
REVIEWS

Frank Felsenstein, ed. *English Trader, Indian Maid: Representing Gender, Race, and Slavery in the New World. An Inkle and Yarico Reader*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. 317p.

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One of the most popular stories from the New World, *Inkle and Yarico* first appeared in Richard Ligon's *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (1673) and was later made famous by Richard Steele's account of the tale in *The Spectator* in 1711. The original version of the tale, in short, recounts the liaison between Inkle, an Englishman, and an Indian maiden, Yarico. A castaway in the Americas, Inkle is saved from death at the hands of "savages" by the tenderhearted Yarico. For her services, Inkle promises to take Yarico back to England where he will marry her. However, upon his rescue from a passing English ship, he has a change of heart, selling Yarico into slavery — even upping his asking price when he discovers that Yarico is pregnant.

In his book, *English Trader, Indian Maid*, Frank Felsenstein has gathered together full texts and extracts from major English versions of this tale up to 1839 in one tight collection. In addition to the English versions of *Inkle and Yarico*, Felsenstein's book includes a handful of other adaptations of the tale, including American, French, and Caribbean versions. In an appendix, he includes influences upon Steele's recounting of the tale, Petronius' "The Ephesian Matron," as well as another source for the legend, Jean Mocquet's *Travels and Voyages*. Finally, Felsenstein includes Wordsworth's "The Mad Mother" in order to suggest how Wordsworth may have been influenced by the tale.

Although the story of *Inkle and Yarico* is familiar to scholars in early American literature and 17th- through 19th-century British literature, Felsenstein's book provides a valuable primary resource for illustrating the ways in which the tale was appropriated and manipulated for different ideological purposes. As an anthology which traces the development of the tale, Felsenstein's book helps to situate the story as an unfolding historical and cultural narrative, particularly in regard to representations of race, gender, and slavery in 18th- and 19th-century England. In most versions of the story, in fact, Yarico has morphed from a Native American into a black slave who has been cruelly rejected by her white lover. As Felsenstein points out in his introduction, "it is significant that [the tale's] period

of greatest currency was when the issue [of slavery] was so much the subject of national debate” (40). And as this collection of primary sources underscores, slavery cannot be separated from representations of gender and how these representations were played out within and against the discourses of empire. Felsenstein includes in his book examples from multiple genres of the story — narrative, epistle, poem, comic-opera — effectively buttressing his argument that this story of imperialism was a central trope in the production of manifestations of English identity in the 18th and 19th centuries. In fact, in his introduction, Felsenstein makes the case that this tale must be seen not only as a written story, but one which existed as part of an oral tradition in British culture. In perhaps his boldest and most intriguing critical maneuver, the fact that Felsenstein includes Wordsworth’s “The Mad Mother” — a poem which never directly alludes to *Inkle and Yarico* — helps to iterate the possible influences of the tale on the origins of British Romanticism. After all, Felsenstein argues, in Wordsworth’s “enthusiastic pursuit of oral literature and its traditions, the tale could be construed as an ideal source for Wordsworth’s art” (34). While Felsenstein is cautious in his reading of Wordsworth, his reading offers a point of departure for further study of Wordsworth and Romanticism in general.

Felsenstein’s “Introduction,” drawing from the wealth of criticism on the tale, offers a clear critique and thorough overview of the different manifestations of the story and their cultural significance. Of particular help is Felsenstein’s introduction to each version of the tale. Unlike some introductory material in anthologies which give little insight or context for the primary texts, depending on the version of the tale, Felsenstein summarizes the origins of the version, its relationship to other versions of the tale, the author’s life, and, when appropriate, modern critical debate surrounding the particular version of the tale.

Following Felsenstein’s argument that this tale was a central cultural artifact of 17th- through 19th-century England, if scholars are not familiar with the different manifestations of the tale, this book is a “must read” for scholars of this period of British literary and cultural studies. Felsenstein’s book is directed mainly toward British readers, because, as he notes, in America *Inkle and Yarico* was subsumed by the story of Pocohontas. But this book should be of interest to Americanists as well. Felsenstein’s inclusion of American versions of the tale help to illustrate its pervasiveness, even in the U.S. And George Coleman’s comic-opera version of the tale was well-received by audiences in America in 1790. While Felsenstein does not argue this point, no doubt the play was popular in America because it underscored ideological tensions surrounding representations of race, gender, and slavery which were relevant to American concerns and desires. ✱