

## **Chapter 3**

### **A trade in desires: Emigration, A. C. Gunter and the Home Publishing Company**

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It is sometimes tempting for scholars to oppose literary success with commercially successful literature and to assume that art is always an inversion of economics. In this view, literary aesthetic quality is inversely proportional to commercial interest: authorial self-interest and disinterest are posited as binaries. There may be attempts to fine-tune such a view, and to re-think all literary production since Gutenberg as swayed to some extent by market demand, wherein our real task becomes the determination of whether or not the author's compliance to that market has been detrimental to her art or beneficial. Nevertheless, even this more nuanced view retains the primacy of aesthetic discourse through which to estimate literary value. But should approved literary aesthetic forms be the only criteria through which we assess and understand literary production and what its value was for its readers? If we consider a user-oriented model and draw in social and cultural discourses as discursive contexts that define and help constitute the work, focus can be placed not only on the behavioural specifics of end-use that includes reading (as the international Reading Experience Databases so successfully do) but also on patterns of use, accessible in a modest way through the terminology of economics. When used in addition to a discourse of literary aesthetics, the language of consumption changes the discursive context and thus our understanding of what books are, namely objects that enable a trade in desires.

Book historian William St Clair has described an alternative to the author-led model of creative expression by exploring how entrepreneurial publishers perceive unmet needs that can be profitably supplied with appropriately-priced print, necessitating new financing and marketing

strategies, and new authors' writings.<sup>1</sup> In this model, all of the agents in the process – authors, publishers, entrepreneurs, buyers and, especially, readers – are part of a commercial trade; nodes within a communications circuit. Alongside St Clair, we might place the model of society based on Bruno Latour's description of critical sociology in his "Introduction" to *Reassembling the Social: an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (2007). This model advises that we look for values of cultural production that are not prescribed but which emerge as appropriate for the various actors and users. Rather than an *a priori* fact contextualising a given item of cultural production, society for Latour and the predecessors he discusses is an *a posteriori* creation that results from the linking of users or actors in communication. In combining the book history of St Clair with Latour, therefore, we move towards a literary cultural production that, in its very linking of nodes, *creates* a set of associations, a heterogeneous "society" or collective with specific values that business studies would recognise as a market. The common thread within this market for both producers and readers is desire, the gap between human's wants and their satisfaction that production is supposed to fill.

The selling of hope – or trade in desire – was at the crux of Archibald Clavering Gunter (1847-1907) and the Home Publishing Company's enterprise. One of the most successful and almost entirely neglected producers of fiction, A. C. Gunter's texts were important social objects during the mass emigration at the end of the nineteenth- and the beginning of the twentieth century. The *doyen* of émigré reading, Gunter was proprietor of his own Home Publishing Company and of *Gunter's Magazine*, the author of purportedly thirty-nine bestselling novels published in English and in multiple translations among countries where emigration was profuse. While far from great literature, Gunter's writings were timely objects of great cultural potential and an important form for émigré readers which, as this chapter will demonstrate, provide a case study for a user-oriented paradigm. The three sections that follow - on emigration, on onboard reading and on A. C. Gunter -

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<sup>1</sup> William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), pp. 447-9.

will be concluded with a tentative suggestion as to how such a paradigmatic shift in comparative theory might begin.

## Emigration

Between 1800 and 1900, the population of Europe more than doubled from around 188 to 438 million people. During this period more than sixty million people left Europe from regions where too little land, agricultural rationalisation, and cheap factory-made goods left their futures unsustainable.<sup>2</sup> The majority of that emigration took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, with more than forty million people emigrating from Europe to the New World between 1850 and 1913.<sup>3</sup> They migrated not only to the US and Australasia, but to Canada, Central America, South America (Brazil and Argentina), to sub-Saharan Africa, and, not so widely known, to Siberia (while many European Russians emigrated to the US, almost six million people moved to Siberia between 1890 and 1914).<sup>4</sup>

Europeans left behind countries with abundant labour and low living standards. In the countries they entered labour was scarce and living standards high.<sup>5</sup> They settled vast and thinly-populated territories and their technologies enabled them to export goods back to Europe, necessitating more rail, harbours, infrastructure, and therefore the demand for more immigration. Transoceanic telegraph cables speeded financial communications and linked commodity prices in a much more rapid global network. The components necessary for setting up a large heterogeneous market, and especially a large readers' market, moved steadily into place.

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<sup>2</sup> John P. McKay et al., *A History of World Societies*, 8th ed. (Boston, Mass: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009), pp. 715–22 (p. 718).

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson, ‘What Drove the Mass Migrations from Europe in the late Nineteenth Century?’, *Population and Development Review* 20.3 (1994), 533–59, there 533.

<sup>4</sup> An estimated seven million people arrived in Siberia between 1801 and 1914, 84% of which settled between 1887 and 1913. See Donald W. Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration: Government and Peasant in Resettlement from Emancipation to the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957), pp. 13–35. See also Raymond H. Fisher, ‘Review,’ *The American Historical Review* 63.4 (1958), 989–90.

<sup>5</sup> Hatton, ‘What Drove the Mass Migrations’ (see above, n. 3), there 533.

