Introduction: Transatlantic stories and Transatlantic readers

This is a book about some of the forgotten, as well as some of the now more familiar, stories of the Atlantic world during the eighteenth century, and a study of how those stories became transatlantic – popular, meaningful to readers, or influential in shaping perceptions, on both sides of the Atlantic. Though written in a variety of genres, the stories that were reprinted and redeployed transatlantically were generally "founded on fact." Broadly conceived by contemporaries as "fictional histories," they fictionalized and personalized the history of the times. Designed to inform and instruct readers about how life was or might be conducted in the Atlantic world as much as to persuade and entertain them, they were at once fictional and "true."[1]

Many of the British and American narratives that were later marginalized or forgotten were heavily weighted towards the experiences and perceptions of women, of the poor, and of the déclassé. They told about the transatlantic migrations, motives, and experiences of ordinary people – stories of danger, conversion, captivity, community and amazing freedom in a multinational Atlantic; stories of servitude, of voluntary or forced migration, of flight and successive resettlements; stories about the ubiquitous violence and war; and stories rethinking conduct, the goal of return and the meaning of place. Their perspectives differ sharply from those of subsequent, traditional British or American national histories, which is one of the reasons they were ignored for so long. Narratives which in their own time were widely read on both sides of the Atlantic and for good reason, such as Penelope Aubin's *Nobles Slaves* (1722), *The Hermit* (1727), *The Narrative of the most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw* (1785) or Samuel Jackson Pratt's *Emma Corbett* (1780), fell out of favor less for aesthetic reasons, than because they fit so poorly into later nationalist master-narratives and reminded us of experiences that we preferred to forget. The stories in question do, however, often relate to what we are learning from the new Atlantic histories, while

adding to such histories, vividness, immediacy, and contemporary subject positions, and testing events against a variety of generic forms.[2]

Literally hundreds of eighteenth-century British stories were largely or partly transatlantic in content – even the compendious lists painstakingly assembled by Robert Heilman and Benjamin Bissell during the 1920s and 1930s are incomplete.[3] Eighteenth-century British readers were clearly as fascinated by the "Transatlantic," as by the "Oriental," tale. Both before and after the American Revolution, there were also literally hundreds of British stories shipped to American booksellers and libraries by the printers and publishers in Britain who participated in the profitable transatlantic book trade. Eighteenth-century American readers were clearly as desirous of keeping up with the best-sellers and steady sellers in London or Edinburgh as readers in London, Newcastle, Dublin or Edinburgh might be.[4] Yet this was not the only way stories traveled; and far more two-way transatlantic literary interaction occurred than this well-researched picture suggests.

A larger number of originally American stories than we tend to remember were reissued in London between the republication in 1682 of Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative and the republication at the turn of the nineteenth century of Royall Tyler and Charles Brockden Brown. This is especially the case if we factor in the writings of transatlantic people who were adopted into the national literature of one nation and not the other. Like Benjamin Franklin, James Ralph, Increase and Cotton Mather or Thomas Atwood Digges in their respective genres, writers of transatlantic narratives such as Charlotte Lennox, Susannah Rowson, W. R. Chetwood, Edward Kimber, Edward Bancroft, Elizabeth Ashbridge, Peter Williamson, James Annesley, Samson Occom, James Albert Gronniosaw, John Marchant, Ottobah Cugoano, Olaudah Equiano, Tobias Smollett, Gilbert Imlay, John Davis, and quite possibly Penelope Aubin, lived and worked on both sides of the Atlantic. They drew on personal experience of North America or of the West Indies, of Britain and of the Atlantic world. Several also offered first-hand accounts of different parts of the Americas during the period, as well as acute transatlantic critiques. American stories that were "founded on fact" had more impact in Britain than we tend to suppose.

