Book Reviews

Transatlantic Women Travelers, 1688-1843, edited by Misty Krueger Bucknell University Press, 2021. Pp. 234. $150. ISBN: 9781684482979 (Hardcover). $25.91. ISBN: 9781684483310. (Paperback). $32.82.

Misty Krueger's collection moves scholarship on traveling women in new and exciting directions. "Transatlantic" has too often been limited to the Anglophone Atlantic, mainly connections between Britain and North America. Krueger moves closer to "circum-Atlantic," including travels to Mexico, Peru, Surinam, Haiti, and Sierra Leone. She further expands her scope by including fictional representations of women travelers, thus bringing in women of color, who did not publish travel writing this early. For women in the long eighteenth century, travel often brought the chance to escape the domestic sphere and experience greater freedom. Krueger's excellent introduction qualifies this by noting that "the freedoms afforded to some women travelers in this era . . . were the result of imperialism, colonization, and Black women's trauma" (2). Her contributors continue this welcome attention to the intersectional dimensions of women's transatlantic travel.

The first half of the book treats nonfictional travel writing, beginning with Diana Epelbaum's impressive study of Maria Sibylla Merian's illustrated natural history, *The Metamorphosis of the Insects of Surinam.* Including visual culture is a logical choice, since much early travel writing was illustrated. Epelbaum's insightful readings of Merian's scientific artwork explore the tension between close attention to local ecology and the international reach to which Merian aspires, as a woman trying to

break into the masculine institutions of early modern science. Collecting specimens in tropical forests and swamps was challenging, involving help from local indigenous and enslaved people. "Merian's gender comes into focus," Epelbaum writes, "if we read the uneasy co-existence of local and global investments as a fraught performance of gender necessitated by her status as interloper" (43).

Another traveler to a tropical location was Anna Maria Falconbridge, who traveled to the Black settler colony of Sierra Leone in the early 1790s. Shelby Johnson takes a fresh perspective on Falconbridge, weighing the British Empire's role in moving subaltern groups around the globe. Sierra Leone was founded by abolitionists in 1787 to help London's so-called Black Poor, many of whom won their freedom by fighting with the British in North America. The colony struggled, and many settlers died. In 1791 a larger group of Black Loyalists was resettled to Sierra Leone from Nova Scotia. Falconbridge's husband, Alexander, was sent to help re-establish the colony. Falconbridge published *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone* after his death, in part to get the Sierra Leone Company to pay her what they owed him. The book reprints settlers' petitions to the Company, protesting mistreatment, but Falconbridge was an uneasy ally, given her stated support for slavery as another kind of resettlement—rescuing people from "unhappy Africa." Can she, Johnson asks, meaningfully represent "Black suffering or Black political self-determination" (57)? Johnson pairs Falconbridge's book with a letter from a Nova Scotia settler, Susana Smith, to Lt. John Clarkson, the trusted organizer of the exodus to Sierra Leone. Smith requests "som Sope . . . to wash my family Clos." Johnson reads her simple request as testimony to the "threshold of livability" that was the harsh everyday reality of transatlantic travel for a woman less literate, less privileged, and less visible than Falconbridge.

Grace Gomashie's essay takes us to another continent on the Atlantic rim: South/Central America, where two women "social explorers" wrote of their experiences in the early nineteenth century, one in Mexico and one in Peru. Both Flora Tristan's *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (1833-34) and Frances Erskine Inglis Calderón de la Barca's *Life in Mexico during a Residence of Two Years in That Country* (1843) focus on women's lives in the countries they visit, observing women's position with regard to religion, marriage, and education. Tristan, the illegitimate daughter of an elite Peruvian, had fled an abusive marriage in France, where she later became an activist and advocate for women's rights. *Peregrinations* describes colorful characters including Indigenous camp followers, the free and powerful *Limeñas* (women of Lima), and an indomitable former first lady of Peru. Calderón, born Scottish, had lived in France and the U.S. She married the Spanish ambassador to the U.S., later ambassador to Mexico, and accompanied him there. Both writers participated to some extent in the "discourse of femininity" that steered women writers toward "subjects in the traditional female domain such as customs and traditions" (65). Both, however,

criticize patriarchy, Tristan militantly, Calderón in a satirical vein. Comparing the two, Gomashie identifies a tension between female solidarity and "European pride" in superiority over less educated Latin American women.

Pam Perkins's essay reconstructs women's lives in 1820s Newfoundland, an island outpost of empire whose remoteness and harsh climate made it difficult for colonists to retain their identities as Britons. The colony included few leisure-class women; most settlers were fishermen and their families. No published writing by Newfoundland women before 1839 survives, but Perkins finds evidence in the journals and letters of Sir Thomas Cochrane, the island's governor, of women's contribution to maintaining an "English" identity at the outer boundary of the empire. Cochrane's determination to bring "a form of feminized public sociability" to the colony affords "glimpses of a world of sunny Austenian pleasures" such as "shopping, dancing, amateur concerts, rounds of visiting" (84, 89)—even as ladies are occasionally stranded by heavy snow or thrown from a sleigh. Perkins also surveys "outport women" such as a Mrs. Selby, the companion of a fur trader, who eats bear and caribou and hunts from a dogsled, to yield a "more rounded vision of Newfoundland's settler colonial society" (93).

