

Spring 2019, Volume 52, Number 1

Scanty Anecdotes: Collections of Literary Histories and National Character in Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*

Adam Kitzes

Abstract: The following essay takes up Washington Irving's *Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* as a study in the production of national character. Crayon's tour provided occasion to examine the techniques that shaped his sense of Englishness, including his sense of its national character as a long-lasting structure, preserved in its literary traditions. His survey crystallized in an extended scrutiny of antiquarianism, both in its scholarly application, which treated literary texts as specimens of national tradition, and in its more popular expressions, which appeared in activities such as literary tourism, festivals, and ceremonies. In that respect, the sketches became a series of experiments in what Crayon could and could not accomplish, so long as he sought it in literary texts designated as artifacts or remnants. Irving's multiple revisions, including his rearrangements of the various episodes, helped reinforce the more searching qualities of Crayon's observations and remarks. It was critical that the book suggested possibilities, without ever settling on any definitive organization. For Irving meanwhile, the *Sketch Book* remained part of a more persistent professional concern over how to approach the still highly unsettled history of his own nation. To that purpose, I also bring in material from among Irving's later writings, including select passages from Irving's *Tour on the Prairies*. Although limited in scope, a review of those passages helps illustrate Crayon's remarkable appeal for Irving, who continued to make use of the celebrated persona, even as he grew more forthright about its limitations.

"Collapsing the Cartographies of Gender and Nationality: Howe's Transatlantic Explorations in *The Hermaphrodite* and *From the Oak to the Olive*"

Denise Kohn

Abstract: Like many nineteenth-century American writers, Julia Ward Howe found that the expanding culture of transatlantic travel offered her the liberty to explore, study, and work. In this article, the author examines Howe's novel, *The Hermaphrodite*, which is set in England, Germany, and Rome, in conjunction with her chapter on Rome in her travel book *From the Oak to the Olive*. Reading these texts through the lens of cultural geography and transatlantic studies, the author suggests that our understanding of *The Hermaphrodite* should be broadened to see the novel as a type of travel narrative in which the intersex protagonist Laurence journeys across a picturesque Europe, identifying at times as male, female, and nonbinary within different spaces. In both *The Hermaphrodite* and *From Oak to Olive*, Howe seeks to write literary narratives of the transatlantic world, and though one is fiction and one is autobiographical, they are both imaginative constructions of the relationships between space, gender, and national identity.

"There is this cave / In the air behind my body:" Transatlantic Travel and James Wright's Midwestern Gothic

Matthew Heider

Abstract: James Wright's final two poetry collections, *To A Blossoming Pear Tree* (1977) and *This Journey* (1980), both describe a poetic transcending of borders that infuses the present with the past within the body of the literary traveler. What Wright accomplishes with his poetic border crossings is to radically redefine the humanity's relationship with the world it occupies. In his later work, Wright muddles the boundaries between human emotion and place not because of an emotional catharsis at the end of his career, nor necessarily as an indication of the land as his poetic motivation. Instead, Wright indicates instead that the human is inseparable from the other-than-human, and that social division and cruelty within human society are a microcosm of the anthropocentric violence humans commit and summarily disavow.

Wright's poems ask readers to cross the anthropocentric divide that dominates Euro-American epistemology and to examine and recognize the points of contact – literary and physical – that suggest another language is being spoken by the other-than-human world. Wright's journey through Italy opened up a geographic and cultural distance from Ohio, enabling him to collapse the temporal divide between his past and present in "The Journey". In that moment, Wright locates the "heart of the light / shelled and leaved" (Wright 338) as he overlays the Ohio of his memory onto the topography of Italy. Wright, from the mobile position of the traveler, enacts a Midwestern Gothic poetic that ultimately displays a life-affirming language that pushes against the violent human domination of the Anthropocene. Wright, as traveler-poet, articulates fractured human kinship as the product of constructed divides between the Earth and all its residents.

Reclaiming Jamaica's Indigenous Space through Storytelling in Lorna Goodison's *Controlling the Silver*

Kasey Jones-Matrona

Abstract: This essay argues that Lorna Goodison's poetry collection *Controlling the Silver* (2005) is infused with African and Indigenous Caribbean modes of storytelling which honor oral traditions and reclaim the Jamaican landscape from the history of colonization. The poems "Rainstorm is Weeping: An Arawak Folk Tale Revisited," "Traveling with Photographs of Our Generations Flanking St. Christopher on the Dashboard," and "Creation Story: Why Our Island is Shaped Like a Turtle" re-map Jamaica and honor Arawak/ Taíno landscape and seascape. Drawing on scholarship that rejects the vanishing Arawak/ Taíno myths, the author uses Katherine McKittrick's theories of geographies in relation to Indigenous communities in order to re-think the meaning of "uninhabitable" spaces. Considering complex histories of habitation of Jamaican landscape and space unravels the lasting impacts of colonization while also celebrating the resilience of Indigenous Caribbean cultures.

"Être une femme sur terre:" resistance in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*

Lisa Karakaya

Abstract: This essay analyzes Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* through the lens of critical race theory to argue that the novel demonstrates protagonist- and textual-based resistance to white supremacy through depicting an alternative *Weltanschauung*, or apprehension of the world. Examining the

novel with the framework of resistance described in Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism*, Frances Lee Ansley's definition of white supremacy, and Charles Mills's description of white supremacy in *The Racial Contract*, this analysis identifies characteristics of women's resistance to a society that denigrates them, which are part of this oppositional *Weltanschauung*. The novel highlights the ways in which white supremacist societies subordinate those marked non-white; but also illuminates modes of resistance to subjugation, especially in its emphasis on its definition of humanity. This essay identifies how the text affirms black characters' humanity and dignity by associating humanity with nature, establishing women's spiritual leadership as essential to the protagonist's agency, and employing *créolité*, signifying an oppositional mode of speech and thought, as described in Chamoiseau's *Eloge de la créolité*.