At the same time, far fewer prose narratives first issued in Britain than we like to think were taken up by printer-publishers in America, though many of these were subsequently reprinted multiple times. It is important to remember that in America, there was a double economy of the book: alongside the volumes carried over the water by the transatlantic

book trade, there was, almost from the first introduction of printing to the new world, what Robert Bell – the Scottish printer-publisher who migrated to Philadelphia in 1768 – called a "native fabrication" or "literary manufacture" of books.[5] American production of such books as primers, sermons, psalm books and letter-manuals preceded by fifty years or more that of novels, which began to be taken up by American printers at the Revolution and came into their own only during the 1790s. But early and late, "native fabrication" and "literary manufacture" are more useful terms than "piracy" or "the reprint trade" because they highlight the fact that, during the eighteenth century, texts were often altered, reworded, epitomized, re-compiled, renamed, adapted, repositioned, reinterpreted, re-contextualized or reframed, in the course of reprinting and embodiment in different material books.[6] "Native fabrication" and "literary manufacture" are what enabled American reprints to become what Richard Sher calls "acts of appropriation" and James Green "vigorous, even defiant statements of American independence,"[7] rather than merely cheap reproductions of European texts. Native fabrication meant that many of the transatlantic stories that "lived on" for different readerships at different dates on both continents did so by virtue of being, to some degree, re-presented, re-told, re-interpreted, re-applied, re-cycled and reused. The word "story" in its everyday sense reminds us of this fact. We use "story" as the eighteenth century used the word "history," for true, partly true and fictional accounts of someone's experience, which change a little from retelling to retelling and are not bound to any particular form of words.

The stories discussed in the chapters that follow were transatlantic both in the sense that they were about the transatlantic experiences of ordinary people and in the sense that they were reprinted on both sides of the Atlantic – preferably multiple times. These are some of the shared stories which helped shape Britons' and Americans' view of that world. A number of these stories were also transatlantic in the additional sense of being authored by transatlantic people, writers who had lived on both sides of the ocean. My criterion of selection throughout has been absence: I have privileged stories which tell us something about experiences in the Atlantic world and/or about transatlantic literary relations that texts which we more usually read or teach do not, and transatlantic stories which have not, on the whole, been interpreted as such.

But there is no rule without an exception. While reluctantly leaving out Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Scott and Susanna Rowson about whom I have written elsewhere,[8] I have included one transatlantic story

by a transatlantic person – Edward Kimber – which was not reprinted transatlantically, because it addressed important dimensions of British–American relations that were implicit elsewhere, and is now once again readily available in print.[9] As James Raven has pointed out, Kimber was "one of the most popular novelists of his day."[10] Kimber's *History of the Life and Adventures of Mr Anderson*, which was first published in London and Dublin in 1754, was based on the life history of an American colonist whom Kimber encountered while serving in America with the abolitionist founder of Georgia, General Oglethorpe. Kimber used *Mr. Anderson* to warn British readers of the danger of an alliance among the colonial poor – which for him meant indentured servants, African slaves, dependent white daughters and Indians – against the violence and cruelty of their greedy white masters. The solidarity that *Mr Anderson* shows the poor enacting towards other poor and subordinated people was also quite regularly demonstrated in other transatlantic *Lives* that were founded on fact (regardless of how we now categorize them) – those of Ottobah Cugoano, Samson Occom, Updike Underhill, Bampfylde-Moore Carew, Ambrose Gwinett, John Ashton and Philip Quarll, for instance. The willingness of the poor to help others across national and ethnic boundaries was also treated thematically in epitomized Crusoes, in captivity narratives and in Aubin's transatlantic novels. Together, these different transatlantic stories gesture towards the outlines of a transnational subaltern subculture in and between those rival Atlantic empires that were "Poor Man's Country" for people who experienced and portrayed empire from below.

At mid-century, Kimber also portrayed the desire of the subjected and the governed to escape from the empire, and from the rule of British or anglicized colonial men, into spaces as yet ungoverned by them. This too haunts many transatlantic texts, including *The Algerine Captive*. Considered in this light, San Domingo in *Charlotta Dupont*, the pirate refuges in *History of Pyrates* and *Ambrose Gwinett*, the "nativist" Indian movement of the 1760s and 1770s which Samson Occom joined, John Marrant's Indians, Gronniosaw's and Equiano's "Africa," the island world of *The Hermit* or of *Paul and Virginia* (adopted and appropriated from France by Britons and Americans in different translations), and in their way, women's novels such as Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*, were disparate expressions of the same profound impulse to escape imperious, manly British rule. Utopian depictions of settlements in an American wilderness, such as what Jeffrey Richards calls "the fiction of America" in *The Adventures of Emmera*, or the British Pantisocratic Edens of the 1790s

which Christopher Flynn characterizes as "English reforms in American settings," have a problematical, and perhaps cooptative relation to acts, impulses and narrative exemplars that were potentially far more dangerous and disruptive to the politics and economics of Britain's commercial empire.[11] The same may be said of Rousseau's innocent country retreats for propertied men. Representations of the lines of flight pursued by early American settlers who absconded from "civilization" to remain with their Indian captors, or by the poor who opted out of the empire by running away, by shipboard mutinies, or by slave insurrections, and who established pirate havens and hidden societies on deserted islands or in forests, mountains and swamps beyond the reach of imperial law, were far more disturbing to contemporary British and Anglo-American elites than Rousseau's Clarens. Though not reprinted in America for perhaps obvious reasons, *Mr. Anderson* was both an early antislavery novel and a prescient reflection upon these and other pressing contemporary transatlantic concerns.

