

**Diego Saglia, *European Literatures in Britain, 1815-1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 261. £75. ISBN 9781198426411.**

After the Hundred Days, and post-Waterloo, Britons took advantage of newly-opened borders to travel to the Continent. In parallel with these physical displacements, British nationalism was increasingly forged in relation to the Continental ‘other’. It may once have been tempting to view the literature of Britain in the opening decades of the nineteenth century as mentally ‘closed’ to foreign imports. Indeed, this view of an intrinsically insular British cultural sphere in the Romantic period and beyond has remained remarkably persistent. This, Diego Saglia reminds us, is to misread the literary marketplace of 1815-1832. His timely examination adds a welcome voice to recent studies of cosmopolitanism in the British literature of the period. Comparative examinations have increased in the last two decades, lifting the ‘fog in the Channel’, and shining a light both on continental imports that enriched ‘native’ literature, and on the reception of British literature abroad. Saglia focuses on the later Romantic period, viewing it as fraught with ambivalences, contradictions, and tensions. He argues that ‘imports and contaminations’ from the Continent ‘complicated ideas of a discrete national culture’ (xiii). The study refers to an impressive range of source material – from periodicals to anthologies, drama, theatre and poetry. Close readings and historical analysis combine to make a enjoyable and engaging read.

There is much to admire in the case studies throughout this monograph, as well as in the breadth of scope more generally. In Chapter 2, close readings of John Bowring’s *Specimens of the Russian Poets* (1820-21), John Gibson Lockhart’s *Ancient Spanish Ballads* (1823), Charles Brinsley Sheridan’s *The Songs of Greece* (1823) and Edgar Taylor and Sarah Austin’s *The Lays of the Minnesingers, or German Troubadors of the Twelfth and Thirteenth* (1825) shows the works’ ‘engagement with historical and political questions from transcultural and transhistoric perspectives’ (104). Chapter 3 gives a fine overview of contemporary, and modern, translation theories. In the period, these were invariably closer to the domesticating model, despite the important intervention of Germaine de Staël’s ‘On the Spirit of Translations’, first published in 1816, which encouraged respect for the ‘foreignness’ of the source text. Saglia’s reading of the cosmopolitan circle at Holland House and their ‘Italian activities’ sees their collaborative exchanges and their uses of translation ‘as a way of expanding and strengthening the House’s cultural and political authoritativeness’ (141). The reader moves to the stage in Chapter 4, in a lively examination of ‘national’ theatre which argues that ‘the idea that there was an intrinsically English stage between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appears to be a precarious one at best’ (156). The study concludes with a fine chapter reading the post-Napoleonic Politics of Southey, Byron and Hemans, adding productively to the voice of Romantic scholarship that has questioned what is ‘British’ about ‘British Romantic Poetry’.

Some lines of continuity throughout the eighteenth century and into the Romantic period remain unexplored, in the interest of the absorbingly tight temporal focus that the book maintains throughout. The first chapter, on periodicals and the construction of European Literatures, is a fine reading of the ‘Great Reviews’ of the early nineteenth century: the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, *Blackwood’s*, the *New Monthly* and less-familiar publications. It reads the engagement of publishers and reviewers alike with foreign fiction in the period as a political affair. ’Twas ever thus. That connections can be made with the ‘policies’ of the first great English reviews of the mid-eighteenth century – Griffith’s *Monthly*; Smollet’s *Critical* – indicates that this work will be of interest and relevance to those working outside the Romantic period. Much remains to be done on the engagement with those who commissioned reviews and translations with the work of their counterparts across Europe. It is outwith the aims of *European Literatures in Britain* to provide a comprehensive account of these pan-

European connections, meaning, *ipso facto*, that there is certainly scope for future researchers to pick up where Saglia leaves off. Likewise, the coda – entitled ‘The European Vistas of Historical Fiction’ – engages with Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (1814) as exemplifying ‘national concerns, international contexts, and transnational vistas’ which characterize ‘novel-writing in the post-Waterloo decades’ (230). Saglia’s reading of Scott is convincing. There is, however, a great deal more work to be done on the translators and translations of prose fiction in the period, taking into account not the more mainstream historical novel, but rather the still-popular (although now largely neglected) novel of sensibility. *European Literatures in Britain* points some directions forward.

In short, Diego Saglia’s fine study is highly recommended to all who research and teach Romantic-period literature. As the Continent of the present feels increasingly isolated, he encourages us to open up our Romantic readings to the Continent of the past.

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