

Transnational England

Transnational England:
Home and Abroad, 1780-1860

Edited by

Monika Class and Terry F. Robinson

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P U B L I S H I N G

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For our parents,
Heidi and Walter Claß
and
Jim and Sharon Robinson,
with love

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Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

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INTRODUCTION

MONIKA CLASS AND TERRY F. ROBINSON

Transnational England: Home and Abroad, 1780-1860 examines the reception and influence of foreign thought and culture in England during a time of increased travel, imperial conquest, and global conflict. Offering new and wide-ranging insight into England's relationships with other nations in an era that saw the vast expansion of the British Empire, the American and French Revolutions, and the Napoleonic Wars, this collection maintains that cross-national analyses of the period should attend not only to the associations between England and Western Europe, as in traditional comparative studies, but also to the connections between England and other world communities. The essays contained herein broach this topic by investigating, in the literature of the period, England's interaction with European, American, Eastern, and Asian nations. They show how English authors, inspired by the increasing attention to the global, brought inter/transcultural issues to bear in their writing and employed a wide variety of literary genres—drama, poetry, travel narratives, novels, hymns, and prose—to confront affiliations and differences between self and other, near and far, the familiar and the foreign. The collection, as a whole, reveals that the commingling of diverse social, artistic, religious, and political trends, resulting from English contact with domestic and distant others, ultimately worked to blur distinctions between England and other nations. It further illuminates how the formation of English identity or “Englishness” depended greatly upon a dialogue with other lands and their peoples, fostering a reciprocity that served both to define the ideological borders of the English nation and to expose their tenuous construction.

The word “transnational” was coined in the early twentieth century to refer particularly to economic exchange between nations,¹ but has since been adapted to denote any interest “extending beyond national bounds or

¹ See Norman Angell, *The Fruits of Victory: A Sequel to “The Great Illusion”* (New York: The Century Co., 1921) xxviii, 9, 13, 61, 62, 67, 80.

frontiers.”² In this latter sense, the “transnational” overlaps definitionally with the “global”; however, as the anthropologist Michael Kearney points out, the “transnational” has “a more limited purview”: “Whereas global processes are largely decentered from specific national territories and take place in a global space, transnational processes are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states.”³ Because of its attention to specific communities, the “transnational” avoids the homogenizing potential with which the “global” has frequently been associated. It is this understanding of the transnational that we wish to evoke regarding England’s encounters with other nations between 1780 and 1860.

While applying a modern-day term to describe cross-cultural interactions during the late eighteenth through mid nineteenth centuries could raise charges of anachronism, the essays in this collection reveal how transnational concerns are hardly a modern invention. As postcolonial criticism and transatlantic scholarship have shown, the intersection of cultures does not begin and end at the nation’s edge, but involves a crossing of geographical and ideological boundaries.⁴ During the period in question, as England began increasing the export of its political, economic, and aesthetic doctrines across Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas, it also, necessarily, became engaged in the act of importing the resources, ideas, and cultures of other nations, often actively and willingly, and often as a by-product of such contact. As a result, the construction of the English nation occurred not in a vacuum, but as a dynamic process, shaped by England’s engagements with other countries. Conceptually,

² *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) <<http://www.oed.com>>.

³ Michael Kearney, “The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 548. As Kearney reveals, the “transnational” is the term of choice when referring, for example, to migration of nationals across the borders of one or more nations” (548).

⁴ See, for instance, Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, eds. *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992); Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor, *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2007); Lance Newman, Joel Pace, and Chris Koenig-Woodyard, *Transatlantic Romanticism: An Anthology of British, American, and Canadian Literature, 1767-1867* (New York: Longman, 2006); and Alan Richardson and Sonia Hofkosh, *Romanticism, Race, and Imperial Culture, 1780-1834* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996).

England's diplomatic and imperialistic endeavors might be imagined as having formed a series of Venn diagrammatic circles, connecting the English nation to other nations worldwide, and indicating, in their overlapping spaces, fields of interaction and exchange that extended beyond national boundaries and that proved mutually constitutive. It is in this way that the collection calls particular attention to the "trans" of the "transnational," for while the root word maintains the concept of the nation and the potential for uniformity or diversity therein, the prefix points to the crisscrossing of nations, their cultures, and their borders, and suggests how such intersections inform or de-form nationhood itself. Indeed, the transnational highlights the interconnection between peoples and places, and simultaneously emphasizes the importance of examining the fluid rather than fixed nature of national identity.