For the rest, the transatlantic stories to be discussed here inhabited (at least) two different times, as well as continents, because once they began to reprint narratives at the Revolution, American printers reprinted older as well as newer European texts. This should not be interpreted as a sign of provincial lag; London publishers did the same after 1774 when perpetual copyright ceased and older books became available to all. However, the canon of early American narrative reprints from 1775 to 1800 does differ strikingly not only from New Critical and postmodern literary canons, but also from the canon of best-sellers in late eighteenth-century Britain compiled by James Raven on the basis of British reprints and sales.[12] This is because, in compiling his (usually small) list of reprints by selecting among the great mass of foreign books, or in agreeing to co-publish an expensive edition, each early American printer-bookseller or publisher acted as a judge of what ought to be known, read, and made easily accessible to his neighbors. As Rosalind Remer has shown, during the first decades of the early Republic, "publishers were always looking for [European] books that, once edited by an American … would take on particular usefulness for American readers." Here, "publishing could be an act of political self-definition."[13] In America, publishing became especially political during the American Revolution and after Jeffersonian Republicans broke away from the Federalists to form an opposition party in 1794. But British printers and booksellers had their politics too. For instance, John Almon, Joseph Johnson and the later George Robinson were identified with radical writings; the Dillys supported America and

the Revolution; and John Newbery offered safe and moral "little books" for "children six feet tall."

Texts could therefore mean very differently at different temporal and geographical removes. *The Noble Slaves* and *Captain Boyle*, for instance, both dated from London in the 1720s, where they initially figured as responses to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and to contemporary British literary and political critiques of that text. Both novels were taken up in America during the 1790s, and by the "country printers" in New England who first published Royall Tyler's novel, *The Algerine Captive*. Severed from their initial relation to Defoe and in the case of *Noble Slaves*, detached both from Aubin and from England, these narratives were paratextually reframed to underline *Noble Slaves*' relevance to contemporary American concerns with Barbary captivity and *Captain Boyle*'s applicability to contemporary American disputes about free trade. As such, they migrated from country printers to printers in Boston and New York, and remained popular in America well into the second decade of the nineteenth century. At the same time, considered synchronically as works published more or less simultaneously in different parts of New England during the 1790s and early 1800s for their bearing on contemporary American events, these narratives formed part of the locally revitalized generic and thematic context of *The Algerine Captive*, as much as *The Algerine Captive* formed part of the locally viable context for them. Regarding the matter in this way allows us to recognize that Tyler's novel was, among other things, a savage comment upon and reconfiguration of a particular kind of transatlantic story, and to understand why, when it was reprinted in London at the turn of the nineteenth century, *The Algerine Captive* was read by British reviewers as a far more politically radical novel than we are inclined to think it today.

TRANSATLANTIC PRINT CULTURE

In what follows, the publishing history of books in the Atlantic world provides the material base for the study of the transatlantic migration of texts. But study of the variable contents of those books reveals a transatlantic print culture that was heavily invested in various forms of textual editing and paratextual rewriting. In the eighteenth-century literary market place, where eighty percent of narratives were published anonymously or pseudonymously and all power over the text remained in the hands of printers and publishers, authors were rarely the sole writers of texts.[14] Narratives were co-authored, sometimes quite radically, by the editors,

printer-editors, compositors, or bookseller-editors who were also their initial readers. In editing a text – or in re-editing, reframing and reprinting it for a different audience, time or place – editors and printers not only figured as cultural brokers; they also acted as purveyors and translators of what they thought they had read, or in the case of epitomes and abridgements, of what they thought mattered about what they had read. As such, they left traces of their readings, and records of their re-applications of their readings, in the text or paratext.[15] The number of eighteenth-century printers and booksellers who, despite their humble origins and often rudimentary education, were also writers themselves is quite remarkable. In Britain alone, a far from comprehensive list would include John Almon, William Bingley, Samuel Chandler, William Chetwood, Joseph Cottle, John Dunton, Robert Dodsley, Thomas Gent, Robert Goadby, Ralph Griffiths, James Lackington, Benjamin Motte, John Newbery, John Nichols, Samuel Richardson, William Smellie and George Walker.[16] This bears witness to the extent to which, before the modern division of labor, practices of writing, editing and rewriting were imbedded in the "mechanic," as well as in the commercial, heart of print.

