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Imprinting Anglo-Italian Relations in *The Liberal* / Byron and Translation

Imprinting Anglo-Italian Relations in The Liberal, edited by Lilla Maria Crisafulli, Serena Baiesi, and Carlotta Farese, Lausanne, Peter Lang, 2023, 259 pp.Byron and Translation, edited by Maria Schoina and Alexander Grammatikos, Liverpool, Liverpool UP, 2024, xii + 236 pp., 6 illustrations.

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range of sources. Rix focuses on the Gothic reception of Danish ballads and Norse mythology but does not engage with British travelogues on Denmark. His approach is more streamlined, though it offers less original insight at times, occasionally reusing arguments from his earlier work. However, Rix's concise monograph is more readable and avoids the repetition of the same quotations and arguments across chapters. As a result, the two monographs complement rather than overlap with each other, and both are recommended for readers interested in British Romanticism and its connections with Scandinavia.

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Imprinting Anglo-Italian Relations in *The Liberal*, edited by Lilla Maria Crisafulli, Serena Baiesi, and Carlotta Farese, Lausanne, Peter Lang, 2023, 259 pp.

Byron and Translation, edited by Maria Schoina and Alexander Grammatikos, Liverpool, Liverpool UP, 2024, xii + 236 pp., 6 illustrations.

Recent scholarship has increasingly called attention to the relevance of the exchanges between Britain and Continental Europe for a full understanding of Romantic-period culture. Diego Saglia has extensively mapped this terrain in his *European Literatures in Britain, 1815–1832* (2018), while a number of investigations have been specifically focused on Anglo-Italian relationships—from Peter Vassallo's pioneering *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence*

(1984) to Maria Schoina's much-cited *Romantic 'Anglo-Italians'* (2009) and, most recently, Will Bower's *The Italian Idea* (2019). Within this pan-European perspective, translation has emerged as a crucial area of investigation, fruitfully interacting with the flourishing of translation studies. As a privileged vehicle of cultural mediation, translation has been examined as "a paradigm for international relations" (Clark and Connolly 19), with a scope that extends beyond the rendering of a text into another language to encompass a wide range of practices invested with commercial value, ideological capital, and ethical implications. At the same time, as a recognized "locus of cultural difference," translation has been seen as "challenging cultural canons, disciplinary boundaries, and national values in the translating language" (Venuti 34, 84). The two books under review contribute to this variegated line of enquiry by focusing on specific instances of Romantic cultural and linguistic interaction: the short-lived quarterly *The Liberal,* founded in Pisa in the Fall of 1822 by Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Leigh Hunt, and Lord Byron's sustained engagement with translation, emblematic of his mobility across languages and cultures. Byron constitutes an important point of convergence between the two collections, along with the transnational activism that permeated both his work and the publication he contributed to launch.

The nine essays collected in *Imprinting Anglo-Italian Relations in* The Liberal thoroughly explore the cultural and political stakes of a journal that was unique in its configuration—conceived in Italy by British exiles, addressed to a British audience, printed in London—and in its ambitions, which the various contributions consistently interpret as a bid to foster a genuinely transnational European culture. While tracing the scope, orientation and reception of *The Liberal* as a collective enterprise, they also focus more closely on the individuals behind it—with two essays each devoted to Leigh Hunt and Byron, and one to P. B. Shelley, William Hazlitt, and Mary Shelley—and provide engaging analyses of its varied contents, which ranged from poetry to essays, tales, travelogues, epigrams, and a considerable number of translations, mainly from the Italian.

