

Association des écrivains de langue française (Association of Writers in French; ADELFF), has sought to move beyond its Parisian base, but the political weight of its financial backing confirms that its “goals and strategies have been bound up with the politics of French cultural hegemony” (217–218). Shamil Jeppie offers a fascinating account of book history in Timbuktu from the early twentieth century to the present, finding that difficult political conditions did not stop the reading, writing, copying and collecting of books, but in some cases actually opened up opportunities to become more engaged in these activities. Elizabeth le Roux takes a critical look at the politics of academic publishing through an examination of South Africa’s oldest university press, Witwatersrand University Press (WUP). Le Roux questions its frequent association with oppositional or anti-apartheid publishing, arguing that WUP’s publications suggest that the press was “far more acquiescent towards apartheid policies” (176), partly because it operated within the constraints of a publicly funded institution of higher education, and partly because it did not resist the government’s censorship regime (192).

There are no simple conclusions to be drawn: the issues are broad and complex, and a book this size can only hope to offer insights. Nevertheless, this is an important volume because it directs our attention to difficult questions, including that of the relationship between socio-historical contexts and literary production. The book will be valuable to the fields of book history and postcolonial studies, not only because it demonstrates the need for new critical approaches to the book in Africa but also for the challenges it poses to the broader discipline of book history.

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REZEK, JOSEPH. *London and the Making of Provincial Literature: Aesthetics and the Transatlantic Book Trade, 1800–1850*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. ISBN 978-0-8122-4734-3. Pp. vii + 286. Hardcover \$59.95.

Joseph Rezek’s *London and the Making of Provincial Literature* identifies London as the shared center of influence for a transatlantic Anglophone book trade during the first decades of the nineteenth century. In particular, he traces the exchange of strategies among certain white fiction writers—Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson, Walter Scott, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper—who collectively exhibit what Rezek calls an

“aesthetics of provinciality”. The term “names the representational modes of Irish, Scottish, and American fiction that devised new theories of literature’s distinctiveness from the tense crucible of subordination” (8). Though the authors wrote about and from their own colonial and post-colonial nationalisms, London’s importance as the book trade’s central marketplace meant that they had to modulate divisive nationalisms in favor of a universalizing literary model that would appeal to a metropolitan set of publishers, booksellers, and readers. They therefore downplayed separatism and conflict in favor of transcendent cultural exchange that used literature as the apolitical realm of communication and communion. Rezek claims that the importance of his book, especially for Americanists, is that it demonstrates how “fundamentally transatlantic provinciality was”, as evidenced in the ways these white authors from Ireland, the U.S., and Scotland were in conversation with and influencing each other (7). Unlike other studies that have addressed these literary histories separately, he contends that attentiveness to transatlantic provinciality reveals the “interdependen[ce]” of “the history of books with the history of aesthetics” (8).

Rezek lays out the argument and scope of his book in the introduction, noting that by mid-century, London’s importance had been offset by the emergence of a U.S. marketplace. In the epilogue, Rezek demonstrates how Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* epitomizes that shift, wherein British and American marketplaces are both present, neither dominating. In between the introduction and epilogue, the book follows a tripartite structure. The first two chapters plumb book trade records to demonstrate the ways that provincial booksellers and publishers negotiated copyright laws and geographic distance in order to acquire and sell books. Here, Rezek is interested not in the reprint trade, but in new works. He identifies the 1801 Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland as the piece of legislation that cemented London as the center of the Anglophone book trade for the next several decades. The back-and-forth between metropolitan and provincial nodes emerges as a courtship wherein provincial players must find matchmaking agents in London to cajole early copies and other forms of access. These chapters craft narratives from the scattered minutiae of business records and letters, highlighting London’s importance.