I.

Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait, *Mrs Baldwin in Eastern Dress* (1782) (Figure 1), provides an especially fascinating example of the transnational at work in late eighteenth-century England in terms of both commercial and cultural exchange. In addition to telling the story of how historians—in this case, Reynolds himself—have tended to favor an economically-imbued portrayal of cross-national ties, it also demonstrates how present-day transnational research, by revisiting the past and uncovering the sometimes hidden narratives of intellectual and artistic encounter, can shed new light on the harrowing and heartening legacies of global contact and correspondence.

Reynolds's painting depicts the nineteen-year-old English beauty, Jane Baldwin, gracefully sporting a turban fashioned out of what appears to be white and pink silk, crowned with a small bouquet of tea roses. It is an accoutrement that calls to mind the turn-of-the-century vogue for wearing Eastern-style headdresses, a trend stimulated by Britain's increased economic and diplomatic ties with the Ottoman Empire. Unlike many contemporary portraits, however, which represent artistic or aristocratic men and women donning turbans and/or other ornaments such as tassel decorations, shawls, sashes, and fur wraps but otherwise wearing English clothing, Reynolds's image of the alluring and enigmatic Jane Baldwin is noteworthy for its early depiction of an English woman dressed in oriental



Figure 1: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Mrs Baldwin in Eastern Dress*. Oil on canvas, 1782. © Compton Verney.

clothing from head to toe.⁵ While women and men were known to attend masquerades in foreign dress, often having their costumes crafted in England from couture designs, Baldwin wore the depicted gown to a ball given by George III, and as Aileen Ribeiro notes, it was a “genuine costume that Reynolds was painting.”⁶ Indeed, Baldwin most likely brought the ensemble with her on her visit to England from her Eastern home.

Born in Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey), Jane Baldwin, née Maltass (1763-1839), was the daughter of Yorkshire parents Margaret Icard and William Maltass, a merchant of the Levant Company. At the age of sixteen, having “scarcely emerged from childhood,”⁷ she married the wealthy George Baldwin, an English merchant stationed in Alexandria, Egypt who later became that country’s British Consul-General and the British Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Tehran. Considered one of the most attractive women of her day, Jane Baldwin captured the attention of many admirers during her travels, including Emperor Joseph II, who commissioned a bust portrait of her by Giuseppe Ceracchi; the Prince of Wales; and the elderly Dr. Samuel Johnson who asked and gained permission to kiss her.⁸ In England, she earned the sobriquet the “pretty Greek”⁹ not because she was of Hellenic descent (she had no Eastern-European blood) but because she, having been born and raised in the Greek region of Western Turkey, identified with that community as her own.

⁵ Other early portraits of Western European women in full Ottoman attire include Jonathan Richardson’s *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in Turkish Dress with Page* (c.1725), Jean-Étienne Liotard’s *Monsieur Levett et Mademoiselle Glavani en Costume Turc* (c.1740), and Angelica Kauffmann’s *Portrait of Mary, Third Duchess of Richmond* (1775).

⁶ Aileen Ribeiro, *The Dress Worn at Masquerades in England, 1730 to 1790, and Its Relation to Fancy Dress in Portraiture* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1984) 232. For information regarding the fashion for masquerading in Turkish, Persian, and Greek costume, see Ribeiro 232-48. Jane Baldwin was not the first English woman to be depicted wearing authentic oriental attire. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for instance, in a number of portraits, wears Turkish costumes that she had procured during her foreign residence and travels; see Ribeiro 226-29. The direct influence of Reynolds’s portrait of Jane Baldwin on nineteenth-century British orientalist painting can be seen in Henry William Pickersgill’s *The Oriental Love Letter* (1824).

⁷ “Mrs. Baldwin,” *Gentleman’s Magazine*, New Series, 12 (Dec. 1839): 657.