Earlier in the century, the émigrés travelling on wooden sailing ships were treated more-or-less as cargo. The risk of disease was high and the journey's duration unpredictable. Conditions were extremely tough for passengers “between decks” and occasionally violent (and this says nothing of the conditions for coerced migration, during which many never survived). Gradually, the wooden sailing ships of the early part of the century were replaced by sail-and-steam ships such as Brunel’s *Great Western* (1837), then by heavy iron ships, such as the *Great Britain* (built 1839-43), and subsequently by lighter, stronger, and cheaper ships made of steel.<sup>6</sup> Transport charges tumbled and the oceans began to shrink. In 1840, the *Great Western* could cross the Atlantic eastward in fourteen days; in 1888, Cunard’s steel-hulled *Etruria* did it in six.

With steam-driven transoceanic transport, the passenger became an important commercial asset and accommodation a marketable commodity, thus providing grounds for a new purpose-built transoceanic service.<sup>7</sup> And when the émigré-passenger market underwent a dramatic shift downwards over the last third of the nineteenth century, that market was captured by purpose-built liners for companies such as Cunard, White Star, Allan Line, Orient-Pacific, the Inman Line, the Hamburg-America Line, the Hamburg-South America Line (“Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft”), Denmark’s Thingvala, the Scandinavian-America line, and the ocean greyhounds of the Guion Line, whose core business was the steerage trade. Previously, passenger numbers had been relatively small: the *Great Western* in 1837 carried 148 passengers; the *Great Britain* in 1843 merely 252.<sup>8</sup> Fare price was relatively expensive: the *Great Western* carried only first class passengers and its initial Bristol to New York fare was a mighty 35 guineas (children half price). By the century’s last decades, ocean-liner passenger capacity not only quadrupled, but berths for third-

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<sup>6</sup> McKay, *History of World Societies* (see above, n. 2), p. 718.

<sup>7</sup> Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, *Travel by Sea in the Nineteenth Century: interior design in Victorian passenger ships* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972), p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> ‘S.S. GREAT BRITAIN: An International Historic Engineering Landmark, 1843, Bristol, England: 25th September 1984,’ catalogue (New York: The American Society of Mechanical Engineers, United Engineering Centre). See also Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, *Women under Sail: Letters and Journals Concerning Eight Women Travelling or Working in Sailing Vessels between 1829 and 1949* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1970), p. 122.

class and steerage passengers became available and affordable. Transatlantic third class and steerage rates could be anything from six pounds to even three pounds. Various Passenger Acts from several nations, too, helped by guaranteeing hygiene, food quality and space for lower-rate passengers. Of steerage conditions on the White Star Line, Henry Fry, in his history of the North Atlantic passage from 1896, describes separate dormitories, electric lighting, baths with hot and cold water, family rooms, ventilation, a liberal diet and luxuries far beyond the mere bread and water supplied on the old sailing ships.<sup>9</sup> These were the modern liners Joyce had in mind when portraying dreams of emigration in *Dubliners* (1914), the wondrous Allen Line boats that Frank worked on and the boat to Buenos Ayres that Eveline should but could not board to escape with him in “Eveline.”

The improvements and downward market pressure dramatically increased passenger volume. Calculating from figures published by Fry, the combined North Atlantic ferries had a capacity of around 110,000 passengers. Assuming a meagre eight trips *per annum*, this fleet could in principle move just under one million passengers each year. Ships such as the *Saale* or the *Werra* of North German Lloyd typically had capacity for 150 first class, 100 second and 1,000 steerage passengers, but some ships of the Hamburg line could accommodate 2,500 at steerage. Of the North Atlantic ferries’ total capacity, approximately 79%, or 87,000 passengers were steerage class. Measured in passenger numbers, the North Atlantic liners were in the business of steerage.<sup>10</sup>

The traffic however was not simply one way. Emigrants did return, and in large numbers, creating something of an information field and a network of nodes in an emerging market.<sup>11</sup> Rates of emigration return and the implications that can be drawn from it are hotly debated among

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Fry, *The History of North Atlantic Steam Navigation: with some accounts of early ships and ship owners* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1896), pp. 94-7, 176-77.

<sup>10</sup> North Atlantic ferries’ total capacity: approx. 16,000 first class, 7,000 second class and 87,000 steerage, which equals 15%, 6% and 79% respectively. Estimate derived from ‘Appendix no.7’ in Fry, *The History of North Atlantic Steam Navigation* (see above, n. 9), pp. 302-5.

<sup>11</sup> See for example Dudley Baines, ‘European Emigration, 1815-1930: Looking at the Emigration Decision Again,’ *The Economic History Review* 47.3 (1994), 525-44, there 530-2, 535.

historians of migration, but one important parameter within the debate is the idea of “chain migration.” This is an information-based hypothesis that relates the movement of particular emigrants to the earlier movement of pioneers and how information is conveyed in networks between New and Old World communities. The communication between those arrived and those soon-to-depart was mainly by letter but other artefacts of print culture cannot be excluded. The links thus set up, whether by people or print, create in effect a transatlantic “collective.”<sup>12</sup> As the oft-cited quote has it, “Europeans were the first to transform the Atlantic Ocean from a great and seemingly impassable barrier into a highway of trade and communication.”<sup>13</sup> The circulation of any literatures that were shared on both sides of the Atlantic therefore form part of a common currency.

