FOREWORD

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In *English Traits* (1856), Ralph Waldo Emerson describes the Atlantic Ocean as ‘a galvanic battery’ distributing ‘acids at one pole and alkalies at the other’.¹ It is a striking metaphor, both for its conscious modernity and for its scientific affectation, expressing what Emerson saw as the profound differences in the US and British national characters, something that *English Traits* goes on to explore in some detail. But the vehicle of the metaphor also subtly insists that the phenomenon of cultural polarisation relies upon the functional interactions of a greater system: Emerson’s Atlantic battery is an image of electrochemical conversion, or more simply of energy transfer and distribution, which stresses the generative supranational system out of which the two contrasting national identities appear to flow. Emerson uses this thought of an electrical charge to visualise the relationship between the US and Britain, as well as the Atlantic world that joins them, in a way that also gestures toward an imagined geography where social, cultural and political exchange dynamically occur.

The Edinburgh Companion to Atlantic Literary Studies is interested in this energised space and its currents. The overarching aim is to examine the extent of the cultural and literary energy system that formed in the Atlantic world. Structured around eight sections, with chapters focusing on literature and culture from first contact to the present, it explores fruitful Atlantic connections across space and time, across national cultures, embracing literature, culture and society. It is in this expansive spirit that this volume seeks to stretch the critical framework applied to writing engaged with Atlantic identity more broadly by incorporating approaches normally considered cisatlantic, transatlantic, circumatlantic or global in their scope.² As editors of this book, we have committed ourselves to geographical breadth by bringing together studies of literary works often isolated in different and ostensibly distinct national or regional traditions such as British, French, African, Caribbean, US and Canadian literatures. With roots in the sixteenth century, the Atlantic world that this book means to evoke also draws on the planetary awareness of ‘deep time’ theorised by Wai Chee Dimock in its faith that literature as an imaginative agent both crosses and dissolves arbitrary boundaries of physical space and delineated time.³ A growing awareness among literary scholars of the ecology of the world’s oceans in relation to its land masses also influences the shape of this book, as it calls attention to the flow patterns created by oceanic currents and to the interdependence of human culture and the natural world, which has no ‘Atlantic’ identity in particular.⁴

Mapping and remapping animate the opening section of the book on 'Atlantic Cultural Geographies', where contributors create new conceptual affinities that redraw lines of influence across the Atlantic and situate the Atlantic within a global context. Leonard von Morzé writes of eighteenth-century Georgia's self-conscious position as a society whose free labour system refuted Atlantic slavery, locating it, 'economically speaking, both inside and outside the Atlantic system'. The collective created by Georgia's German settlers 'more closely resembled the system they perceived in the Indian Ocean' than those of their counterparts in the Americas. In her chapter, Juliet Shields explores the 'village as a form of social organisation' mirrored by the Atlantic and refracted in poetry by English, US and Canadian writers. Outlining a linguistic and imaginative region that she calls the 'Luso-Hispanic', Joselyn Almeida investigates 'the vitality of a multilingual, transnational network within London' that shaped British Romanticism, allowing us to see how 'Spanish and Portuguese also belonged to Romanticism's living public sphere'. In a spirit kindred to these explorations of the localised roots and oceanic scope of Atlantic literature, Christopher Hanlon considers the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is often seen in relation to England yet taken as a spokesperson of US interests. Hanlon believes 'Emerson represents an ongoing opposition through which the local and the transnational subsist in generative tension'. As a group, these chapters help chart different points of the *Companion's* Atlantic compass.

The next section, 'Atlantic Mobilities', uses mobility as a topos to explore how texts, ideas and peoples have experienced the disruption and dislocation of migration. Its chapters consider the aesthetic and political implications of this migratory condition. Eve Tavor Bannet deals with textual remediations in her work on imitation in the long eighteenth century. She examines the value of imitation as a literary form and traces texts and their reimaginings around the Atlantic world from Scotland through France to the US. By focusing on the history of writing and the book, her work brings to light new readings of literary texts that were not mere copies but creative works in their own right. Sinéad Moynihan focuses on Irish historical novels in the post-Celtic Tiger moment with a particular focus on Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009) and argues that emigration to the US, as it appears in this novel, is a metaphor for the free market economy of Celtic Tiger Ireland. Moynihan begins with Fintan O'Toole's recent claim that 'the great theme of the contemporary Irish novel is not Ireland but the US' and she closes with thoughts on the émigré's American dream gone wrong as the 'Returned Yank narrative': the story of perpetual leaving and returning and leaving again. But Moynihan argues that to understand Ireland in the post-Celtic Tiger moment one must move away from the simplistic opposition between 'home' and 'elsewhere'. Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson examines, amongst other contemporary fictional texts, Jonathan Franzen's novel *Freedom* (2010) and its interest in national criss-crossing. Macpherson expands on Carolyn Porter's argument for a situated reading of borders as enriching transnational exchange, and argues that such a model of reading reveals the tensions around place and identity that works like Franzen's imaginatively scrutinise. Macpherson argues that it is in these crossings that authors offer 'avenues of exploration that are uncomfortable, "foreign" and ill-defined'.