In his study of *The English Novel in the Magazines*, Robert Mayo described some of the writerly techniques regularly used by British editors to make novels widely available in a variety of different forms to the readers of such British magazines as *The Universal, The Lady's, The Novelist's, The Hibernian* and *The Edinburgh*, as well as to readers of such review-periodicals as *The Monthly, The Critical* and *The British*. The techniques favored included reframing, renaming, making extracts, detaching scenes, summarizing and connecting extracts, serializing, producing epitomes and long abridgements and further altering them. Among the stories offered in multiple versions, which differed according to editor and editorial technique, were Behn's *Oronooko*, *The General History of Pyrates, Robinson Crusoe, Rasselas, Telemachus, Gil Blas, The History of Marianne*, Eliza Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless, History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* and *Invisible Spy*, Burney's *Cecilia*, Mackenzie's *Man of the World*, Henry Brooke's *Fool of Quality*, Sarah Fielding's *Governess*, Lennox's *Henrietta*, Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udopho* and Inchbald's *Simple Story*.[17] In her recent study of English provincial readers, Jan Fergus found that between 1770 and 1799, four times as many customers in the Midlands subscribed to periodicals such as *The Lady's Magazine, The Novelist's Magazine, The Monthly Review* and *The Critical Review* as bought or borrowed novels, and that such readers rarely purchased novels as separate books.[18] They did not need to, for they got

versions of a good cross-section of what we now consider the important eighteenth-century novels through the reviews and magazines. Nor were these necessarily less permanent than books. Stephen Colclough found that provincial readers, such as Joseph Hunter in Sheffield, collected these periodicals together in order to have them bound into volumes. Derek Roper discovered that urban readers such as William Hayley, Thomas Hollis, Warren Hastings and Robert Southey owned complete bound sets of one or more of the principal reviews. Eighteenth-century readers did not treat periodicals as ephemera as we do now.[19] Royall Tyler's *Algerine Captive* (for instance) therefore probably got wider circulation in Britain –and certainly in more durable form – from being serialized in *The Lady's Magazine* (which sold 12,000 copies each week) and again in *The Entertaining Magazine*, than the novel would have done had its first English edition escaped the Robinson's warehouse fire.[20]

The principal British magazines were also available in America, where the same editorial practices obtained. New American-authored narratives, such as Jeremy Belknap's *The Forresters*, Ann Eliza Bleecker's "History of Maria Kittle," Charles Brockden Brown's *Memoirs of Stephen Calvert*, or Judith Sargent Murray's "Story of Margaretta," first appeared in installments in American magazines from the early 1780s on, as did extracts from new American narratives: William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy*, Foster's *The Coquette*, Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* and *Edgar Huntly*, Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, Crevecoeur's *Letters of an American Farmer*, and Dr Hitchcock's *Memoirs of the Bloomsgrove Family* among others.[21] Many appeared several times in different American magazines over a ten or fifteen year period. Migrating British stories too were both serialized and extracted.

As we will see, the same editorial practices of paratextual reframing (with new dedications, commentaries, prefaces or introductions), of renaming (often via new subtitles and descriptions of the contents on the title page), of reprinting extracts separately, and of producing and altering epitomes and abridgements, were prevalent in the print culture of the book trade too – and that on both sides of the Atlantic.[22] Until the 1770s, English copyright law could not be enforced much outside London, and even then, translations, adaptations, compilations, abridgements and epitomes were regarded as new books and escaped copyright restrictions.[23] A great many readers therefore got their stories in altered or shortened forms from printed books. Many now canonical novels were available both in full length and in abridged or epitomized book formats, including *Clarissa, Sir Charles Grandison, The Female Quixote, Peregrine Pickle,*

