study. In 2010 she edited a collection of essays, *Romanticism and the Anglo-Hispanic Imaginary*, which considers the multiple political, social, and literary connections between Romantic-era Britain and Spanish America. Underscoring the lack of attention that has been given to this relationship, the book also provides a rich interdisciplinary foundation for what has become an emerging branch of scholarship. Rebecca Cole Heinowitz’s *Spanish America and British Romanticism, 1777–1826: Rewriting Conquest*, published shortly afterwards, provides an admirable extension of the work begun by the scholars who contributed to Almeida’s collection.

Almeida’s monograph is equally important and innovative. By reflecting the age’s cross-cultural, fluid interactions, the pan-Atlantic theoretical framework helps us refigure Romantic and Victorian Britain’s relations with Africa and the Americas. It encompasses various discourses and realities, including the practice of slavery and the rhetoric of liberation during the ‘reconfiguration of British power in light of the decline of the Spanish empire’ (11). Almeida helpfully integrates the contributions of translation, as well as movement and transmission, as they intersect with history and literature.

The book’s chapters advance chronologically and span a broad range of authors describing the ‘hybrid networks of culture that arise from multiple encounters across the longitudes of the Atlantic’ (237). Almeida draws from a generic array that includes histories, abolitionist poems, travel narratives, and a novel. Her first chapter begins with a comparison of William Robertson’s *History of America* (1777) with Ottobah Cugoana’s *Thoughts and Sentiments* (1787) and Francisco Javier Clavijero’s *Storia antica del Messico* (1780). By including Native American and African slave voices, she considers how imperial critiques brought about discursive reflections on global justice through ‘Pan-Atlantic relationality’ (14). Her second chapter analyses the distinct liberation movements of abolitionism and Latin American independence through the cases of Toussaint Louverture and Francisco de Miranda, whose efforts helped create an expansive nexus across imperial centres (London and Paris) and ‘peripheries’ (Caracas and St. Domingue) alike. Analysing the works of José Blanco White and Richard Robert Madden, the third chapter examines the role of translation as a powerful link between British abolitionism and reformist projects in Spanish America. Almeida then examines Charles Darwin’s ‘discovery’ voyage on the *H.M.S. Beagle* in the fourth chapter, and considers his writings as a transformative contribution for Anglo-Hispanic relations. Darwin’s contributions, she explains, resulted in South America’s transition into a tangible, real phenomenon for the British. Finally, in her concluding chapter, she analyses the paradoxes of later Victorian Britain’s commercial investments in Latin American slave-

holding states.

With this publication, Almeida has offered an elegantly written and important piece of ‘recovery’ criticism. It not only captures the broad and boundary-less space of the Atlantic and the interconnectedness between politics and writing, whether fictional or non-fictional. The book also reconceives, as she explains, the ‘monolingual genealogy of culture’ through the various ethnic, racial, social, and cultural connections provided by her compelling pan-Atlantic conceptualization (238).

Omar F. Miranda
New York University