⁸ “Mrs. Baldwin” 657.

⁹ Hester Lynch Thrale, *Thralania: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809*, ed. Katherine C. Balderston, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1942) I: 531.

In the portrait, Jane Baldwin's luxuriously brocaded emerald and gold striped Persian caftan, sprigged with cherry-colored flowers, envelops her frame, and is enhanced by an ermine mantle. Her dark chestnut hair, braided into multiple long, looping strands, and her jewelry, featuring a diamond or pearl waterfall necklace, gold teardrop earrings, and a gold chain and pendant, complement her "exotic" style. Couched on a red velvet divan studded at its base with brass tacks, Jane Baldwin sits seductively in a cross-legged pose while gazing upon an ancient coin of Smyrna.

First exhibited at the Royal Academy in the early months of 1783,¹⁰ Reynolds's portrait would have been recognized by those familiar with Jane Baldwin's celebrity as an image of the famous English woman in Persian dress. For those unfamiliar with her status, however, the painting's nondescript title, "Portrait of a Grecian lady,"¹¹ would have framed the image as that of an anonymous, native Greek woman.¹² The difference between these potential viewing experiences sheds light on how Baldwin—a woman neither fully English nor fully Greek (nor Turkish nor Persian)—physically embodied a mixture of English and Eastern cultures. For even though she dons foreign fashions, the portrait suggests through her body language that they, and the peoples and lands with which they are associated, are not foreign to her. She may be an English woman, but her home—as indicated by her visual attention to an Ionian relic and her relaxed adoption of a seated position that, according to English custom, would be considered unfamiliar and potentially uncouth—is not in England.

In the painting, Reynolds indicates that the agent of cultural confluence is economic trade, here metonymically represented in the coin that Jane Baldwin holds in her right hand. Reynolds invites us, as viewers, to participate visually in this exchange, as our gaze upon Baldwin—a woman associated with multiple nations—becomes caught up in her act of gazing

¹⁰ Martin Postle, *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005) 220.

¹¹ Postle 220. See also Gustav Friedrich Waagen who similarly titles Reynolds's painting of Mrs. Baldwin "A Portrait of a Greek lady" in *Treasures of Art in Great Britain: Being an Account of the Chief Collections of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, Illuminated MSS., &c. &c.* 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1854) III: 160.

¹² Like the title, the impressionistic landscape of trees and clouds towards the upper left-hand corner of the painting provided viewers no information about the sitter's origin, though Baldwin was said to have told the author of her obituary that the trees were those in London's Temple Gardens; see "Mrs. Baldwin" 657.

at the coin. Moving our eyes from her to the coin and back again, we find that we are taking part in a motion that links the cross-border circulation of people and goods to the vehicle of commerce. Indeed, Baldwin's pose—her focused attention to the coin—suggests that she herself meditates on her own connection to the marketplace, and given her status as the daughter and wife of English merchants, her contemplation of the coin is literally apropos, since as a woman living in eighteenth-century society, she, too, might be considered a commodity associated with and subject to masculine exchange.¹³

That said, Baldwin does not appear without agency. Reynolds's portrait of her is candid; the impromptu nature of the portrayal suggests that she is wrapped up in thought, seemingly unaware of being the focus of the artist's or another viewer's gaze. To be sure, Reynolds has crafted her into an exceptional visual object while simultaneously creating the impression that she is too elevated to be considered a mere commodity. She appears to act independently, ostensibly bringing together cultures not as an affected performance for an audience, but as a manifestation of her persona in her own right. There is a quality of self-possession and authenticity that Reynolds wishes to convey here. Even so, this depiction of Baldwin is not as true-to-life as Reynolds might make it seem: something has gone missing from this portrait of cultural intersection.

During Baldwin's several sittings for Reynolds, she read a volume of works by the recently deceased and highly celebrated Italian poet and dramatist, Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782).¹⁴ It was this—a book—that she held in her right hand and perused during the painting of her portrait, not Reynolds's substituted coin. Imagine for a moment, then, that in the image Baldwin holds not a piece of money, but a collection of literature. The painting's narrative thus takes on a different hue: rather than commenting upon Baldwin's relationship to a world economy, it highlights her cosmopolitan erudition and further suggests an ethos of cultural exchange colored less by marketplace transactions and more by the artistic and discursive connections between nations.

