EUROPEAN LITERATURES IN BRITAIN, 1815–1832

Studies of British Romanticism have traditionally tended to envisage it as an intensely local, indeed insular, phenomenon. Yet, just as the seemingly isolated British Isles became more and more central in international geopolitical and economic contexts between the 1780s and the 1830s, so too literature and culture were characterized by an increasingly close and relevant dialogue with foreign and especially Continental European traditions, both past and contemporary. Diego Saglia casts new light on the significantly transformative impact of this dialogue on Britain during the years that saw a return to unimpeded cross-border cultural traffic after the end of the Napoleonic emergency. Focusing on modes of translation and appropriation in a variety of literary and cultural forms, this book reconsiders the notion of the supposed intrinsic insularity of Britain through the lens of new key questions about the national, international, and transnational features of Romantic-period literature and culture.

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Romantic Translations

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Preface

This book explores the intersections of local and national concerns with international perspectives in the literature and culture of Romantic-period Britain. In doing so, it tackles issues that are of particular relevance to current Romantic studies and their increasingly wide-ranging examinations of the cosmopolitan connections of British literature and culture at the turn of the nineteenth century.[1] Contributing to this developing critical debate, this study concentrates on the links between British and Continental European literatures and cultures. It starts from the assumption that, just as the seemingly isolated British Isles became increasingly central in international geopolitical and economic contexts between the 1780s and the 1830s, so too its literatures were characterized by an increasingly close dialogue with foreign – particularly Continental – traditions, both past and present.

Specifically, this book throws new light on the presence and impact of Continental European literatures in Britain within the cultural milieu of the two decades after the end of the French and Napoleonic wars of 1793–1815. Focusing on the years between the mid-1810s and the mid-1830s, it aims to clarify how imported texts, forms, and cultural players from the Continent were not merely distinctive features of a few particularly receptive authors (Byron, for example), works (Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*), or cultural centres (Holland House). In fact, they were among the defining traits of an entire literary and cultural system and its far-reaching transformations in the production and consumption of textual and other cultural artefacts within specific historical, ideological, and political contexts. A fundamental premise of this book is that criticism, imaginative literature, and theatre in this period need to be understood in light of an ongoing interaction of local, internal, and often organically conceived tendencies, on the one hand, and international imperatives on the other. At the same time, this interaction and its attendant tensions acquire particular relevance in connection with the ideological questions

and political developments characterizing Britain between Napoleon's downfall and the mid-1830s, as well as its engagements with Continental politics over the same period, most notably the clash between the conservatism of the Holy Alliance and its repressive Congress system, and countervailing liberal and constitutional aspirations.

In the introduction to *The Contours of European Romanticism* (1979), Lilian Furst observed that, even though the promised outline could 'be charted', readers were to expect a certain amount of disappointment because the final map would 'never attain a diagrammatic neatness'.[2] Mindful of this caveat, in this book I avoid delineating panoramic overviews of a literary terrain neatly laid out through patterns of binary contacts and influences. Instead, I explore what Furst terms 'contours' by looking at general processes and baseline features. In addition, in this study I concentrate exclusively on contacts between Britain and the Continent, since, in spite of a growing interest in other cultural areas such as the Americas or the East, links with Europe were undoubtedly the most frequent, widely debated, and productive in the period. Within this frame, the book's chapters investigate selected instances of intercultural contact, translation, and importation that illuminate different forms of interaction between British and foreign traditions, as well as the various types of impact of those traditions on Britain's literature and culture.

European Literatures in Britain, 1815–1832 examines forms of literary importation and acclimatization by progressing from general phenomena to more specific manifestations. It starts from appropriations and constructions of foreign literatures in reviews, periodical essays, anthologies, and their paratexts, before moving on to drama and theatre, poetry, and briefly, for reasons I explain later, the novel. Inevitably working through selections and exclusions, each chapter offers an overview of its main theme and set of issues before looking at case studies from strategically chosen perspectives. Thus, each chapter contributes to conjuring up a picture of Romantic-period literature and culture as a web of local, national, international, and transnational features – where 'international' describes both phenomena connecting or affecting several nations and those processes and products that circulate in different nations but retain their national traits, while 'transnational' refers to cultural processes and products transcending national borders.[3]

In the Introduction, I address the book's focus on Continental European (rather than more globally inclusive) connections, as well as on the years between 1815 and 1832 as a crucial phase that saw an unprecedented intensification in, and transformation of, the literary and cultural

relations between Britain and the rest of Europe. At the same time, I contextualize my study within current critical work about the international and cosmopolitan features of British Romanticism as I discuss its main critical and interpretative categories – interlinguistic translation, 'cultural translation', and appropriation. From the contextual perspective, I provide an overview of the connections between British and Continental literatures from the 1780s to the 1830s, placing special emphasis on the exponential increase in international contacts and foreign imports after 1815. Finally, the closing section of the introduction examines some selected instances of British periodical essays from the post-Waterloo period in order to throw into relief how the growing impact of foreign traditions conditioned discussions of the national literature and its plural identities (British, English, and Scottish, among others) and affected definitions and self-images of Britain's literary and cultural heritage.