One way to examine literary cultural production circulating in this heterogeneous émigré collective is for the way it defies the logic of transmission that sees production rippling outward from metropolitan centres, or as the result of a simple two-way process between centre and periphery (as in the original *Book World* of 1935), and instead to look for complex multi-layered exchanges between communicating hubs. This is the aim of Daniel Maudlin and Robin Peel’s edited anthology, *The Materials of Exchange between Britain and North East America, 1750-1900* (2013), and the aim of new transatlantic studies more generally. Another allied approach, however, is to find out what happens if we accept that the value of any noticeable item within this circulation, such as the novels of A. C. Gunter, are derived not from that item’s literary significance nor how it performs when subject to aesthetic judgement, but located in its utility (to use a term from economics) for a wide variety of émigrés around 1900, spread throughout various regions within Europe.

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<sup>12</sup> The term “collective” refers to Bruno Latour’s work on critical sociology and to Actor-Network-Theory (ANT). See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Benjamin, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Atlantic Word: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), p. 20; cited in Daniel Maudlin and Robin Peel, *The Materials of Exchange between Britain and North-East America 1750–1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), p. 6.

## Onboard Reading

So what were those several million émigrés reading? - and not only the émigrés underway, or those already arrived, but those about to travel, those thinking of crossing central Europe to one of its ports such as Hamburg, to where many hundreds of thousands were first smuggled across the Prussian border (risking theft, sickness and quarantine while waiting for passage as well as potential deportation back to Europe once they reached their destination). What kinds of literature encouraged them to take those risks and what sustained them on their journeys? One place to begin might be the subject of onboard reading.

In the earlier nineteenth century, when sail and sail-and-steam vessels conveyed cargo and passengers in aggregate, onboard reading tended to be makeshift. Greenhill and Giffard, in *Women under Sail*, cite women's diary entries at mid-century to show how, for instance, New Zealand-bound emigrants like Jessie Campbell onboard the squared rigged *Blenheim* on 19 August 1840, "Read a good while Wilson's *Tales of the Border*, they are very stupid." She read Fennimore Cooper's *The Water Witch* (1830) on Tuesday 15, which she had got from a Mr Galgarry, and on Friday 27 she read "during the forenoon *Colburne's Magazine* extracts in it from Mrs Trollope's amusing novel the *Widow Married*" (serialised from 1839-40). Such personal records posit onboard reading as haphazard and pragmatic.<sup>14</sup>

Bill Bell has revealed a second facet of onboard reading from the earlier nineteenth century, namely prescriptive reading.<sup>15</sup> Various religious and educational groups produced literatures of improvement for would-be émigrés, such as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (the SPCK) who produced an Emigrants Tracts series from 1851. One typical instruction was to "Spend the mornings, until dinner time, in reading, writing, and ciphering: in the afternoon collect

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<sup>14</sup> Greenhill and Giffard, *Women under Sail* (see above, n. 8), p. 55, 64-5. See also Greenhill and Giffard, *Travel by Sea* (see above, n. 7).

<sup>15</sup> Bill Bell, 'Bound for Australia: Shipboard Reading in the Nineteenth Century,' in Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *Journeys through the Market: Travel, Travellers and the Book Trade* (Folkestone: Oak Knoll Press, 1999), pp. 119-40.

in groups, and while one reads aloud, let the others work,” from which we can infer that such publications were created more to satisfy the needs of producers rather than readers or, as economists would call them, end users.<sup>16</sup> The instructive spirit was evident towards sailors, too; both naval and merchant. John Harris wrote, “Seamen need a good library on board ship. They have intellectual as well as bodily wants. They have not only the bone and sinew of other men, they have also, in proportion to their cultivation, the same intellectual powers and the same capacity of mental elevation and enjoyment.”<sup>17</sup> Up to mid-century, some ship’s libraries were published. Chambers Instructive and Entertaining Library included, from 1851, *The Emigrant’s Manuals* series for America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. An 1851 *Chambers Popular Library* advertised itself as being “adapted for Private Families, Emigrants, Ships’ Libraries, &c.,” containing two Walter Scott novels, and a mixture of travel, history, and biography (doubtless backlist titles or material out of copyright).<sup>18</sup> But, again, these earlier libraries can be said to be production-oriented, suiting the needs of the publisher, rather than driven by, and occasionally expressly conceived for, the desires of émigré readers themselves. To find out what satisfied the literary needs of the great surge of emigrants in the late nineteenth century, we have to look elsewhere.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, not much work has been done on passenger ship libraries of the later long-nineteenth century. The main sources are Harold Otness’s 1979 article, ‘Passenger Ship Libraries,’ Harry Skallerup’s *Books, Afloat and Ashore* (1974), odd references in maritime histories and Voyagers’ Companions, as well as Arno Mentzel-Reuters article ‘Bücher auf der Nordatlantikroute 1890-1915’, and Paul van Capelleveen’s essay on ship’s printing presses in the

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<sup>16</sup> Cited in Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>17</sup> John Harris, *Britannia; or the moral claims of seamen* (London: n.p., 1837) cited in Harry R. Skallerup, *Books Afloat and Ashore: A history of books, libraries and reading among seamen during the age of sail* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Book, 1974), p. 77. For a list of US naval seamen’s libraries see appendices in Skallerup, *Books Afloat and Ashore*, pp. 221-46.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Bell, ‘Bound for Australia,’ (see above, n. 15), p. 121.