While Reynolds's replacement of Jane Baldwin's book with a coin bespeaks his desire to be frank about the financial conditions that led to her fortune and fame, his doing so also suggests how depictions of and

¹³ Even in the twenty-first century, Jane Baldwin's persona maintains its tie to the marketplace. On July 1, 2004, Sotheby's in London sold her portrait for a record £3,365,600, five times the reserve price and the highest amount ever paid for a portrait of a woman by a British artist. The remarkable event was recorded by the *BBC News* and the *Telegraph*, among others; see Bennett and "Reynolds."

¹⁴ Postle 220.

conversations about the associations between world communities are often relegated to economic concerns. Imagining a volume of Italian poetry in Baldwin's hand augments this portrait of global exchange by highlighting how nations and their people meet not only through commodity trade (in which the manufacture and retail of books no doubt play an important role) but also through the intellectual export and import of art and ideas. This fresh pictorial prospect captures, accordingly, a more local and intimate portrait of how individuals foster cultural intersections. As mentioned above, Baldwin assumes a degree of agency in the painting, and, given this alternative narrative of her book reading, she would appear to do so even more. Rather than containing a direct commentary on her debt to the marketplace, this revised portrait would offer a new vision, one in which she seemingly manifests the transnational through her own volition: Baldwin, the daughter of Yorkshire parents, has chosen to wear oriental garb from her "foreign" homeland, has chosen to read a Roman author, and has chosen to do so while sitting for a quintessentially English artist.¹⁵ Picturing her alternately, then, with a coin or a book in hand awakens the portrait's full figurative potential, ultimately allowing for a

¹⁵ As a prolific eighteenth-century painter, the first President of the Royal Academy, the author of the *Discourses on Art*, and the founder and leader of the national "School of English Artists," Sir Joshua Reynolds has long been considered "the embodiment of British art"; see Martin Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Subject Pictures* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 274. As scholars have revealed, however, the notion that Reynolds developed an exclusively English style was a fiction manufactured by those interested in promoting high art in England. Calling attention instead to the fact that Reynolds "was a member of a cosmopolitan community of artists," Robert Rosenblum points out the influence of French artists on Reynolds's painting style, and the early twentieth-century critic Alan Burroughs, finding evidence in Reynolds's work of an "Italian ideal," suggests that "If Reynolds was England's 'first painter,' then he was so by virtue of studious contact with other schools of art"; see Rosenblum, "Reynolds in an International Milieu," *Reynolds*, ed. Nicholas Penny (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986) 44, and Burroughs, "Portrait of Mrs. Baldwin," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 149.892 (Sept. 1924): 505. Postle confirms this assessment, stating that "Reynolds's concept of a British School . . . was one which co-existed with, and drew inspiration from European models" (*Sir Joshua* 284). Reynolds's many travels to the Continent and observation of foreign artistic techniques thus influenced how he produced his own "English" paintings. The epitome of English style was, indeed, a transnational one. The fact, then, that Reynolds executed his portrait of Jane Baldwin on his own initiative and kept it for himself throughout his life attests not just to his likely attraction to Jane Baldwin but also to his fascination for the way in which she, in her person, brought together multiple cultures.

more complete representation of cross-cultural relations in the period—one that acknowledges both the costs and benefits of national intersection.

II.

Transnational England represents an effort to recover some of the literature that has gone missing from our own portrait of England's relationships with other nations during a period of dramatic economic, political, intellectual, and artistic enterprise. While the factual documentation of wars and uprisings, legislative acts, governmental records, and financial transactions most certainly aids our understanding of history, the story of a nation's past can be more fully understood when we acknowledge the role of literature in its constitution. As Timothy Brennan saliently points out, "Nations . . . depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role"; it is for this reason that "the modern nation-state in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is inseparable from the forms and subjects of imaginative literature."¹⁶ Brennan's term "imaginative literature" is useful, especially if we think of it as encompassing not just fiction but all creative genres—including travel writing and biography, for instance—that participate in the construction of national identity.