Building on these premises, the two opening chapters deal with some of the principal channels for the introduction, presentation, and diffusion of foreign texts and authors in Romantic-period Britain. Chapter 1 focuses on periodicals as major instruments for the promotion of knowledge about European literatures within the context of English, British, and Continental history and politics. My starting point is an assessment of the approaches to foreign literatures, as well as foreign criticism on English and British literature, in the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Review* near the end of the Napoleonic emergency. As an illuminating case in point, I examine how the 'Great Reviews' debated the critical output of Madame de Staël and her *coterie* at Coppet, evaluated their innovative critical suggestions, and reacted to their interpretations of English and British letters. The chapter then considers the series of essays entitled 'Horae Germanicae', which ran in *Blackwood's Magazine* from 1819 to 1828, and their forms of cultural translation and appropriation as crucial contributions to the discovery and popularization of German literature, and to the definition of a conservative political and cultural agenda. Subsequently, the chapter explores liberal and radical attitudes to Continental literatures by focusing on the foreign literary policy of two of *Blackwood's* main competitors in the 1820s, the Whig *New Monthly Magazine* and the Benthamite *Westminster Review*. The final section briefly considers the fraught launch of the *Foreign Review* and *Foreign Quarterly Review* in 1827 as an emblematic confirmation of how, by the later Romantic period, foreign literatures had become contended goods endowed with significant cultural and ideological capital.

Concentrating on anthologies and collections, Chapter 2 expands on this examination of the principal means of diffusion and discussion of foreign literatures, and particularly their lyrical outputs, in ways that reflected their editors' ideological orientations and political agendas. In this *pendant* to the preceding chapter, I discuss some representative examples of this type of engagement with Continental literatures – Sir John Bowring's volumes of Russian poetry (1821, 1823), John Gibson Lockhart's *Ancient Spanish Ballads* (1823), Edgar Taylor and Sarah Austin's *Lays of the Minnesingers* (1825), and Charles Brinsley Sheridan's *The Songs of Greece* (1825), a translation of Claude Fauriel's *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne* (published in Paris in 1824–1825). These works deserve attention not only because they bear witness to a new interest in unfamiliar exotic traditions but also since they make clear that, in the period under examination, selections and constructions of Continental poetry were inseparable from wide-ranging analyses of the history and politics of the Continent from the Middle Ages to the present. And these analyses invariably bore an ideological stamp, as emerges from the moderate Toryism pervading Lockhart's *Ancient Spanish Ballads*, on one side, or the militant radicalism in Bowring's and Sheridan's volumes, on the other.

Translation is the next major point in the book's thematic progression. Chapters 3 and 4 take into consideration specific centres of intercultural mediation – specifically, the Whigs' London headquarters of Holland House and the Romantic-period stage. In doing so, they examine practices of interlinguistic translation, adaptation, and 'cultural translation' within the markedly international atmosphere of the 1820s and 1830s. Chapter 3 starts by considering reflections on translation in Romantic-period Britain, especially the contrast between what Lawrence Venuti terms 'domesticating' (target-oriented) and 'foreignizing' (source-oriented) approaches to the foreign-language text. This preliminary contextualization discloses a variety of competing theories and practices of interlinguistic translation. It also serves to introduce my examination of the exemplary mixture of interlinguistic and 'cultural' translation in the nexus of sociability and ideology characterizing the activities of Holland House's Whig Italophiles. The Italianist specialists gravitating around this *salon* and *coterie* translated and appropriated Italian texts in accordance with Whig opposition to Tory foreign policy, and as a way of supporting patriotic fervour and anti-Austrian politics in the Italian Peninsula. My analysis especially concentrates on the usually overlooked yet singularly relevant figure of Barbarina Brand, Lady Dacre. Through an analysis of her collaborations with Henry Brougham and Ugo Foscolo over the translation of Italian verse (most

importantly, for the latter's *Essays on Petrarch*), I reconstruct the significance of translation within a collaborative context that was closely related to the Hollands' cultivation of cosmopolitan cultural connections and their interest in Italian politics. As this case study indicates, translation as linguistic transposition in the international and cosmopolitan milieu of post-Napoleonic Britain was linked to broader, and ideologically weighted, processes of appropriation and transference of texts, languages, objects, and individuals.