The section on 'The Black Atlantic' engages with influential work in this field. The publication of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) represented a seminal moment in the developing field of Atlantic literary studies. Gilroy's insistence on the Atlantic space as the site of modernity's reckoning with, and acceptance of, the trafficking of

enslaved peoples encouraged a more geographically expansive scope for what might have hitherto seemed an American problem. The chapters in this section take up the legacy of Gilroy's book to explore the ongoing relevance and potential of his paradigm by reconceptualising the geometry of the Atlantic space. Susan Castillo Street examines attitudes toward race in the nineteenth-century Francophone Atlantic by giving an account of the life of Claire Lechat de Kersaint, Duchess of Duras, before turning to her short novel *Ourika* (1824). In her account of the novel, Castillo Street claims that 'Ourika represents the ambivalence felt by the French ruling classes toward slaves and people of colour in the wake of the historical trauma of St Domingue'. Later she turns to Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* (1826), which, she writes, 'sets the template for much subsequent writing about race and slavery in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world', and her reading of these novels illuminates how racial tensions haunted the literature of the nineteenth-century Francophone Atlantic. Leslie Eckel reads Martin R. Delany and Frederick Douglass in an Atlantic world context and evaluates the implications of Douglass's visit to Europe and what that meant for the African diaspora and utopian politics. Eckel argues for seeing Douglass and Delany as self-consciously controlling their 'intellectual property' (when land ownership for African Americans was out of reach). Yogita Goyal argues that important neo-slave narratives by Octavia Butler (*Wild Seed*, 1980) and Charles Johnson (*Middle Passage*, 1990) offer a theorisation of the figure of Africa that exceeds and challenges existing conceptions of diaspora and the black Atlantic, gesturing beyond the conception of time and history offered by Paul Gilroy's notion of the slave sublime.

'Atlantic Genders and Sexualities' offers new readings of Atlantic world literature. The essays here address performative possibilities for gender and sexuality that the Atlantic space might help to imagine or even constitute. Jennifer Frangos takes up this challenge by developing an account of gender performance and sex changing in the New World. Frangos claims that 'the early European contact with the New World and the transatlantic circulation of goods, people and ideas opened up new, decidedly queer possibilities for identity and subjectivity'. As she compellingly shows, the 'circulation of representations of these queer identities in the (print) culture of the Old World . . . helped to publicise and popularise the transformative power and queer potential of the early modern Atlantic world'. Ivonne García reads Mayra Santos-Febres's novel *Sirena Selena* (2000) in which she examines the power of the drag queen. Through her extended analysis of the text she demonstrates that 'within the region-centred theorisations of an Atlantic world . . . *Sirena Selena* [is] an important subject of literary scrutiny'. Daniel Hannah turns our attentions to queer masculinities in the Atlantic world in his study of Claude McKay's *Banjo* (1929) and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* (1934), where he argues that for these authors transatlantic displacement allows for experimentation with forms of white and black masculinity.

Chapters in the 'Reform and Revolution' section perceive the literary Atlantic as a space of social invention and political activism, where ideas circulate and unsettle national norms. Brigitte Bailey focuses on the literature of the transatlantic city, in particular the extent to which writings by Margaret Fuller, William Wells Brown and Herman Melville demonstrate that 'transatlantic discourses of urban representation and reform were entangled with other reform questions', including issues of gender, race and economic inequality. The growth of Anglo-American feminism via discourses of self-reliance most concerns Clare Elliott, whose chapter concentrates

on intellectual cross-fertilisations among a group of writers that includes Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Peabody and Louisa May Alcott. Turning to periodical culture, Barbara Green investigates '[t]ransatlantic suffragette travel writing' in the newspaper *Votes for Women*, which she argues 'illuminates the distinct models of feminist celebrity made possible by periodicals, models that maintained local attachments while extending the reach of global activist networks in the modern period'. Together, these chapters envision the Atlantic Ocean as a conduit that electrifies thought and action on either side of its waters.

Some of our contributors, in the 'Atlantic Exchanges' section particularly, are interested in an Anglo-American relationship much like the one Emerson sets out in *English Traits*. For example, David Greenham examines the origins of Transcendentalism and its complex relation to traditions in European thought, from which it is divorced when it is characterised as a US-born philosophy. Questioning the 'either/or' habit of intellectual history, which finds a need to root Transcendentalism on one side of the Atlantic or the other, Greenham provides an alternative reading of Emerson that develops into an extended case study of arguably the most canonical and long-standing of transatlantic literary debates: the origins of American literature. Sarah Wagner-McCoy looks at the New Woman and a transatlantic courtship plot in Frances Hodgson Burnett's less well-known early novels. Although Hodgson Burnett is famous for her children's classics such as *The Secret Garden* (1911), Wagner-McCoy focuses on her most ambitious novel of transatlantic courtship, *The Shuttle* (1907), and states that the title refers to 'the shuttles that wove Europe and America together: transatlantic steamships that revolutionised nineteenth-century travel'. She asserts that the 'image of the shuttle itself captures the paradox of transatlantic domesticity, a homecoming continually in motion across the thickening web of the Anglo-American world'. Daniel Katz considers William Carlos Williams's European travel novel *A Voyage to Pagany* (1928) and the poem 'The Desert Music' (1954) and suggests that 'Williams's work demands an "Atlanticist" approach' precisely because 'his poetics attempt to work through a cultural geography which is insistently relational on every level'.