Netherlands.<sup>19</sup> The key text is a 1911 magazine article ‘The Libraries on the Trans-Atlantic Liners,’ in the *Bookman* by Calvin Winter.<sup>20</sup>

On the purpose-built liners of the end of the century, first-class and occasionally second-class passengers could make use of a formalised ships’ library; often supervised by a *Bibliothekssteward*. In 1889, the White Star Line’s *Teutonic* had a steward-attended library with stock described as “standard books.”<sup>21</sup> The Inman’s *City of New York* had a library of 900 volumes. Cunard’s *Campania* and *Lucania* (1892 and 1893) were similarly fitted with libraries. The ship’s libraries of the Hamburg-America and North German Lloyd Line were particularly luxurious, stocking German, French, Spanish and English books (the latter largely in Tauchnitz editions, which were English-language volumes published by the German based firm for sale chiefly in Continental Europe).<sup>22</sup> The *Britannic* had a shelf of books in its second-class lounge nominally called a library; and, as with the P&O Liners serving Australia and New Zealand, first-class libraries were occasionally opened to second-class readers.<sup>23</sup> Hamburg-America’s *Kaiserin Auguste Victoria* and the *Amerika* had first, second and even third-class lending libraries.

Stock could be sourced from commercial lending libraries. When company owned, the volumes might be given the Line’s own bookplate, and when owned by the onshore supplier, these library volumes were known as supplements. The Hamburg-America Line employed an agent in New York to buy “a new instalment of the latest popular books,” and forward them to Hamburg to

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<sup>19</sup> Harold M. Otness, ‘Passenger Ship Libraries,’ *Journal of Library History* 14.4 (1979), 486-94; Arno Mentzel-Reuters, ‘Bücher auf der Nordatlantikroute 1890–1915,’ *Deutsches Schifffahrtsarchiv* (DSA) 23 (2000), 93-142; Paul van Capelleveen, ‘Stampen, Rollen, Schudden, Zetten: de Nederlandse Scheepsdrukerij,’ in Marieke van Delft, Marco de Niet and Kees Thomassen, eds., *Bijzonders Divers: Studies over Opmerkelijk Drukwerk uit de Twintigste Eeuw* (Den Haag, Amsterdam: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2007), pp. 70-93.

<sup>20</sup> Calvin Winter, ‘The Libraries of the Trans-Atlantic Liners,’ *Bookman: a Review of Books and Life* 33.4 (1911), 368-75.

<sup>21</sup> Otness, ‘Passenger Ship Libraries’ (see above, n. 19), 488.

<sup>22</sup> Winter, ‘The Libraries of the Trans-Atlantic Liners’ (see above, n. 20), 372. N. G. Lloyd, in 1911, prescribed a ratio of “220 German, 30 French and 60 to 70 English books,” for express steamers sailing to the US. See Mentzel-Reuters, ‘Bücher auf der Nordatlantikroute 1890–1915’ (see above, n. 19), 95.

<sup>23</sup> Otness, ‘Passenger Ship Libraries’ (see above, n. 19), 490.

be stripped and re-covered in the company's uniform dark cloth.<sup>24</sup> The Cunard Line, like other lines, used a system of rotating libraries, transportable from ship to ship. Cunard sourced "a carefully selected *Times* library of 500 volumes changed at the end of each voyage," offering recent works on biography, travel and edifying subjects, which passengers could borrow or purchase.<sup>25</sup>

By the turn of the century, additional sources of onboard reading appeared. Onboard bookstalls made an appearance, stocking recent books and the latest issues of current magazines. Appearing, too, were ship's newspapers. Although ship's newspapers (often taking the vessel's name for the title as in the *Aconcagna Times* (1879), the *Essex Chronicle* (1864), the *Arawa Gazette* (1885)) had been written before - the National Library of Australia has numerous entries for ships newspapers written and "published" *en route* - the presence of wireless telegraphy gave a boost to the newsworthiness of this format.

One final source of reading material was the few books that passengers could bring without exceeding luggage restrictions. S. W. Silver and Co.'s Colonial and Indian Pocket Book Series in its *Voyager's Companion* (1879), advised its readers to bring "an easy chair, a railway rug, a bath sponge, a field glass and two or three books."<sup>26</sup> It can be assumed that many of these volumes would have circulated. But what of the titles? Of fiction onboard the *Kaiserin Auguste Victoria*, Winter notes Rudyard Kipling, Conan Doyle, Robert Chambers, and Owen Wister, author of *The Virginian* (1902), supposed progenitor of the cowboy novel and which spawned numerous film versions, including a 1914 version by Cecile B. deMille. Other names include Robert Hichens - who according to John Sutherland's *Companion to Victorian Fiction* (1989) excelled in bestselling superheated romanticism - as well as Francis Marion Crawford.<sup>27</sup> Crawford's *The Novel, What It Is*

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<sup>24</sup> Winter, 'The Libraries of the Trans-Atlantic Liners' (see above, n. 20), 371.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 374.

<sup>26</sup> *The Cape, Free State and Diamond Fields*, vol. I [S. W. Silver and Co. *Colonial and Indian Pocket Book Series and Voyagers Companion*] (London: S.W. Silver and Co., 1879), p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> John Sutherland, *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989), p. 295. A good discussion of Hichens's "bestsellerdom" is found in Claud Cockburn, *Bestseller* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), p. 43-64.