The essays in this collection illustrate the vital role of literature in forming England into an identifiable and unique place, but they also show that just as literature shapes a nation, it simultaneously questions its inalienability and exclusivity. In the period between 1780-1860, many literary works that attempt to define English national identity necessarily oscillate between localization and displacement. In this, they exemplify the transnational, which entails the dialogic interplay of concepts such as "home" and "abroad," revealing them to be, in fact, linked terms. Examples from just a few contemporary poems can elucidate this phenomenon.

In "Constancy to an Ideal Object" (comp. 1804-1807?), Samuel Taylor Coleridge constructs a vision of England while journeying abroad in Malta, Sicily, and Italy.¹⁷ Addicted to opium, depressed, homesick, and in love with Sara Hutchinson, he seeks a place to find comfort and envisions

¹⁶ Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form," *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 49, 48.

¹⁷ Coleridge began the poem during his stay in Malta, but completed it many years later. See Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998) 62.

a cottage as a cure to his distress: “To have a home, an English home, and thee!”¹⁸ It is during his travels in the Mediterranean that Coleridge imagines England as an ideal object. Here, “home” cannot be “home” for Coleridge without the “abroad” to frame it.

When Felicia Hemans prefaces her patriotic poem “The Homes of England” (1828) with an epigraph from Sir Walter Scott’s *Marmion* (1808) that challenges, “Where’s the coward that would not dare / To fight for such a land?”, one must then recognize that Hemans’s subsequent description of “The Homes of England” as “stately,” “merry,” “blessed,” and “free” can only be defined as such insofar as they are shaped and shadowed by the spectre of global war.¹⁹ In her poem, the homes of England are synecdochically related to England the nation, a space that is further made manifest as a consequence of a threat from outside forces.

William Wordsworth, a poet often identified as a “localist,”²⁰ connects “home” to a specific place in England after having traveled back and forth between the island and the Continent. His anxiety to anchor himself to an English village emerges in his poem, “Home at Grasmere” (comp. 1800),²¹ through repetitions of the word “here”:

dear Vale,
One of thy lowly dwellings is my home!
.....
 . . . No where else is found—
No where . . . can be found—
The one sensation that is here; ’tis here
Here as it found its way into my heart
In childhood, here, as it abides by day,

¹⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Constancy to an Ideal Object,” 1828, *Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose*, ed. Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson, and Raimonda Modiano (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2004) 210, line 18.

¹⁹ Felicia Hemans, “The Homes of England,” *Records of Woman: With Other Poems*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: T. Cadell, 1828) 169-71, lines 1, 9, 17, 33. Irene Basey Bessemeyer suggests that *Marmion*, Scott’s poem about the Battle of Flodden (1513), is a direct commentary upon the French Revolution; see her essay “‘The Vision of Enchantment’s Past’: Walter Scott Rescripts the Revolution in *Marmion*,” *Scottish Studies Review* 1 (Winter 2000): 63-77.

²⁰ David Simpson, “The Limits of Cosmopolitanism and the Case for Translation,” *European Romantic Review* 16.2 (Apr. 2005): 145.

²¹ Though the dating of composition of the poem is problematic, Stephen Gill agrees with Jonathan Wordsworth that it is “almost in its entirety, a poem of 1800”; see Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life*, 1989 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 455.

By night, here only; . . .²²

Even Wordsworth, however, relinquishes the notion of fixing his home immovably to a particular place, and gives way to a slightly more cosmopolitan notion of residence—a localized cosmopolitanism, one might say—where the local becomes transportable. While he does ultimately imagine home as “A Centre . . . / A Whole,” he also recognizes that it is, finally, a concept, carried “in chosen minds / That take it with them hence, where’er they go.”²³

In these brief examples, poets fashion the contours of the English nation out of encounters with the foreign, and, in so doing, secure identity by drawing upon alterity. Literary works such as these illustrate how writers form their nationalizing narratives within larger global contexts and thereby reveal how the transnational beat at the very heart of English culture.