The introduction by Lilla Maria Crisafulli, "Historical and Social Environment of *The Liberal*," sheds light on the intricacies of contemporary Italian politics and the vibrant intellectual life of Pisa during the Shelleys' and Byron's residence there. Alongside the canonical figures of the Pisan circle, a number of lesser-known Italians come into focus, thereby enriching our understanding of the cultural milieu that helped shape the journal's reformist program. These insights are further developed in Crisafulli's own contribution—"What's in a Name? Shelley, the South, and *The Liberal*"—which traces the genesis of the project in Byron's conversations with Shelley and highlights Shelley's decisive role in defining the journal's oppositional agenda. She points out how, by adopting the decentered perspective of the South (as the subtitle "Verse and prose from the South" makes clear) and by embracing a transnational approach to literature, *The Liberal* sought to dismantle the very notion of a bounded national culture, along with the chauvinistic and imperialistic associations it carried in Britain after the prolonged war with France. Indeed, as Franca Dellarosa convincingly shows in her contribution—"Cockney Imprint: *The Liberal* and Its Reception, 1822"—the very noun "Liberal" that the group chose as title of their publication was a provocative statement of intent. Adding an important tassel to the critical conversation about the notion of liberalism in Romantic culture, Dellarosa identifies an "anxiety of definition" (35) that shaped both Hunt's preface to the first issue and the extremely hostile reception of the journal in the British press. She sees such anxiety as stemming from Hunt's act of translating (in the etymological sense of "carrying across") the term "liberal" from its traditional usage in conservative circles, where it denoted a personal, gentlemanly virtue akin to generosity, into the realm of political

discourse, where it resonated with the fresh memory of the *Liberales,* the supporters of constitutional government in Spain. Later in the volume, Elena Spandri's intellectually rich contribution—"William Hazlitt and the Ironies of Liberalism"—returns to the debate over the term, examining its nuanced interpretations within *The Liberal* itself. Exploring Hazlitt's role in the periodical after Shelley's death and discussing the essays he contributed, she highlights his skepticism toward the viability of liberalism, particularly as embodied in the Shelleyan ideal of literary culture as an agent of public reform, in the reactionary climate of the 1820s.

Gioia Angeletti's essay—"*Domestica facta* Recollected in Italy: Byron and *The Liberal*"—strikes a similarly somber note, addressing the gap between Byron's ambitions for the project and its eventual outcome. She interprets his growing disaffection with the journal, which sealed its fate after just nine months and four issues, in light of a double tension in his Italian years: on the one hand, the process of "acculturation" in Italy which included his political involvement in the Carbonari activities against Austrian rule; on the other, his wish for a rapprochement with his English (liberal) audience to "unburden himself from the scandalous celebrity concerning his name" (143). That his contributions to *The Liberal* —from the satire on George III of *The Vision of Judgment* to his scathing "Epigrams on Lord Castlereigh" and his ironic revisiting of the Regency in *The Blues*—mostly deal with "*domestica facta*," meaning "domestic or internal affairs concerning English history and society in the present or the recent past" (150), confirms, in Angeletti's view, his "latent desire for personal rehabilitation" (145). Yet by 1823, with hopes for Italian emancipation vanishing and *The Liberal* facing fierce hostility at home, Byron's sense of exclusion deepened, which might explain why he abandoned the project, departed from Italy and turned toward Greece.

A common, though less politically-inflected, criticism of *The Liberal* was that it amounted to a miscellany of unrelated material, lacking coherence or design. The essays in the collection help to counter this view on several fronts. Fabio Liberto highlights the intertextual discourse about Italy and Italian freedom that runs through the journal, reinforcing its sense of shared purpose. In his essay, "The 'united voice of Italy': *The Liberal* and Mary Shelley's 'A Tale of the Passions,'" he identifies a telling example in Mary Shelley's contributions, focusing his attention on a short story where medieval Italy serves as "a hermeneutic means to understand the present" (213), meaning the Italian political predicament but also the condition of Britain. Timothy Webb explores a comparable instance of specific focus and deliberate planning in Leigh Hunt's series "Letters from Abroad," which appeared in all four numbers of *The Liberal*. In "'Letters from Abroad': Leigh Hunt and the Traveller's Epistle," Webb notes that Hunt drew on his personal, if limited, experience of Italy (he traveled no further than Florence, never reaching the South, Milan, or Venice) for his own constructions of the place, which, either directly or by implication, "provided an unflattering perspective on his own country" (127). Although Hunt's "Letters" have often been criticized for their emotional tone and dismissed as overly impressionistic, Webb reassesses their link to private correspondence, concluding that his accounts of Italian life are "characteristically fresh, animated and, in the best sense, strikingly personal" (137).