David Simple and *Fanny Hill*. In some cases, such as that of *Robinson Crusoe*, many more readers on both sides of the Atlantic knew the story through epitomes and abridgements than through Defoe's original – as indeed they still do. Nor was serialization confined to the magazines. The different "books" of novels such as *Robinson Crusoe, Tristram Shandy, Clarissa*, Brooke's *Fool of Quality* or Frances Sheridan's *Sidney Biddulph* were initially published in London serially in separate volumes, often at intervals of a year or more; and established novels were marketed all over again as "part books" in 6d weekly installments. In Britain, as in America, some novels in printed books also began life serially in magazines, such as Smollett's *Launcelot Greaves*, Charlotte Lennox's *Sophia* or Frances Brooke's *The Old Maid*. And when publishers did not serialize, alter or truncate narratives, readers often did. Fergus found that many of the readers she studied engaged in what she calls "desultory reading": they read only parts of a full-length printed novel (books III and IV of five, all books but the last), thus producing their own extracts and abridgements of narratives in the very act of reading.[24] One of the important implications of such readerly practices, and of the shifting about of versions between magazines, reviews, abridgements, books, part-books, and separately printed extracts of books, is that, both in America and in Britain, stories often had far greater exposure, and were far more widely read, in a wider variety of forms, than their book history alone would lead us to suppose.

Whether "fictional" or "true" – or as Hume said all stories were, mixtures of truth and fiction – stories inhabited what David Brewer calls "a literary commons" for writers as well as for editors and printers. Eighteenth-century editors and writers felt free to provide characters in extant narratives with new episodes and adventures, to give their stories a different ending or to reorient the "argument," as well as to write continuations to other authors' tales.[25] They also engaged in what Donald Reiman called "versioning," the production of "differing versions" of the same story "that exhibit quite distinct ideologies, aesthetic perspectives or rhetorical strategies."[26] As we will see, versioning could be achieved by a variety of techniques, including by selecting and altering an extract from a story, and through the widespread practice of dialogically reworking and rewriting another writer's scenes.[27]

Stories inhabited a "literary commons" in large part because narratives did not necessarily or normatively attach publicly even to great masters. James Raven found that between 1750 and 1770, new novels "were associated more with their bookseller-publishers than with their authors, even

where authorship was announced."[28] Robert Griffin has shown that in Britain "*Roxana* circulated for nearly half a century without being linked publicly to Defoe's name," and in so many different versions that when the story did finally "acquire an author," it was a puzzle even for a critic as acute as Charles Lamb to know which bits of which version were "his."[29] And considering nineteenth-century America, where the practices of reprinting and circulating multiple versions of the "same" story continued to prevail into the 1850s, Meredith McGill has argued that "critics [who] have rescued anonymous and pseudonymous texts from their disseminated condition and reissued them in standard, multi-volume authors' editions, creat[e] composite figures and bodies of work that did not exist and could not have existed in the era in which these texts were written."[30] Here too, despite the copyright laws, print culture was neither primarily author-centered, nor ineluctably attached to a particular "correct" form of words. In Britain, of course, periodicals from *The Spectator* on did try to arouse in readers curiosity about authors; "by the author of" was used on imprints to connect anonymous texts, and authors' *Lives* and *Collected Works* began to appear as early as the 1680s – often in the case of the latter, to raise money for a writer through a printed equivalent of the dramatist's benefit night. Authors of stories often published in "semi-anonymity," since their immediate social or literary circle often knew who they were, while the broader public, reliant on the title page, did not. But all this is as much as to say that for stories – as opposed to books of science, books of poetry, and classical texts, which were signed – the birth of the solitary, individualized, copyrighted, anchoring post-Romantic author was still "emergent" in Raymond Williams' sense.[31]

Our post-romantic emphasis on originality has fostered denigration and exclusion from "literature proper" of works resulting from practices of imitation, extraction, compilation, versioning, abridgement and epitomization which were fundamental to all forms of eighteenth-century writing, as well as to the eighteenth-century book trade. Post-Romantic aesthetic values and modern copyright thinking – as well as twentieth-century editorial practices which privileged originality, organic wholes and a single correct form of words – have tended to ratify "great masters," to ignore or hide under modern editorial decisions the existence of diverse versions of the "same" story, and to dismiss with contempt the writing practices that produced them. Though we have begun to move beyond this, the underlying aesthetic assumptions and judgments still haunt us, and for some critics, still prevail – as do the scholarly reading practices from the New Criticism through Deconstruction which mastered