'Atlantic Ecologies' brings together chapters that focus on the immanence of natural phenomena and the pursuit of scientific knowledge in a space constituted by oceanic nature. Louis Kirk McAuley's interest in 'the confusing and sometimes devastating interactivity of organisms in the Atlantic world' leads him to interpret James Grainger's poem *The Sugar Cane* (1764) in a circumatlantic context that connects Scotland to the Caribbean in routes of 'capitalist development'. In the literatures of Britain and Aboriginal Canada, Kevin Hutchings examines 'the key role that the rhetoric of animality and the depiction of animals (both wild and domesticated) played in colonial and anti-colonial discourses' in order to understand how 'these discourses affected animals and ecosystems'. Samantha Harvey figures the Atlantic as a space of 'wonder' as she writes of Coleridge's and Emerson's visits to the Hunterian Museum in London, where they encountered specimens that suggested a totality, or 'a dynamic vital principle that informed all natural forms'. As the nineteenth century progressed, Susan Oliver argues in her chapter, such distinct components of the natural world coalesced in journalism that promoted 'the development of a transatlantic environmental imaginary'.

The book's final section on 'Atlantic Events' considers cultural phenomena that are amplified by Atlantic crosscurrents, from Cold War plots to musical innovation to

the trauma of 9/11. Adam Piette reminds us of the Atlantic influence of supranational organisations such as NATO, reflecting transnational conflict and animating the background of Cold War fiction by Vladimir Nabokov. In his study of the echoes of T. S. Eliot's high modernism in the music of the Beatles, the Beach Boys and Bob Dylan, Christopher Gair perceives a twentieth-century Atlantic world motivated by a 'countercultural urge to unravel the master narratives of state, church and high culture'. Catherine Morley explores a more contemporary Atlantic literary landscape, where she finds in the fiction of Colum McCann and Jess Walter the shared 'image of "the gap"', which for each is crucial to understanding the individual and collective traumas of 9/11'. With these events, the chapters bring us to the present moment, when flows of information, migrants, investments and creative opportunities chart an Atlantic world imaginatively united yet often frustratingly divided into its constituent parts.

The rich and varied topoi outlined above are given their own distinctive mapping in the volume introduction written by Paul Giles, one of the leaders in this field. Giles's introduction helpfully outlines the formation and development of Atlantic literary studies, which he suggests has its roots in the theoretical turn of the 1980s and 1990s and the emergence of literary-critical discourses centred on race, gender and class. These modes of critique opened up new perspectives on canon formation, which not only made a virtue of deconstructing the largely formalist foundations of aesthetic value and judgement that still dominated much academic criticism, but also confronted the essentialism of national literary traditions and the claims of national distinctiveness. Atlantic literary studies has moved on considerably from this early mood of critical dissent, which in any case mingled with the somewhat milder investigation of Anglo-American patterns of influence and then the wider comparative field of transatlantic studies, so that today it stands as an exciting area of interdisciplinary academic inquiry drawing together scholars (and students) of history, literature, cultural geography, political science, economics, music, African American studies, American studies, African studies, and Caribbean and Latin American studies. Although this volume focuses on Atlantic literatures, it is written to appeal to specialists in all of these fields since it takes account of the complex web of individuals and peoples who have shaped a dynamic and often shared cultural world in multiple ways beyond the narrowly literary.

We could not conclude this foreword without thanking Andrew Taylor for his important work in the early stages of the project. For their fascinating perspectives on Atlantic cultural formations, their enthusiasm for the collective enterprise that this book represents, and their ongoing work in advocating the significance of Atlanticist perspectives in literary criticism, we are grateful to the many colleagues who have contributed their original work to this book. We are indebted to the models of creative enterprise, thoughtful response and professional acuity provided by the scholarly editors with whom we have worked, including Jana Argersinger, Phyllis Cole, Wai Chee Dimock, the late Susan Manning, Wesley Mott and Linda Smith Rhoads. We would like to extend our thanks to Jackie Jones at Edinburgh University Press for supporting the volume at its conception and to Michelle Houston, Adela Rauchova and James Dale at Edinburgh University Press as well as Cathy Falconer for their guidance and assistance in preparing the manuscript for press. Finally, we are grateful for the thoughtful support of our colleagues and students at Northumbria University and Suffolk University and for the joyful presence of our families at home.

Notes

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 10 vols (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971–2013), vol. 5, p. 28.
2. For helpful definitions of these categories in relation to studies of the Atlantic world, see David Armitage, ‘Three Concepts of Atlantic History’, in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds), *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 13–29.
3. Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 4.
4. For more on this ecocritical view of oceanic studies, see Patricia Yaeger, ‘Editor’s Column: Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons’, *PMLA* 125.3 (2010): 523–45.

To Cecile Agnes and to William,
with love