Hunt's sustained engagement with Italian culture, as evidenced in his dual role of editor and author-translator, is also explored by Serena Baiesi in her "Politics, Literature, and Leigh Hunt's Editorial Spirit in *The Liberal*." Pointing out that his distinctive "bicultural sensibility" (107) led him to translate the works of Alfieri and other Italian writers, she notes how his versions are often accompanied by the originals. This choice, which not only invited readers to judge the quality of his work but also signaled his deep respect for Italy's literary heritage, would become a defining feature of *The Liberal*'s approach to

translations. As Maria Schoina points out in her contribution—"'With flowing rhymes, a pleasant style and free': Byron's Translation of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*"—Byron had his rendering of the first canto of Pulci's fifteenth-century mock-heroic poem printed alongside the Italian original in the fourth issue of *The Liberal.* In her detailed discussion of the publication history, the aesthetic paradigm, and the reception of the Pulci project, Schoina argues that it reveals "Byron's faith in the power of translation as a means of literary cosmopolitanism and progressive politics" (175).

Having addressed the political import of translations in *The Liberal*, the collection fittingly closes by considering a modern attempt to translate its spirit and ethos for today's world. In "Back to the Future: *The Liberal* from Romanticism to Postmodernism: An Interview with Benjamin Ramm," Carlotta Farese introduces Benjamin Ramm, a BBC journalist and writer who, between 2004 and 2012, edited twelve issues of a magazine that styled itself as a continuation of its Romantic predecessor. Its mission statement declared: "First founded in 1822 by the Romantic poets Percy Shelley, Lord Byron and Leigh Hunt, *The Liberal* seeks to regenerate liberalism and reinvigorate the public sphere" (239). In the list of prestigious contributors, including Hélène Cixous, Simon Armitage, and Julia Kristeva, the Romantic focus on the Italian South gave way to a concern with the global South, reflected in the presence of writers such as Wole Soyinka and Liu Xiaobo. In the interview, Ramm underscores the continuing vitality of Byron, Shelley, and Hunt's legacy, reclaiming their critique of Britain's cultural insularity, their insistence on the public role of poetry, and the relevance of these ideas to the cultural debates of the pre-Brexit years.

Highlighting the enduring resonance of *The Liberal* and its transnational concerns, this closing piece serves as a natural bridge to the second collection under review, which addresses Byron's profile as translator with a clear focus on the broader impact of his translation practices. The rich volume edited by Maria Schoina and Alexander Grammatikos, *Byron and Translation,* purports to address the lack of a full-length study of the role that translation played throughout Byron's career, from his first published collection, *Hours of Idleness* (1807)—significantly subtitled *A Series of Poems Original and Translated*—to the complex linguistic universe of *Don Juan,* shaped by multiple "interlanguage connections" (McGann 34). The nine essays by a team of international scholars not only painstakingly reconstruct Byron's investment in interlinguistic translation, examining the texts he chose to translate, how he translated them, and where he placed them in his work, but also consider his contribution to what translation studies call cultural translation: the formal models, ideas, and social practices he carried across languages and cultures.

As the editors make clear, their aim is "to discuss the poet's translations with a sustained linguistic focus while being context-sensitive" (3). Hence, their rich introduction traces Byron's ongoing engagement with translation against the broader early nineteenth-century interest in the practice, evidenced in the works of Schleiermacher, Goethe, and Madame de Staël. Explaining that, unlike his German contemporaries, Byron never "use[d] translation as a way to glorify his home nation and first language" (12), they point out how translation formed part of "his personal mission to break down barriers, understand and learn from the 'other', and to create anew" (14).

The first three essays expand on the background to Byron's translations by examining complementary facets of his engagement with non-English textuality: his reading of foreign literature, his plurilingual letter writing, and his use of poetic forms derived from foreign models. In line with Marguerite Yourcenar's belief that one of the best ways to reconstruct a man's thinking is to rebuild his library, in his "Byron's Foreign Books: Reading in Translation and in the Original" Diego Saglia interrogates Byron's "virtual