Because of its ability to offer a way to view political and socio-cultural practices without reducing them solely to local, national, or global agendas, the study of the transnational has begun to flourish in literary studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a number of influential academic conferences and publications show. In 2004, Jeffrey N. Cox and Jill Heydt-Stevenson focused the attention of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism (NASSR) on the sister-term “cosmopolitanism” in an effort to raise questions about its multiple and contested meanings; its potential to camouflage imperialism, colonization, and the exploitation of native cultures; its connection to democratization; and its prospective links to the “transnational.”²⁴ In 2007, the University of Wolverhampton and the Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines organized the day-conference “Transnational Identities I: Residence Abroad,” which examined the “sense of ‘country’ as an unstable and transportable text, subject to transculturation, translation, and transformation.”²⁵ In 2008, the British Association for Romantic Studies (BARS) and the German Gesellschaft für Englische

²² William Wordsworth, “Home at Grasmere,” *William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry*, ed. Stephen Gill and Duncan Wu (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 91, 93, lines 52-53, 154-59.

²³ Wordsworth 93, lines 167, 168, 159-60.

²⁴ See Jill Heydt-Stevenson and Jeffrey N. Cox, “Introduction: Are Those Who Are ‘Strangers Nowhere in the World’ at Home Anywhere: Thinking about Romantic Cosmopolitanism,” *European Romantic Review* 16.2 (Apr. 2005): 131.

²⁵ Sharon Ruston, “BARS: Transnational Identities I,” e-mail to British Association for Romantic Studies Mailing List, 3 March 2007.

Romantik (GER) hosted in Munich “Romantic Localities,” a conference that investigated how Romantic-era writers responded to the languages and landscapes of the Continent, the Orient, the South Seas, and North America. Adding to this, the organizers of the 2008 NASSR supernumerary conference, “Trans(National) Identities: Reimagining Communities,” in Bologna, Italy, among them Greg Kucich, a contributor to this collection, set out to explore, more broadly, “issues such as identity-formation, the development of national cultures, the relevance of cosmopolitan and international ideas, the possibility of transnational aesthetics, and a wealth of intercultural exchanges and influences.”²⁶

Such events indicate a new trend in late eighteenth- to mid nineteenth-century literary and cultural studies, which has also manifested itself in a number of recent publications that seek to understand the complex relationship between England’s imperialist enterprise and its constitution as a nation. For example, in 2004, Christopher A. Bayly, in his detailed and ambitious study *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, coined the term “archaic globalization” in order to denote the eighteenth-century shift toward establishing political and cultural uniformity.²⁷ In her book, *Slavery, Colonialism and Connoisseurship: Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literary Transnationalism* (2006), Nandini Bhattacharya similarly introduces a new term: “transnation”—a trope for “the political and social transformation of those subjects, agents, nations and nationalities in the vast global flows of things and people that characterized the early modern era, especially the eighteenth century.”²⁸ Her study investigates nascent transnationality in the works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Phillis Wheatley, James Cobb, and George Colman, Jr. “as a new way of rereading eighteenth-century colonialism and globalization.”²⁹ More recently, Jeffrey Cass and Larry Peer have taken the discussion of literary and cultural transnationalism into an alternative direction by viewing the transnational in the context of the postcolonial polemic against comparative studies. As Cass states provocatively, “Damrosch, Spivak, and Bassnett eschew a literary ideology that constructs absolute national boundaries, draws linguistic lines of demarcation, and obstinately clings to

²⁶ Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Gregory Kucich, “NASSR Supernumerary 2008: (Trans)National Identities—Reimagining Communities, Conference Report,” *NASSR Newsletter* 17.1 (Apr. 2008): 2.

²⁷ Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (London: Blackwell, 2004) 34-46.

²⁸ Nandini Bhattacharya, *Slavery, Colonialism and Connoisseurship: Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literary Transnationalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) 3.