(1893) states that “[A] novel is a marketable commodity, of the class collectively termed “luxuries”” albeit one that fathoms the depth of human passions.<sup>28</sup> Onboard the *Cecilia*, in a North German Lloyd library (blaming the paucity of American writers to the presence of Tauchnitz), Winter again finds Kipling, Rider Haggard, Crawford, and Maurice Hewlett, who wrote historical and regency romances, including the enormously successful *The Forest Lovers* (1898). But to his surprise, and reflecting an anxiety noted both in Winter and Otness about whether passengers were reading quality literature (in other words, applying literary criteria to their selections), Winter also found Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Representative Men* (1850) and John Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* (1843-60).

The inference here is that the literary requirements of émigrés cut across lines of high and middlebrow culture, a condition that H. G. Wells confirms in his *The Sea Lady*, a novel serialised in the Mechanic’s Institute favourite, *Pearson’s Monthly*, during 1901. As a representative of an under-sea world, a mermaid Sea-Lady appears to Wells’s narrator and his cousin Melville to tell of, among other marvels, an under-water library that, because “printer’s ink under water would not so much run as fly,” is stocked from the accidental and intentional “dropping and blowing overboard of novels and magazines from most passenger carrying vessels.”<sup>29</sup> Popular novels are discarded into the sea after their so-called “boom” period is over - “practically the whole of the Tauchnitz library is there” - and the fiction section is as “dominant in this Deep Sea Library as it is upon the counters of Messrs. Mudie.” But while “fashion papers are valued even more highly than novels” sometimes “books of an exceptional sort are thrown over when they are quite finished.” The sea mermaid, gently mocked by the narrator for her interest in fashion and “the rain of light literature that is constantly going on,” also regards highly a cache of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. But, again, the

<sup>28</sup> Francis Marion Crawford, *The Novel, What It Is* (Boston Mass: Macmillan, 1893), p. 8, and pp. 107-8. Crawford’s approach to the novel is as an amusement, but nevertheless a serious one. A fuller discussion of Crawford can be found in Simon Frost, ‘Public Gains and Literary Goods: a coeval tale of Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling and Francis Marion Crawford,’ in Kate Macdonald and Christoph Singer, eds., *Transitions in Middlebrow Writing, 1880–1930*, (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 37-56.

<sup>29</sup> H. G. Wells, *The Sea Lady* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1902), pp. 33-40.

narrator is uncomfortable with her means of accessing high culture, satirising the *Encyclopaedia* as “that dense collection of literary snacks and samples, that All-Literature Sausage.”<sup>30</sup>

Why, though, should literary criteria, certainly criteria from the discipline of comparative literature that emerged over the twentieth century, accurately reflect the values of nineteenth-century émigrés focussed intently on their families’ futures and hopes in a new world? Conducting a rather careful survey of the entire ship, Winter’s worst suspicions about the literary values of onboard reading were confirmed when he discovered that the book which easily carried off the prize was “one of those familiar yellow covered novels by Archibald Clavering Gunter.”<sup>31</sup> Winter does not say which ship, nor which decks were surveyed (perhaps lending a clue as to ticket-class), but an equally careful canvass of the archives provides a glimpse as to the kind of writings and values that were being served by Gunter and consumed in the émigré market.

### **Archibald Clavering Gunter**

Liverpool-born Archibald Clavering Gunter, himself an émigré, came to publishing via work as a rail and mining engineer, chemist, stock broker and playwright. The sparse bio- and bibliographic information available on Gunter can be traced back to contemporary newspaper reports and reviews, although among these reports there is not always factual agreement.<sup>32</sup> *Gunter’s Magazine*, too, provides the occasional insight. Gunter was a playwright before he was a novelist, with New York successes such as *Prince Karl* (from 3 May 1896), *A Florida Enchantment* (from 12 October 1896), and *The Deacon’s Daughter* (from 25 April 1887).<sup>33</sup> His first novel, *Mr Barnes of New York* (1887) was published by Deshler, Welch and Co., seemingly with some financial incentives provided by Gunter. So successful was the novel and so indignant was he at the publisher’s share of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>31</sup> Winter, ‘The Libraries of the Trans-Atlantic Liners’ (see above, n. 20), 373.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Dzwonkoski, ed., *American Literary Publishing Houses, 1638–1899*. Part I: A–M [Dictionary of Literary Biography 49] (Detroit Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1986), pp. 209–10. See also ‘Death List of the Day,’ obituary, *New York Times*, 26 February 1907, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Data from Internet Broadway Database [accessed May 2013], <http://www.ibdb.com/>

the profits that Gunter set up his own New York-based Home Publishing Company, renamed later as the A. C. Gunter Publishing Company. A slight contradiction is suggested by the *St. Paul's Daily Globe*, which has Gunter the successful playwright unsuccessfully touting his novel manuscript from house to house until self-publishing with the *Home Publishing Company*.<sup>34</sup> The yellow-covered first edition is believed to have come out in a print run of ten thousand, lying dormant until unfavourable critical reviews paradoxically brought it to public attention, and subsequently selling over two hundred thousand copies in the first year in the US. The novel was then promptly turned into a play for a Broadway opening on 15 October 1888. Gunter's obituary places sales of *Mr Barnes* at over a million in the US and England alone.