library," which he pieces together on the basis of Byron's Cambridge "Reading list" (1807) and the catalogues of the 1816 and 1827 sales of his books. His fascinating scrutiny reveals unexpected linguistic and cultural mediations—such as Byron's reading "about Italy in French … about Russian poetry in English … about Germany in English … about Tasso in English … Friedrich Schiller, Simonde de Sismondi and Xenophon in Italian" (29)—which Saglia interprets as evidence of Byron's development of "a transnational and translinguistic cultural identity" (29). A comparable detachment from monolithic notions of national identity is traced by John Havard in "'English native brutality': Locating Byron's Letters," where he examines Byron's insertion of foreign words and non-standard dialects into his letters. Drawing on recent developments in translation studies, Havard argues that these recurring instances of code-switching reveal Byron's sustained questioning of the boundary between domestic and foreign, "with a view to undermining English cultural and political hegemony" (44). With her hands-on approach to the work of translation, Catherine Addison, in "Prosodic and Generic Imitations," shifts the focus to Byron's craftsmanship, situating his translations in the context of the century-long process of adapting foreign prosodic models to English. Her close reading of Pope's and Byron's versions of the same passage from Horace's *Ars Poetica* highlights continuity at the prosodic level, supporting her thesis that Byron's translations are shaped less by semantic fidelity than by the inherited sound and rhythm of English renderings of foreign models.

The next six essays explore specific manifestations of Byron's involvement with translation across a variety of texts and paratexts—from the lyrical poems to the Eastern tales, from the plays to *Don Juan*, from the letters to the notes. They also consider the many languages he engaged with—French, Latin, ancient and modern Greek, Turkish, Armenian, and Italian—as well as the diverse forms of this engagement, including code-switching, embedded translations, adaptations, and free-standing translations. Not even "fake" translations escape attention, as evidenced in Stephen Minta's "'I know nothing of French, being all Italian': Byron and French," which opens this second section. In his extensive coverage of Byron's relationship with the French language, literature, and historiography, Minta isolates a group of poems that, in McGann's edition of Byron's works, are headed, either in the title or the subtitle, "From the French," pointing out that, with one exception, they were not in fact translations but original compositions. As Minta persuasively argues, such texts use the label of translation as a rhetorical foil allowing Byron to navigate the politically charged content of verses which engage with the figure of Napoleon both before and after Waterloo.

Code-switching and embedded translations complete the array of quasi-translation practices discussed in the collection. Filiz Turhan's essay "Byron's Turkish Matrix: 'A strange remembrance'" can be read as a companion piece to Havard's, extending the consideration of code-switching from the private context of Byron's epistolary to the public discourse of the poetry. Turhan highlights Byron's "injection of untranslated Turkish-language words into the fabric of English" (154), noting that, despite his avowed refusal to learn the language, he prided himself on his firsthand knowledge of Turkish culture, gained through his experiences in the East, which he also exhibited in his explanatory notes. Turhan argues that the Turkish words and grammatical structures incorporated in the Eastern Tales and in *Don Juan* are meant to convey both the otherness of the Oriental world and Byron's own intimate understanding of it—a trait also revealed in his frequent criticism of others' command of the language and the accuracy of their translations. Within the collection, this concern with linguistic precision emerges as a recurring feature of Byron's overall approach to translation, as evidenced by his vitriolic description of earlier translators of Francesca's episode in

Dante's *Comedy* as Francesca's "murderers" (217), along with other equally dismissive comments about translations of his own works.

Like code-switching, embedded translations create layered textual environments in which the familiar and the foreign coexist. The collection includes two essays that examine how Byron blurred the boundaries between original composition and translation by inserting passages translated from other languages within his English texts. In her ample overview of Byron's translations and adaptations from the classics—"'I have translated a good deal from both languages': Ancient Greek and Latin"—Karen Caines discusses how Byron's embedded translations serve a variety of purposes, from rhetorical amplification of his verses (Ovid in *The Bride of Abydos*), to coded allusions for "alert cognoscenti" (Lucretius in the first canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), to metaliterary indications of alternative poetic models (Sappho in canto 3 of *Don Juan*). Shifting focus from ancient to modern Greek, Alexander Grammatikos's "'Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth': Eroticism, Heroism and Gender Play in Byron's Modern Greek Translations" presents a detailed discussion of Byron's investment in Romaic culture. He focuses on both Byron's learning of the language, which was for him "*immersive, living and social*" (133), and the translations from the Romaic included in *Childe Harold canto 2*, specifically the two songs "Sons of the Greek, Arise" and "I Enter Thy Garden of Roses" and the phrasebook "Familiar Dialogues." Grammatikos's meticulous attention to Byron's linguistic and prosodic choices demonstrates the personal value translation had for Byron, showing how it enabled him to articulate "a new sense of self" (132) in both public and private spheres. Interestingly, Grammatikos mentions the inclusion, in the appendix to *Childe Harold*, of Byron's English rendering of an excerpt from the Romaic translation of Goldoni's play *Il Caffé,* which offers an additional example of the linguistic and cultural triangulations highlighted by Saglia, reinforcing the sense of a productive dialogue among the contributions to the collection.