²⁹ Bhattacharya 2.

traditional norms of scholarship and erudition that exclude transnational literary forms, versions, genres, and authors.”³⁰ Michael Wiley’s *Romantic Migrations: Local, National, and Transnational Dispositions* (2008) also addresses the transnational, but from a different angle, with a look at how the French Revolution, the American Revolutionary War, and the slave trade forced the dispersion of populations and spurred emigration. Wiley reveals that these mass movements of people across borders destabilized British national identity and opened up opportunities for the creation of cross-cultural dialogue in an increasingly shifting world. Finally, Greg Kucich and Keith Hanley’s collection of essays, *Nineteenth-Century Worlds* (2008), explores more broadly how the emergence of the transnational gave rise to “new material frameworks and conceptual models for comprehending major human categories—such as race, gender, subjectivity, and national identity—in global terms.”³¹ They argue that by examining the ways in which these “interweaving forces” altered human experience in the nineteenth century, we can better comprehend the virtues and ills of globalization in the modern age.³²

Investigations such as these have sparked the creation of a critical mosaic—an ongoing and colorful assemblage of insights into the implications of imperial expansion and global exchange during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To this growing and ever-more discernable image of cultural conjunction, the essays in *Transnational England: Home and Abroad, 1780-1860* contribute a number of unique and multifaceted tiles that illuminate how literature, in particular, plays a vital role in shaping nationhood and national identity. They demonstrate how the act of locating and sifting through material once-buried in the ideological interstices between England and other nations can reveal remarkable finds: here, the difficulty in the Romantic and early Victorian eras of locating a sense of home, the familiar, or the domestic (in its private as well as political significations) in one place, one community, or one territory only.

³⁰ Jeffrey Cass, “Introduction: Heterotopia and Romantic Border Crossings,” *Romantic Border Crossings*, ed. Jeffrey Cass and Larry Peer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 5.

³¹ Keith Hanley and Greg Kucich, eds. *Nineteenth Century Worlds: Global Formations Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008) n.pag.

³² Hanley and Kucich n.pag., 1-2.

III.

Transnational England is divided into three sections. The first examines how English dramas in the Romantic to early Victorian periods often served as forums within which authors addressed contemporary representations of gender, race, and identity in an attempt either to reinforce prejudices or to recalibrate social responses to them. In the latter case, the essays demonstrate that by staging cultural tensions that arose from the meeting and clashing of English and foreign cultures, playwrights denaturalized domestic, nationalist, and generic paradigms in order to stimulate discussion and posit alternative possibilities. The second section addresses how religious and prophetic viewpoints from outside of England shaped ecclesiastical, scriptural, and divinatory knowledge formation within England itself. Exploring issues as varied as Anglican doctrinal practice, Unitarian biblical exegesis, and Blakean vatic revelation, the essays reveal that transnational exchanges and perspectives directly influenced the work and beliefs of England's spiritual leaders and reformers. The third and final section takes up the concept of cultural authority with a specific look at how early nineteenth-century writers accepted or resisted nationalist discourses of English dominance. The essays show how authors adopted a number of strategies for dealing with tensions between self and other, from advocating cultural appropriation and/or emulation, to voicing opposition against colonialist practices, to seeking cooperation and common ground, and to employing an often paradoxical combination of these approaches. Addressing concerns such as colonialism, orientalism, and authorial supremacy, this section explores how British national identity was in part both formed and compromised through its imperialist quest to dominate other peoples and their voices.

Section one begins with Greg Kucich's essay, which links the unfavorable audience reaction to Hannah Cowley's blend of dramatic genres in her play *A Day in Turkey, or the Russian Slaves* (1791) to anxieties over English intermixture with racial and cultural others. Kucich argues that Cowley self-consciously created a hybrid comedic form to highlight the concept that the nation, much like the drama, is not fixed, but is fluid and malleable, and contends that Cowley's mixing of genres echoes contemporary generic experimentation on the part of women writers who were interested in accounting for women's roles in history. He further shows how *A Day in Turkey*, which stages transcultural unions between women and men, reveals that rather than fostering national, class, and gender divisions and thereby securing borders, women's sexual partnerships foster a feminist cosmopolitan hybridity that invites border

crossing and demonstrates the vital role of women in creating mutually enriching global ties.