The next essay straddles the blurry boundary between nonfiction and fiction. Ula Lukszo Klein reads Charles Johnson's *General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* (1724) on two cross-dressing female pirates, Anne Bonny and Mary Read. Johnson's narrative, based on the women's official trial report, sensationalizes their stories, representing Bonny and Read as "tak[ing] advantage of the freedom of the sea in spectacular and seductive ways" (97). Less persuasively, Klein argues that race, as well as gender and class, inflects Johnson's portrayal when the two selectively reveal their gender by baring their white breasts. The racial coding of the breast is not coincidental, Klein contends, but echoes the eighteenth-century "creation of freedom as a race-defined category" (102). She also includes visual culture: the illustration of Read and Bonny in the Dutch edition of Johnson's book projects gender fluidity alongside the romance of the women's transgressive existence.

The second half of the collection, on fictional women travelers, begins with a 1780 novel by Samuel Jackson Pratt, *Emma Corbett*, set during the American Revolution. Emma crosses the Atlantic disguised as a man, pursuing the British soldier she loves. Taken prisoner, but freed by George Washington himself, who sees through her disguise, Emma dresses as an Indigenous boy to continue her search. Jennifer Golightly's reading centers "Emma's sensibility as a catalyst for the humane treatment she receives" (119). The sympathy she elicits when she suffers and faints (often) works to connect men on opposite sides of the war, breaking down national identities in favor of shared humanity. Feminine sensibility reforms men, even in the hyper-masculine surroundings of wartime. The novel, Golightly concludes,

"investigates questions made sharper by the war: the nature of public and private masculinity and femininity" (128).

The remaining four essays treat fictions with traveling women of color as protagonists. Alexis McQuigge reads the anonymous novel *The Female American* (1767) as a fantasy of female power. Its biracial heroine, Unca Eliza Winkfield, ends up as a colonizer and missionary helpmate. Before this, though, the heroine and her Indigenous mother, Unca, exercise power in ways authorized by their Indigenous heritage. The arrival of Unca Eliza's clergyman cousin steers the plot towards its disappointing (for feminist readers) end, undoing Unca Eliza's autonomy. Nonetheless, McQuigge concludes, "this novel ultimately reveals, through its deep contradictions and confusion . . . the value of maternal heritage and female power" (142).

Another anonymous fiction, *The Woman of Colour* (1808), has drawn scholarly attention since the publication of the Broadview edition, edited by Lyndon J. Dominique, in 2008. Octavia Cox disagrees with Dominique's "buoyant reading" (160), which sees the heroine, Olivia Fairfield, as a subversive threat to the British status quo. The daughter of a Jamaican planter and an enslaved woman, Olivia crosses the Atlantic to meet a condition in her father's will: she'll only inherit his wealth if she marries her Caucasian cousin, Augustus. Cox reads *The Woman of Colour* as a "reverse-Robinsonade": instead of a European like Crusoe "civilizing" a remote island, Olivia exposes "uncivilized aspects among apparently enlightened Europeans" (145). As both insider and outsider, Olivia can uncover the inner rot of English civilization. Rather than subversive, Cox argues, Olivia in her virtuous simplicity "proves to be more English than many native Englishwomen" (155): "the status quo is fulsomely supported, and reform rather than rebellion is espoused" (159).

Revolution is the setting for Victoria Barnett-Woods's essay on *Zelica, the Creole* (1820). Barnett-Woods suggests that Leonora Sansay, the author of *Secret History: or, the Horrors of San Domingo* (1808), also wrote *Zelica*, a point debated by scholars since *Zelica* was rediscovered in 1992. The two novels follow roughly the same plot but take divergent approaches to the history of the Haitian Revolution. The mixed-race character of Zelica aligns ideologically with Black Haitian rule, but protects the white heroine of both books, Clara. Barnett-Woods centers creolization, defined as "the multitudinous evolutions of peoples and languages . . . aggregating and synthesizing a diverse range of cultural practices" (167). Unlike the stereotype of the mixed-race woman as "tropical temptress," Zelica follows republican values, modeling "feminine self-determinism and creole mobility" (176). Travel is central to the novel, informing Zelica's "proto-feminist self-perception and pro-revolutionary sensibility" (177).

The final essay in the collection, by Kathleen Morrissey, compares two fictions published a century apart: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1689) and Phebe Gibbes's *Hartly*

House, Calcutta (1789). Both texts feature the voluntary deaths of wives: Imoinda's "pleading for death" by her husband's hand, and the Indian custom of sati or suttee, which Gibbes's heroine Sophia views as a type of feminine heroism. Morrissey draws thought-provoking connections between these two novels of female travel, separated by a century, featuring transnational heroines hemmed in by the colonial patriarchy.

An afterword by Eve Tavor Bannet endorses and unpacks Krueger's decision to include essays along "a spectrum between history and fiction in which there are no pure exemplars of either extreme" (197). Women writers' strategies for navigating patriarchal cultures shape their modes of expression and processes of selection in ways that we need an "expanded sense of reality" to grasp (201).

Misty Krueger's editorial vision, and her contributors' wide-ranging insights, productively expand our sense of the risks and possibilities of women's travel in the long eighteenth century.

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