Envisaging translation and appropriation from another perspective, Chapter 4 deals with drama and theatre as privileged spaces for multiple incorporations of foreign cultures. After reconstructing the debate over the existence of a national British stage, I turn to consider various forms of theatrical importation and transformation. First, I examine translation and adaptation of foreign texts as a consolidated (and generally deplored) practice in drama and theatre, one which saw a remarkable increase after the end of hostilities in 1815 made possible the unimpeded circulation of spectators and professionals across the Channel. As with foreign works, foreign performers were a distinctive feature of the stage in London and around Britain, forming a heterogeneous group including universally praised stars such as Madame Vestris and Joseph Grimaldi, as well as a host of obscure but significant figures. Moreover, the question of the irrepressible 'foreignization' of the Romantic-era stage became particularly relevant to discussions about the nationality of melodrama in the periodical press between 1802, the year of the first performance of Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery* (the first play to be labelled a melodrama), and the 1820s, when the genre was firmly established as the most popular and profitable form of theatrical entertainment. The chapter then shifts to a pioneering examination of the presence and mixed reception of foreign (especially French) actors in London after the end of the Napoleonic wars. As I show in the conclusion to the chapter, by the late 1820s theatre and opera in German, Italian, and French had become such conspicuous components of London's theatrical seasons that they constituted an object of concern and debate for the 1832 Select Committee of Inquiry into 'the Laws affecting Dramatic Literature' and, more comprehensively, the stages of the nation.

Turning to poetry between the mid-1810s and mid-1830s, Chapter 5 is concerned with British poets' creative engagements with foreign poetic texts. If, in these years, the recent poetic burgeoning was a source of pride in the national genius and cultural identity, it was also, and more problematically, seen as the latest development of a hybrid tradition indebted to

Continental verse since its origins in Geoffrey Chaucer's output. Yet, significantly, in the same years these critical interpretations were paralleled by the publication of 'cross-cultural' verse that complicated the idea of an intrinsically national school of poetry. To illustrate this combination of opposing tendencies, I focus on three major 'internationally minded' poets – Robert Southey, Lord Byron, and Felicia Hemans – and their ideologically and politically motivated re-elaborations of foreign poetry and its voices. My starting point is an analysis of Southey's *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814) as an Anglo-Hispanic 'epic' mixing English and Spanish literary, historical, and ethnographic materials. Subsequently, I examine the presence of Italian voices in Byron's poetry from 1818 to 1821, that is, from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* IV to his Ravenna plays. As I contend in this section, Byron's importations and contradictory re-elaborations of these voices were instrumental to his reflection on the political circumstances of Italy and, more generally, of an entire continent in thrall to the Holy Alliance. I close this chapter by examining Hemans's *National Lyrics, and Songs for Music*, published in 1834 but containing some of her periodical verse from the previous decade. Offering multiple instances of Hemans's distinctive ventriloquism of foreign voices, this volume represents a culmination in her lifelong fashioning of a transnational poetics suffused with her pragmatically moderate liberalism.

After considering drama and poetry, I briefly turn my attention to prose fiction in the book's 'Coda'. This more circumscribed treatment is justified by the fact that, in recent years, a substantial amount of outstanding research has addressed the cosmopolitan nature of the British novel in the Romantic period.[4] Building on these foundations, I concentrate my reflections on historical fiction and Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814) as a manifestation of the geopolitical changes that Napoleon's defeat brought to bear on Britain's insular history and identity. In the 1820s, a number of historical novels similarly engaged with the links between national and foreign concerns, as in Charles Robert Maturin's emblematic *The Albigenses* (1824), which self-consciously reprised and reworked Scott's combination of British and Continental sources and themes. With its explicitly European outlook, Maturin's narrative represents past and present, and foreign and national questions, through the ideologically specific forms of cultural translation and appropriation that, as this book demonstrates, informed British relations to Continental literatures and cultures in the post-Napoleonic years.