The Home Publishing Company's output was prolific, lucrative, and packed with Gunter's own work. From around 1904 Gunter published *Gunter's Magazine* which, despite its eagerness for fervent campaigning (one *idée fixe* was a belief that Mormonism was undemocratically threatening America), promised in "The Editor's Megaphone" that "The policy of *Gunter's Magazine* will always be to furnish the greatest amount of entertainment that is possible for types to do. No matter what the title of the article may be, expect amusement from it."<sup>35</sup>

**INSERT [Figure 3.1. Advertiser from *Gunter's Magazine* 1.6, July 1905, 8.]**

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Home Publishing's hardcover volumes sold for around \$1.50-1.25, and paperbacks were fifty cents, advertised as "World Read Works: the most successful novels of the age."<sup>36</sup> In Britain, Gunter's

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<sup>34</sup> *St. Paul's Daily Globe*, Friday 17 April 1891, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> *Gunter's Magazine* 1.4 (1905), 526.

<sup>36</sup> Archibald Clavering Gunter, *My Japanese Prince* (London: Samuel French, 1904) advertising sheet, inside cover.

novels were published by Routledge and others, announced and reviewed in the usual periodicals.<sup>37</sup>

In 1905, the *Gunter's Magazine* advertiser were offering a set of Gunter's to-date thirty one novels, printed on fine, antique-finished paper at thirty one dollars for the set.<sup>38</sup>

But Gunter's novels were also translated extensively, and sold throughout Continental Europe, from where emigration stemmed. Often re-titled, Gunter's novels can be found in Croatian (no less than one title), Dutch (at least three), German (six), Hungarian (two), Icelandic (seven) and Polish (three), and they can be found in quantity in Norwegian, Swedish and Danish; one source claiming that thirty eight of Gunter's supposed thirty nine novels were translated into Norwegian.<sup>39</sup> Matias Skard (1846-1927) - a Norwegian schools pioneer and enthusiastic reviewer of Booker T. Washington - read Clavering Gunter during his endless inspection tours, passing on the habit to his son, Sigmund, who mixed a diet of Classical and Old Norse antiquity with Jack London, *Br'er Rabbit* (in translation) and Clavering Gunter "by the score."<sup>40</sup>

Many translated Gunter novels were reprinted in later editions, some into the 1920s, and were serialised in national and regional newspapers.<sup>41</sup> From the Nordic region, Norway's *Aftenposten* published in Kristiania (Oslo) serialised *Frøken Ingenting* [Miss Nobody] from 1896, and *Dagbladet* also from Kristiania serialised *Inez Romero eller Kjæresten fra Kuba* [based on A Lost American: a Tale of Cuba, New York, Home Publishing [ca.] 1898] no later than 1897 - the discrepancy in dates for *Inez* being due to cataloguing differences in the Norwegian and US libraries. In Denmark, *Nordiske Boghandlertidende*, the country's leading trade magazine, recorded that *H. Barnes fra New York* would be published in volume in 564 pages and that its serialisation

<sup>37</sup> See 'Mr Barnes of New York: review,' *The Graphic*, 26 November 1887, p. 25; 'Miss Nobody of Nowhere: Review,' *The Graphic*, 23 January 1892, p. 34; 'Miss Nobody of Nowhere: news,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 December 1890, p. 3; and 'Miss Nobody of Nowhere: review,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 May 1891, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Advertiser, *Gunter's Magazine* 1.6 (1905), viii.

<sup>39</sup> Sigmund Skard, *Trans-Atlantica: Memoires of a Norwegian Americanist* (Oslo, Bergen Tromsø: Universitetsforlag, 1978), p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13-15.

<sup>41</sup> *Kobberprinsessen* [Princess of Copper] was still being published by Kunstforlaget in 1923, an even later translation being Grímuþlæddi Glímumaðurinn [possibly *The Masked Assassin*] (Iceland, Reykjavik, 1937-8).

was set to begin the week 23 - 29 November 1900 in the regional newspaper *Aalborg Stiftidende*. This was advertised next to Rider Haggard's *Sort Hjært og Hvid Hjerte* [Black Heart and White Heart] priced two kroner, and a student study guide by the Danish Nobel Johannes V. Jensen.<sup>42</sup> The regional county newspaper *Holbæk's Amts Avis* from Holbæk in Sjaelland ran *Attentatet paa Kejserprinsen og Nihilisterne i Rusland. Politi - og Forbryderroman* [Assassination Attempt on the Crown Prince, and the Russian Nihilists: a Police and Crime Novel] from, at the latest, 1898, attributed to Archibald Clavering Gunter and based on an unknown title.<sup>43</sup>

Part of the confusion around translated titles arises from the comparative lack of international copyright control and the weak presence of authorised translations: the Berne Convention of 1886 that established an agreement for international copyright control was not an effective presence throughout Scandinavia at that time. The overall lack of control in Europe and in the US, and the concomitant threat to income, was also a concern to Gunter: "Such were the dramatic qualities of the book [*Mr Barnes*] that before Mr Gunter could secure his just rights abroad, no less than half a dozen different dramatisations were foisted upon the public."<sup>44</sup> Gunter had earlier had a restraining order placed on an unauthorised theatre production of *Mr Barnes*.<sup>45</sup> In December 1898, Deputy US Marshals acting on a complaint from Gunter's theatrical manager, Mr Henry French, "burst in the doors of Bryer's saloon ... and arrested the proprietor," securing pirated manuscript copies of Gunter's works.<sup>46</sup> What this helps to illustrate is Gunter's attitude to his production as a business venture. He seems to encapsulate the figure that Daniel Maudlin identifies as "the Yankee [who] appears as a crucible for the values of the newly emergent *Homo Economicus*," and it is the same figure that appears in many of Gunter's narratives.