The last two essays of the collection engage with Byron's more sustained efforts at translation, from the Armenian and from the Italian. In her essay "'By way of divertissement, I am studying daily, at an Armenian Monastery, the Armenian Language': Byron and Armenian," Anahit Bekaryan provides a detailed reconstruction of Byron's relationship with the community of Armenian friars on the island of Saint Lazarus in the Venetian lagoon. Impressed by the Mechitarists' work as active translators from Greek, Persian, Syriac, and Latin, Byron began learning the language and later translated two of Paul's epistles to the Corinthians, alongside passages from Armenian historians and portions of a long contemporary poem. While pointing out that Byron relished the intellectual challenge posed by what he described as "the most difficult thing I could discover here [in Venice] for an amusement" (179), Bekaryan sees his translations from the Armenian as demonstrations of his attachment to what he called "an oppressed and a noble nation, which has partaken of the proscription and bondage of the Jews and of the Greeks, without the sullenness of the former or the servility of the latter" (183).

Cultural and political motives also help explain Byron's particular regard for the Italian language, which naturally extended to his appreciation of Italian literature. In her closing contribution to the volume ("'The *acme* of putting one language into another': Byron's Translations from the Italian"), Maria Schoina takes into account the translations that Byron embedded in his works (Vincenzo da Filicaja's patriotic sonnet "Italia, Italia, O tu cui feo la sorte" in *Childe Harold canto 4*; Dante's lines from *Purgatorio* 8 in *Don Juan*) together with his free-standing translations from Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* and from Dante's Paolo and Francesca episode in *Inferno* 5, published only posthumously in 1830. Building on the analysis begun in her contribution to the volume on *The Liberal,* her perceptive comparisons of source and target texts follow Byron's progression from his paraphrastic

rendering of Filicaja's sonnet to his later resolve to preserve both the letter and form of Pulci. While Schoina concurs with the established view that this move, respectful of the intrinsic characteristics of the source texts, played a crucial role in the development of Byron's own style and poetic concerns, she shifts the attention onto its more general effects: first, "the renewal of English poetry on a prosodic, stylistic and ideological level" (200); second, the opening of British culture to the diversity of Italian language and culture, which she frames as "the multiple benefits of intercultural literary practice" (218).

When seen in this light, it appears that Byron's increasing adoption of what translation studies term a "foreignizing" approach—"a translation that seeks to register linguistic and cultural differences" (Venuti xiii)—involved not only his choices of translation strategies, but also his selection of source texts that themselves functioned as vectors of cultural differences, countering dominant values in the receiving culture. Both *Byron and Translation* and *Imprinting Anglo-Italian Relations in* The Liberal highlight the resulting "resistance against ethnocentrism … cultural narcissism and imperialism" (Venuti 16) as distinguishing feature of the Romantic interplay of languages, cultures, and rhetorical strategies that they collectively examine. Deepening our understanding of context- and author-specific cultural practices, the two collections underscore how Romantic concerns with translation, cultural exchange, and the politics of literature continue to shape present-day debates on cross-cultural dialogue and the public role of literary discourse.

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Wordsworth(ians) on War

Wordsworth's Trauma and Poetry 1793–1803, by Richard E. Matlak, New York and London, Routledge, 2024, x + 167 pp., 7 illustrations.

Wordsworth After War: Recovering Peace in the Later Poetry, by Philip Shaw, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2023, xi + 276 pp., 5 illustrations.

Wordsworth After War is a misleading—or else disturbingly ironic—title. One feature that Philip Shaw's book shares with Richard Matlak's *Wordsworth's Trauma and Poetry 1793–1803* is that the Wordsworth of these two wartime monographs is continually going through the traumas of war. Other than that, however, the two Wordsworth books could