In 1990, J. H. Alexander advocated what he hoped would 'prove … to be a revival of a lively interest in continental influences' that might prompt a

'recovery of lost knowledge and its updating, and … fresh approaches which would redeem the field from the aura of mildewed sterility which, however wrongly, it tends to exude'.[5] In his article, provocatively entitled 'Learning from Europe', he raised a series of still pertinent questions such as the following: 'what did writers in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* think that British literature could gain from an acquaintance with recent continental literature?'[6] In *European Literatures in Britain, 1815–1832*, I envisage what Alexander terms 'acquaintance' as a complex, far from straightforward combination of processes of translation and appropriation. If, as current developments in Romantic-period studies indicate, we are to find new answers to his question, we need to look away from exclusively binary approaches and concentrate on the multiple and interacting forms of importation and incorporation that broadened the scope of literature and culture in Britain, while also complicating their identities by weaving national imperatives together with the lure of the foreign. We also need to identify the origins, development, and significance of these transnational and international translations in specifically situated networks of historical, political, and ideological forces.

As it explores the increasing presence of the foreign in British literature and culture of the Napoleonic aftermath, *European Literatures in Britain, 1815–1832* demonstrates how imports and contaminations from the outside complicated ideas of a discrete national culture, while at the same time promoting tighter connections and closer conversations with other European traditions. Fraught with ambivalences, contradictions, and tensions, these interconnections confirm the later Romantic period as a crucially transformative phase in which, while British literature and culture welcomed Continental imports at an unprecedented rate, Britain's mixed insular and cosmopolitan identity and history were energetically debated, defended, and redefined.

Notes

1. As evidence of this international turn, see, for instance, the 2004 conference on 'Romantic Cosmopolitanism' organized by the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism at the University of Colorado at Boulder, or the 2013 conference on 'Romantic Imports and Exports' held by the British Association for the Study of Romanticism at the University of Southampton; the volumes dedicated to Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Robert Burns, Walter Scott, and Jane Austen in the 'Reception of British Authors in Europe' series coordinated by Elinor Shaffer; the multivolume *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, edited by Peter France and Stuart Gillespie; and a growing number

of recent monographs, including David Simpson's *Romanticism and the Question of the Stranger*, Jane Stabler's *The Artistry of Exile*, and Paul Hamilton's *Realpoetik* (all published in 2013).

2. Lilian R. Furst, *The Contours of European Romanticism* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 15.
3. Among the various attempts at distinguishing between these two terms, I find Jahan Ramazani's definition of 'transnational' and 'international' particularly germane to the way I deploy them in this book. Ramazani uses 'transnational' to refer to those 'cultural works that cross national borders, whether stylistically, topographically, intellectually, or otherwise', so that this adjective serves to 'highlight flows and affiliations not among static national entities, as sometimes suggested by "international", but across the borders of nation-states, regions, cultures'. *A Transnational Poetics* (The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 181 (note 5).
4. See Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schöwerling (gen. eds.), *The English Novel 1770–1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols. (Oxford University Press, 2000); Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (eds.), *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* (Princeton University Press, 2002); Mary Helen McMurran, *The Spread of Novels: Translations and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton University Press, 2009); Richard Maxwell, *The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650–1950* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Jenny Mander, 'Foreign Imports' in Patrick Parrinder (gen. ed.), *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. II: Peter Garside and Karen O'Brien (eds.), *English and British Fiction 1750–1820* (Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 589–612.
5. J. H. Alexander, 'Learning from Europe: Continental Literature in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1802–1825', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 21 (1990), p. 118.
6. Alexander, 'Learning from Europe', p. 118.

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Whatever its cover may say to the contrary, a book is never truly the work of only one person. It is the result of a number of contacts and conversations that have accumulated, intersected, and cross-fertilized over the years, and which are often so complexly interwoven that they become impossible to unravel and retrace post facto. A book, and possibly all the more so a critical study which comes out of multiple intellectual exchanges, is a map of illuminations, serendipities, and misrememberings. And this is especially true of a book such as this one – with its focus on international and transnational contacts, translations, and appropriations – since it presupposes dialogues and conversations across both time and place, in the present as well as in the past. As a result, my debt of gratitude is incalculable.

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The intricate web of places, people, occasions, and readings I have described, this 'movable feast' of living and learning, invariably makes writing a book a formative experience beyond the mere fact of producing research. For me, this process has been a unique opportunity for establishing links and creating lasting bonds, sharing and exchanging knowledge and experience, and growing together with other people who revel in that exchange of ideas and experiences, and who believe that the pursuit of knowledge leads to a crossing of lives that inevitably changes us and makes us better. Finally, this book is dedicated to Steve Wharton, because he makes it all worthwhile.