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<sup>42</sup> See *Nordiske Boghandlertidende* 48 (30 November 1900), 294.

<sup>43</sup> Title translations are by the current author.

<sup>44</sup> *St. Paul's Daily Globe*, Friday 17 April 1891, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> 'Author Gunter's Rights protected,' *New York Times*, 24 April 1891, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> 'Pirated manuscripts Seized,' *New York Times*, 1 January 1898, p. 2.

Gunter's novels were, to say the least, formulaic: *Mr Barnes of New York* (1887), *Mr Potter of Texas* (1888), *Don Balasco of Key West* (1897); or *Bob Covington - a novel* (1897), *Billy Hamilton - a novel* (1898), *Phil Conway - a novel* (1904); and so on until the Gunter cycle recommenced with *Mr Barnes, American: a Sequel to Mr Barnes of New York* (1907).<sup>47</sup> Their huge success, though, did not grant him access to the society of *belles lettres* and may even have barred him from it. Based on a rumour, the *New York Times* claimed that Gunter had been "blackballed" by the Authors Club. The grounds for objection were that Mr Gunter's books, "*Mr. Barnes of New York* and *Mr. Potter of Texas* were not considered to be up to the standard of literature which had prevailed as a qualification of membership."<sup>48</sup>

Summarising his narrative technique, Gunter's self-scripted advertisement noted "Infinitely varied in plot, incidents and character, teeming with life and adventure, and instinct with the great secret of the novelist, that of keeping the reader in breathless expectation as to 'what comes next'."<sup>49</sup> On reading several of Gunter's novels it becomes apparent that the secret is a pretty open one, but what is most notable is the plots and characterisation, the one being furiously paced and the other uncomplicatedly robust, an observation endorsed by the *Pall Mall Gazette*: "rapid movement and vividly picturesque if not overdrawn characters ... are the secrets to Mr Gunter's success."<sup>50</sup> And when the pace of his present-tense narrative failed him, Gunter resorted to abusing italics and capitals:

"ESTATES!" gasps little Gussie, who has been gazing at him with open mouth and rolling eyes ...

<sup>47</sup> Published in Britain as *The Shadow of a Vendetta: being the further adventures of Mr Barnes of New York* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1908). Interestingly, the National Library of Sweden holds Archibald Clavering Gunter, *Mrs Barnes från Newyork: Fortsättning på Mr Barnes från Newyork [Mrs Barnes of New York: continuation of Mr Barnes of New York]* trans. M. Drangel (Stockholm, Bonnier, 1907). This may be a faulty entry relating to Archibald Gunter, *Mr Barnes, American: a sequel to Mr Barnes of New York* (London: Stevens and Brown, 1907).

<sup>48</sup> 'A. C. Gunter and Authors' Club,' *New York Times*, 6 May 1894, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Advertiser, *Gunter's Magazine* 1.6 (1905), viii.

<sup>50</sup> See 'Miss Nobody of Nowhere: review,' *Pall Mall Gazette* 8149, Monday 4 May 1891, p. 3.

“Certainly, estates; *large* ESTATES ! But more than that!” and the lawyer lifts up Burke’s volume ...

At this little Gussie grows pale ...<sup>51</sup>

Habitually, the novels’ themes are of adversity and endurance, of risk and rags-to-riches, of happiness both financial and romantic, and about revenue on long-forgotten investments. These were themes with which Gunter also identified. The British *Hampshire Telegraph* noted that “Mr A. C. G. ... is in no way averse ... from relating stories of his earlier hardships.”<sup>52</sup> In a late nineteenth-century American setting, these themes figured strongly in Gunter’s *The Princess of Copper* (1907) the tale of a young orphan girl whose empty Californian copper mines turn out to be worth thirty million dollars; in *Mr Potter of Texas* (1888), the tale of a falsely accused office boy Sammy Potts, fled to America, and his transformation into the wealthy Mr Potter; in *Miss Dividends* (1892) about indomitable Harry Lawrence and his battles with Mormon fanatics over rail stock that finally pass to Erma, Miss Dividends, so the two can be married; and in the aptly titled *Miss Nobody from Nowhere* (1890), the story of orphan Flossie, saved from the Apache Indians by cowboy Pete (in reality Yale-man Phillip), whereafter she can marry Phillip’s wealthy friend, van Beekman.