In the next section, chapters three to five, Rezek traces something of an arc that moves from Ireland to the U.S. to Scotland in order to explain the evolution and exchange of the aesthetics of provinciality. In chapter three, he argues that novels by Irish authors Edgeworth and Owenson should not be seen solely as national tales that favor reconciliation between Ireland and England through the use of a romantic plot that ends in marriage

between a *Wild Irish Girl* and a usually Anglicized suitor (64). Rather, their narratives moderate political difference due to the economic demands of a London marketplace that eschews a separatist Irish nationalism. In the next chapter, Rezek turns to Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book*. Though initially he published much of it in the U.S., Irving made revisions in order to secure a British copyright. Comparing the American originals to the British edition—the latter since becoming the preferred version—Rezek demonstrates how Irving engaged in “transatlantic revision” in order to appeal to a London marketplace that might not enjoy reading about American exceptionalism or understand regional American English or references. By altering what London audiences might read as incomprehensible and nationalist language, Irving retained his cultural authority and transformed *The Sketch Book* into a work of fiction that highlights literature as a place of cultural exchange transcending political divisiveness. In the section's last chapter, Rezek turns to Cooper and Scott and demonstrates how both authors treat literature as an opportunity to emphasize provincial-metropolitan intimacy. Throughout, Rezek links these authors together, noting how the London marketplace gave them access to each others' books, so that they might witness and employ the aesthetics of provinciality.

In the final section and last chapter, Rezek takes up a different subject—reader responses. He argues that, unlike provincial publishers, booksellers, and authors, provincial readers recovered the nationalisms that had been revised away for the London marketplace. Thus two provincial spheres emerge—one of producers and sellers, another of buyers and readers. The former sphere exchanges strategies in order to transcend nationalist politics and gain access to London; the latter writes those politics back in through marginalia and other textual responses. When it came to travel accounts, for example, provincial readers and periodical editors denounced incorrect or insulting characterizations of their homes by writing corrections in the margins of their books—“Lying! lying! Lying!!!” (158)—or printing corrective reviews. In the U.S., Americans found nationalist inspiration in Scott's *The Lady of the Lake* and adopted its Scottish war anthem, thus inaugurating a practice that continues today: playing “Hail to the Chief” to salute the U.S. President. In short, provincial readers found models for their own local nationalisms in the revolutions and patriotisms of their provincial counterparts.

Rezek's treatment of the early nineteenth-century American market as provincial and transatlantic rather than incipiently and hemispherically imperial encourages a welcome conversation about the shared strategies of

U.S., Irish, and Scottish book cultures. His book implicitly urges scholars to think about how the book trades as legal and economic ventures were as much a part of the Anglophone colonial system as the more familiar commodities of sugar and cotton, even when the U.S. was no longer colonial. And because novels transmitted ideas in addition to goods, they offered ways of reading that system which were not always in accord with instrumental and local politics and considerations. Rezek repeats at multiple points that the Romantic ideal of transcendent literature was as much a philosophy as a pragmatic strategy for a provincial marketplace that needed to appeal to London. His book highlights that future work should examine how colonialisms are bounded by economic and aesthetic patterns, not simply revolutions and political documents. While at one point he states that responses to colonialism and the “uneven distribution of cultural capitalism” are distinct, his book suggests that they are in fact inextricably linked (64). The American Revolution did not produce a clean separation between colonial and national periods. In being persuasive about the long persistence of American provinciality, Rezek’s book argues against solely nationalist approaches to book history and textual cultures. As a result, his introductory reminder that his project “does not directly address the print culture of the early black Atlantic” (a subject he has begun addressing elsewhere) underscores the need to explore how the economics and legalities of the book trade not only facilitated the exchange of an aesthetics of provinciality, but also an aesthetics of racism and imperialism throughout the century and beyond (20).

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TODOROVIC, JELENA, *Dante and the Dynamics of Textual Exchange: Authorship, Manuscript Culture, and the Making of the Vita Nova*. New York: Fordham, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8232-7023-1. Pp. 248. Hardback \$55.00.

Jelena Todorovic’s *Dante and the Dynamics of Textual Exchange: Authorship, Manuscript Culture and the Making of the Vita Nova* paints a detailed tableau of the young Dante’s received culture of reading and writing, and is a welcome contribution on the subject of Dante’s largely undocumented literary formation.

In chapter one Todorovic argues that Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* is a significant yet underrecognized philosophical source for the *Vita Nova*.