

Reviews

ANNA BRICKHOUSE, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. xii + 329. \$70.

The middle decades of the nineteenth century are a period in American literary history that has traditionally been associated with projects of national consolidation. The argument of *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* is that this period was in fact shaped by a network of *transamerican* literary relations that would decisively impact the formation of U.S. national literature. Anna Brickhouse tells a compelling story about a moment of hemispheric consciousness when American literature was characterized by fertile exchanges across national and linguistic boundaries, even as the United States eyed the hemisphere with imperial designs. It begins with the telling absence of the two United States delegates to the 1826 Congress of Panama, the first international conference to take place in the American hemisphere. One delegate died of fever en route, while the other abandoned his mission in fear of meeting a similar fate. It ends with the United States' failed attempts to colonize Mexico and Nicaragua, prompting Latin Americans to view their North American neighbor as a threat to hemispheric relations.

The years 1826 and 1856 are the bookends for a period that was characterized by contradictions between U.S. foreign policy, which continually sought economic and political dominance in the region, and a public sphere that engaged in uneven, multidirectional cultural dialogue with its American neighbors. The nation's first internationally recognized authors—Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and James Fenimore Cooper—were profoundly influenced by a hemispheric literary culture and attuned to events taking place across the Americas, which were widely covered in U.S. periodicals and the subjects of public conversation. Situating these authors in the context of unrecognized *transamerican* genealogies, Brickhouse identifies “the many paradoxes of US literary nation-

alism over the next century: urbane authors and editors fluent in numerous languages publish in only one; indigenous traditions lovingly admired for their 'rich' originality furnish no more than occasions for nostalgia; and the slaveholding economies that undergird the public sphere of cultural production are reduced to the level of metaphor" (pp. 16–17). Brickhouse's richly detailed account of the rise and decline of this transamerican renaissance promises to resituate the emergence of U.S. national literature during this period within a broader international and multilingual context.

Brickhouse's study focuses on a particular geographic circuit that encompasses the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean (admittedly leaving Canada and much of Latin America to further research). It includes American encounters with both hispanic and francophone cultures, each of which derived from distinctive historical and linguistic contexts. The hispanic strand of transamerican literary relations came to prominence in the 1820s, when the United States hoped to become a model for the newly liberated Latin American states. Articles and books published in the U.S. during this period assumed that their readers would be fluent in Spanish and aware of events occurring throughout the hemisphere. Yet these writings were also frequently marked by an implicit sense of Anglo-American superiority, a harbinger of the imperialist ambitions that would characterize U.S. policy in the region from that point onward.

Individual chapters attest to the hispanic influences that saturated American culture by juxtaposing the works and careers of well-known authors of the U.S. American renaissance with Spanish-language counterparts who provide alternative views of similar historical and literary sources. For example, Brickhouse reads James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* against the collectively authored novel *Jicoténcal*, which has been seen as the first Spanish-language historical novel of the Americas. The hispanic novel reverses Cooper's treatment of Indian captivity by articulating a pan-American consciousness rooted in the perspectives of conquered and enslaved characters. Another chapter situates William Cullen Bryant, an author long associated with European literary culture, as a translator of hispanophone literature who was preoccupied with the prospect of U.S. annexation of Cuba. Brickhouse reads the novel *Sab* by the Cuban author Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda—about the romance between a Cuban-born creole and her slave—as a rejoinder to the expansionist views propounded within Bryant's circles. Hawthorne, who sought to distance himself from his American origins, is resituated in the context of his repressed Mexican sources, Frances Calderón de la Barca's

Life in Mexico and John L. Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*. The Hawthorne chapter marks the end of a period that began with great enthusiasm for hemispheric community and collaboration and ended with rising U.S. interest in expansionism, accompanied by a growing investment in creating racial distinctions between Anglo-America and Latin America.

Transamerican francophone relations assumed a somewhat different form, given their association with Haiti and the history of slave rebellion. Brickhouse describes the literature of this period as darkened by a "Franco-Africanist shadow" indicated by "a place of disturbance or ambivalence . . . : an indeterminacy surrounding the issue of racial identity rather than a hidden truth to be revealed at an opportune moment; a pervasive anxiety of origins rather than the titillating revelation of these origins" (p. 243). Authors whose work is shadowed by this dynamic of imperfect repression include Herman Melville, Lydia Maria Child, Sarah Orne Jewett, and William Faulkner. The recovery of francophone American influences also illuminates an important alternative, however, by providing "a critical window onto the transnational and multilingual dimensions of a specifically African American tradition within early US literary history" (p. 88). In chapter 3 Brickhouse notes that Phyllis Wheatley, a poet associated with the founding of African American literature, published in a periodical called *Revue des Colonies*, which provided a forum for anti-imperialist and abolitionist writings. From this perspective, Wheatley becomes a proponent of a "mulatto vision," a transamerican corrective to the racial binarisms that characterized much U.S. literature of the time. Edgar Allan Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* is juxtaposed with the West Indian immigrant Victor Séjour's story "Le Mulâtre," two works that arrive at very different conclusions about colonialism and the prospect of slave revolt in the Americas. A chapter on "transamerican theatre" argues that the Haitian dramatist Pierre Faubert drew on the cultural capital of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* while re-scripting the derisive views of Haiti expressed by her character George Harris.

Brickhouse describes her work as genealogy rather than conventional literary history, a method that entails "situating each text and each set of literary relations within and across a range of multilingual and often antagonistic strands of cultural production rather than affiliating them solely with a single national tradition or dominant public sphere" (p. 34). Her meticulous research and fluency with multiple linguistic and national contexts are dazzling. Brickhouse combines close readings of individual works with exhaustive historical

contextualization, producing a book of formidable complexity and erudition. The downside of the genealogical model is evident in Brickhouse's frequent use of the words "tangled," "twisted," and "convoluted." At times it is difficult to keep up with the circuitous routes she travels in order to link the myriad works discussed in each chapter. While I would certainly not want to diminish the intricacies of this book's argument, I did wish that it more often stepped back to establish and reiterate the broader implications of its close reading. These implications are significant, and the rewards of pursuing the densities of Brickhouse's analysis are great. *Transamerican Literary Relations* is a timely and valuable resource that will deepen and complicate our understanding of the transnational, multilingual Americas of the period known as the American renaissance.

RACHEL ADAMS
Columbia University

JENNIFER SCHACKER, *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. Pp. vi + 198. \$39.95.

"The construction of 'identity' is always a fundamentally contrastive process," claims Jennifer Schacker in her introduction to *National Dreams* (p. 3). The identity under discussion here is a national one; Schacker argues that the translation and dissemination of some of the major "imported" fairy-tale and folktale collections of the nineteenth century offered for an English readership "a form of cultural and historical adventure, a space in which to encounter and then reflect upon national identities and differences" (p. 2). This process, Schacker emphasizes, was a reflective one inevitably constrained by the compromises and ambiguities involved in the compilation, editing, and publication of these narratives. The intended audience for these collections—itsself an uncertain and fluctuating construct—was presented with a palatable and domesticated insight into the popular literature of other nations, "a corpus of tales . . . modified for mass consumption" (p. 142). In *National Dreams* Schacker charts the ideologies that informed this transnationalization of the vernacular narratives of other nations for English readers in the nineteenth century, and she offers a fascinating insight into the intentions and aspirations that shaped some of the century's most successful collections of tales.

The collections that Schacker discusses were published in the first