**INSERT [Figure 3.2. *Miss Dividends* (1892). Front cover. From author’s private collection]**

Drawn with no lack of pathos, Gunter’s orphans rely on little but resilience, their strength of character, and an undaunted belief that happiness on so-many thousand a year is near at hand. But, rather than reading Gunter as crude melodrama, if we instead read his novels as sequentially plotted

<sup>51</sup> Gunter, *Miss Nobody from Nowhere* (New York: Home Publishing Company, 1890), p. 148.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Slaves of the Quill,’ *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* 5622, Saturday 16 March 1889, p. 9.

paths to success wherein psychological complexity must be subordinate to vivid willpower, both for the main characters and in the narrative technique, then it is possible to interpret from his American novels an oversimplified, but nevertheless necessary dream of security that inspired some of Europe's sixty million émigrés. In a similar vein, the section "Editor's Megaphone" of *Gunter's Magazine* compared the trials of childhood and adulthood. Gunter found them to be equal, if not in magnitude, then in the relative burden they seemed to represent. But, he encouraged, "It lightens the mind somewhat to recall that we used to stew as hard and complain as bitterly about a pile of blocks that wouldn't stand up at an angle of forty five degrees as we do now because we can't build a fortune on about the same principle ... and so children teach us philosophy."<sup>53</sup>

The dream and the "philosophy" necessary for its achievement were not complicated. It was one well-known and capitalised upon by "emigration agents" in Europe and by European regional and cheap purchase-price newspapers who knew their readers' aspirations. The *North Wales Chronicle* for instance advertised dubious security-free loans to working men, next to quack medicines, and prices for Allan, Inman and America Line steamers.<sup>54</sup> *Reynold's Newspapers* carried advertisements for extra income from selling teas, six pence entry quizzes for cash prizes, and advertisements for harvesters wanted in Argentina, all alongside the lowest steerage rates.<sup>55</sup> In the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, next to advertisements for painlessly extracted teeth, were ads for passage to the Americas, China, Japan, India and Australia, "steerage £6, 6s."<sup>56</sup> Dreams of painless teeth and pain-free futures were met through commoditized (print) services. The *Penny Emigrant's Guide*, in its fifth edition, voices émigré aspirations plainly. Prior to advice on passage, prices and work conditions that can be expected, it wrote "While the soil of Great Britain is so monstrously monopolised ... thousands of young men ... [will] hire themselves out for a term

<sup>53</sup> 'The Editor's Megaphone,' *Gunter's Magazine* 1.5 (1905), 640.

<sup>54</sup> 'Classified Advertisements,' *North Wales Chronicle*, 19 April 1890, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> 'Advertiser,' *Reynolds Newspapers*, 2 February 1890, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph and Chronicle*, 23 September 1871, p. 2.

of years as butchers, not of pigs and cattle, but of young men of other nations who have been driven to enlist by similar causes.”<sup>57</sup> The guide is for those “wishing to lay out their spare money” so as permanently to better their condition. Its images of “As I Was” and “As I Am,” addressed to the male as the family’s first potential émigré, could not be clearer.<sup>58</sup>

**INSERT [Figures 3.3 and 3.4. “As I was” and “As I am,” Vere Foster, *Work and Wages*, 1885.**

**© The British Library Board, 8276.b.4 (inside front cover and inside back cover).]**

Vulnerability and hope circulating at the turn of the century could be met by émigré service industries that produced everything from passenger ships to reading materials, and which linked their users into a vast heterogeneous market. Like ships and job advertisements, some literatures recognised the market and sought to satisfy it. Gunter’s romps to success over comparatively negotiable obstacles are simplistic, banal even, but like the passenger liners on which his books were eagerly consumed, his work was predicated on something monumental. He was no Upton Sinclair, whose famous immigration novel Bernard Shaw claimed was the most important event of Shaw’s long lifetime. Gunter never mentions the harrowing emotional commitment needed by Lithuanian émigrés in Chicago, nor the dehumanisation of city industries, as described in Sinclair’s *The Jungle* of 1906. But then anyone reading *The Jungle* translated, say, into Polish, German, Dutch, Hungarian, Norwegian, Swedish or Danish, as Gunter’s novels were, would probably never have set out.

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<sup>57</sup> Vere Foster, *Work and Wages: or the Penny Emigrant’s Guide to the United States and Canada* (London: W. and F. G. Cash, 1855), p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., inside front cover recto and inside rear cover verso.

If we measure Gunter's commercially successful fiction on the same scale that measures Pope to T. S. Eliot in a continuous narrative of literary historiography, then Gunter will fail and fail miserably. But is that our best response? Since Gutenberg, all published literature by virtue of printing and distribution costs has involved a degree of commercialism and, in the act of exchange, an absolute element of commodification. So to propose a general rule for certain approved literary aesthetic forms as being inversely proportionate to commercial interest – that moneyed interest is proportional to the quality of Art – seems closer to an ideological programme than an examination of evidence.

Based on alternative user-oriented models as outlined in this chapter, a contemporary to Gunter such as, say, Joseph Conrad with his early serialised stories collected into *Tales of Unrest* (1898) would be simply one among many suppliers to a market established through those using entrepreneurial magazine publishing to satisfy specific needs. How much more can one say of Gunter, who not only recognised a potential new market but successfully established a corner of it through his self-owned Home Publishing Company and through *Gunter's Magazine*. That he was able to write the copy himself – with just the right balance of rapid movement and superficial characterisation – merely adds to his achievement. The observation is not intended to be flippant: or rather, it would be was it not for the historical seriousness of the market that this chapter claims Gunter supplied. If we are unable to understand, historically, how a seemingly superficial literary form could satisfy a deep human longing, then we fail to understand something of the human condition, which after all is what *les sciences humaines* – what Anglophones call the humanities – is all about.