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Ayşe Çelikkol. ***Romances of Free Trade: British Literature, Laissez-Faire, and the Global Nineteenth Century.*** New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 189+x pp. ISBN 978-0-19-976900-1. US$74.00/£45.00.

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Romances of Free Trade is a likeable book, not least because it features a lively cast of characters: its pages are peopled, and its author's imagination caught by, the likes of smugglers, pirates and other unruly seafaring folk, as well as villains such as *Little Dorrit*'s Rigaud. Ayşe Çelikkol has an allegorical way of thinking in which global conflicts around issues of free trade and protectionism are embodied in and acted out by particular characters: figures whose rule-breaking, boundary-crossing, and frequently seafaring ways pit transgressive energies of movement and circulation against national boundaries and other forms of containment.

The book's economic argument is fairly straightforward—again, providing a series of oppositions ready-made for allegory. Nineteenth-century Britain saw a transition from protectionism to free trade, bolstered by arguments for protectionist measures such as the Corn Laws, on the one side, and calls for the repeal of such prohibitions on the other. Both protectionists and free-traders exploited the apparent tensions between capitalism and the nation-state: the way in which, for instance, the movement of capital threatens to annihilate those spatial boundaries on which nationalism depends, even as the boundaries of the nation-state play a key role in shaping the movement of money and commodities. Though free trade's opponents sought

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to arouse anxieties about the potential weakening of Britain's economic and political control, Çelikkol argues that the development of global capitalism and the strengthening of the nation-state went hand in hand.

Çelikkol reads this political and economic contest as a series of variations on the opposition between circulation and enclosure, aligned respectively with romance and realism. Situating her argument in relation to work on economics, romance, subjectivity, and the novel by Lauren Goodlad, Ian Duncan, and Amanda Anderson, she develops her contention that romance is the genre of free trade. Citing the tendency to see romance as a "marvelous alternative to the sordid reality of modern capitalism," she argues instead that capitalism functions as an opportunity for the deployment of romantic narratives and characters, with romance providing "a means of representing and evaluating free trade paradigms such as endless circulation, unrestricted competition, and the dissolution of centralized power" (115-6). Indeed, reading economic policy into and out of novelistic character (and secondarily plot) is one of the book's chief strategies and defining pleasures. At issue in a character's status as anchored or "disanchored" (8), attached or unattached to a particular nation and its ideals, is the economically-inflected significance of character itself, with the well-rounded characters of bourgeois realism opposed to the more "flat" characters of romance. The "freedom" of free trade issues in a kind of lawlessness—that of the smuggler and the pirate, for instance, who figure here as detached and deracinated identities—with the sea functioning as a kind of romantic nowhere-space undermining the supposedly irrefutable necessity of national boundaries. As the argument demonstrates, these categories are not static, and a flatly-represented "romantic" (31) smuggler may in some cases attain the interiority of the full-fledged realist subject, advancing the free-trade argument via the integration of romance and realism.

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Çelikkol's allegorical vision is immediately apparent in the early chapter on Scott, in which smugglers are said to constitute a "flesh-and-blood corollary to the invisible hand," reifying "the abstract laws that [Adam] Smith claimed to reveal" (14). Smugglers in *Guy Mannering* (1815), like the "meandering merchants" (43) of Marryat's fiction, are associated with wandering and the dreamlike elements of romance. Commodities and characters circulate freely, these texts demonstrate, in opposition to nationalism's and realism's insistence on orderliness and fixed boundaries.

Çelikkol's chapter on the figure of the promiscuous merchant in Victorian melodramas ties free trade to representations of transgressive sexuality as well as to deviant narrative, aligning it with the kind of "waverings and variations" that, according to D.A. Miller, require narrative correction (99). Such "flirtatio[us]" (99) narrative runs the risk, she points out, of rendering seductive the freedom and lawlessness it had meant to oppose. Later chapters on Harriet Martineau and Charlotte Brontë extend the argument about transgression and boundary-crossing to issues of gender, sexuality, and marriage, arguing, for instance, that Martineau's "Dawn Island" (1845) uses fertility as a metaphor for commercial circulation, bringing capitalism and nature together in a pre-modern romantic alignment. Here and elsewhere the book features lovely meditations on the articulation of free trade as natural: as having to do, for instance, with "the motion of ships, the flow of air, the growth of coral reef" (146). The discussion of *Shirley* (1849), somewhat less persuasively, links free trade to marriage, arguing that free trade assists in the development toward liberal subjectivity both states require: marriage, the argument goes, demands the same kind of sharing and boundary-crossing as free economic exchange. The book here develops some of its earlier insights into the relation between

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commerce and affect, claiming that rather than being unfeeling and detached, the capitalist in fact learns the rhetoric of a certain "romance of free trade" (119).

Çelikkol uses Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of abstract space to describe the uncontextualized areas inhabited by her mobile, free-trading smugglers and pirates. Capitalism, she argues, most thoroughly in the chapter on Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857), both requires distance and compresses space, problematizing realism's orderliness and centralized control. Indeed, the reading of *Little Dorrit* is especially nuanced when it discusses the tension between "isolation and permeation" (123) in the novel's initial descriptions of Marseilles. Central to Dickens's novel, Çelikkol finds, is the contrast between the fixedness of a desire to "tie up" (125) property and the motion of the rootless, now-you-see-him-now-you-don't cosmopolite Rigaud, whose unpredictable and sometimes uncanny appearances complement the Gothicism of Affery's "dreams," signifying for Çelikkol the ways in which "[T]he rational world cannot accommodate the free-trading villain" (137). The epilogue touches briefly on the argument's contemporary resonances, noting the demise of the nation-state in the context of globalization. Here as elsewhere, however, Çelikkol resists polarization, citing arguments that the nation-state is in fact currently stronger than ever, despite the transcendence of national boundaries by corporate entities and the boundary-defying circulation of capital and information. Each position is contingent, she suggests, since the circulation of money and information is capable of reinforcing borders as well as dissolving them.

There are a few things to quibble with. At times the definition of free trade is so loose that it seems to serve as a metaphorical catch-all. In the attempt to link free trade to extra-familial affection in the *Shirley* chapter, for example, as in the argument about marriage, the analogy feels somewhat overextended. It would have been preferable not to appeal to the OED for a

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definition of romance, though other sources cited are impeccable, and frequent claims for what "literary critics" tend to do would be more useful if referred to specific critics. The thesis is repeated perhaps too frequently, and the argument often interrupted by statements about its own status which could just as well have been edited out, given that the reader is not really in any danger of losing his or her way. And chapters on particular novels focus very specifically on Çelikkol's issues—such as the Rigaud/free trade connection in *Little Dorrit*—leaving much of the rest of the novel undiscussed.

Finally: the question of the smuggler's interiority was unusual enough to make me wonder why I have never come across it before. It might be because the term "smuggler" points less to an identity than an activity; from the point of view of the property-owner who requires such terms, "smuggler," like "cat burglar" or "peasant," is a caricature, a stereotype in relation to which questions about interiority or subjectivity are precisely not the point. The deep-thinking smuggler may be a contradiction in terms, and not only because when one's business is the transport of stolen goods, any overthinking might be counterproductive. The smuggler's "flatness" and detachment, that is, may be less the result of a "crisis of subjectivity" (31) than of the direction from which the act of naming comes. Though Çelikkol persuasively connects the smuggler's characterization to romance's generic demands, the argument's dependence on the figure of the romantic criminal, and on criminality itself as a representation of free trade, suggests that realism and romance are both invested in the subversive fantasy this figure embodies: a fantasy enabled, to some extent, by the boundaries within which his identity is already contained.

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