Dana Van Kooy also discusses the purposive mixture of genres in Percy Shelley's drama *Hellas* (1822), but she ties Shelley's blending of generic forms to the topic of political transgression and the Italian performance tradition of improvisation. Van Kooy suggests that in *Hellas* Shelley adopts the role of an *improvvisatore*, combining various dramatic types and juxtaposing literary and historical scenes in order to elicit a dialogic inquiry about the relationship between philhellenic ideals, the monumental status of classical tragedy, and Romantic-era events. Focusing on both the historical and modern-day struggle between the Greeks and Persian/Turkish invaders, *Hellas* envisages Greek liberation from Eastern domination. Rather than idealizing revolution and its subsequent violence, however, *Hellas* critiques the nostalgia associated with European Hellenism, which, while seeming to embrace Greece, actually compromises ancient Greek political and aesthetic ideals in the name of a modern ideology of warfare. Shelley's improvisational mixture of genres, Van Kooy contends, thus exposes the disturbing cultural foundations of Western imperialism.

In another essay that discusses the deployment of multiple forms, this time with regard to character, Frederick Burwick shows how the representation of French people in British drama c.1780-1830 mirrored contemporary socio-political attitudes surrounding the French Revolution. Taking shape as both characters and caricatures, on-stage depictions of the French played to audience members' affection for and prejudice against their Continental neighbors. Burwick's overview provides an insightful look into British attitudes toward the French from the years prior to the establishment of the National Assembly through the years following the Battle of Waterloo and reveals how British socio-political concerns and partisan convictions strongly colored theatrical portrayals of the French.

Leigh Hunt's authorship of *A Legend of Florence* (1840)—a drama inspired by the rich cultural, intellectual, and political climate of Italy—reflects, as Michael Eberle-Sinatra demonstrates in the final essay of the first section, not only a literary exchange between England and Italy, but also Hunt's own movement from critic to playwright. Eberle-Sinatra argues that during the creation of his play, Hunt engaged in his own version of border crossing as he managed the transition between writing about and writing for the stage. A complex maneuver that required Hunt to reach beyond his own intellectual boundaries, the shift from critic to dramatist challenged and enriched his thoughts regarding the work of the theater.

Beginning the second section, which concerns how English spiritual leaders interpreted non-native religious material, biblical scholarship, and prophetic perspectives, Ben Whitworth examines the absorption of Latin hymns from the Catholic Breviary and Missal into Anglican liturgical practice during the first half of the nineteenth century. Whitworth argues that due to anti-Catholic prejudice within England, Latin hymns could be accepted into the national Church only when clerical scholars—Isaac Williams, John Chandler, John Henry Newman, and Richard Mant—established precedents for their being ancient and patristic. This, in combination with the translation of the hymns into metrical forms and vocabulary more familiar to an English audience, effaced concerns about doctrinal corruption and resulted in the Church of England's adoption of Catholic hymnody.

Anthony John Harding also explores exchanges between England and the Continent with his investigation of Coleridge's transnational Bible studies. Harding suggests that Unitarian influences at Cambridge inspired Coleridge to visit Göttingen, Germany, the European nucleus of classical and biblical erudition. There, he began an engagement with biblical scholarship that recognized modern Protestantism's failure to reconcile ancient history with the biblical narrative, either through strictly literal or narratological readings. In response, as Harding demonstrates, Coleridge formulated a new approach to defending biblical credibility through what he called "involution," the idea that scriptural revelation is progressive in that the full significance of ancient biblical events may often be realized only in the present day. Coleridge's transnational foray into hermeneutics is thus transhistorical as well.

In the next essay, David Fallon discusses William Blake's self-constitution as a prophet, arguing that this role, which was colored by the gentlemanly ideal of disinterestedness, allowed Blake to adopt a universal subject position from which he could both critique the English nation and envisage a brighter future for it. Such objectivity was not, however, without its problems for Blake, as Fallon argues, since he was concerned about slipping into generalization at the expense of the particular. As a consequence, Blake pushed the elitist discourse of disinterested patriotism toward more democratic and progressive ends through an emphasis upon the individual citizen who takes part in the communal construction of the nation. This negotiation between the patriot and the prophet, then, allowed Blake to adopt a transnational perspective that took into account both the local and the global.

The third section of the collection examines literary engagements with English cultural authority and colonialist practices. Aaron Landau tackles