

Series Editor's Preface

The reception of British authors in Britain has in good part been studied; indeed, it forms our literary history. By contrast, the reception of British authors in Europe has not been examined in any systematic, long-term or large-scale way. With the volume on Swift, we altered the Series title to 'The Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe', as a reminder that many writers previously travelling under the British flag may now be considered or claimed as belonging to the Republic of Ireland (1948), or Eire. A figure like Darwin, indubitably English, has a claim, now largely recognized, on the attention of the world; but the story of his reception in Europe has only partially been unfolded. If Science speaks, or claims to speak, a universal language, it still must communicate with and through the various languages in which understanding is sought.

It is the aim of this Series to initiate and forward the study of the reception of British and Irish authors in Continental Europe, or, as we would now say, the rest of Europe as a whole, rather than as isolated national histories with a narrow national perspective. The perspectives of other nations greatly add to our understanding of individual contributors to that history. The history of the reception of British and Irish authors extends our knowledge of their capacity to stimulate and to call forth new responses, not only in their own disciplines but in wider fields and to diverse publics in a variety of historical circumstances. Often these responses provide quite unexpected and enriching insights into our own history, politics and culture. Individual works and personalities take on new dimensions and facets. They may also be subject to enlightening critiques. Our knowledge of British and Irish authors is simply incomplete and inadequate without these reception studies.

By 'authors' we intend writers in any field whose works have been recognized as making a contribution to the intellectual and cultural history of our society. Thus the Series includes literary figures, such as Laurence Sterne, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, philosophers such as Francis Bacon and David Hume, historians and political figures such as Edmund Burke, and scientists such as Charles Darwin and Isaac Newton, whose works have had a broad impact on thinking in every field. In *David Hume* we saw how a local, eighteenth-century Scot became by the twentieth century simply 'Hume', a name in world philosophy that stands with Aristotle or Kant as representing a position or certain doctrines and modes of thought; but the study of his reception also gives us back a more diverse, various individual: a brilliant stylist, a provocative sceptic or deist, a man of the Enlightenment, an innovator in aesthetics and belles-lettres, a pioneering economic theorist whose ideas underpin those of Adam Smith, a major British historian (with Gibbon, Robertson and Macaulay), whose *History of England* was the leading work on the subject for a hundred years, and, finally, a force to be reckoned with in the major disputes that challenged the religious world view and ushered in the scientific over two crucial centuries. In the present volume, we see how Charles Darwin, in many ways a traditional English amateur naturalist and

essayist, a writer whose works were accessible to a wide public, became the founder of modern biological science, the provider of the long-sought 'mechanism' of development, the bane of many forms of established religion, and, branded as 'Darwinism', the source of a dangerous doctrine of liberation. In this case, too, we see how reception abroad returns a writer home, magnified and transformed, through the work of leading thinkers abroad, both his supporters and his opponents.

In some cases individual works of the same author have dealt with different subjects, each with virtually its own reception history; so Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790) was instantaneously translated, and moulded thinking on the power struggles in the Europe of his own day; his youthful *Inquiry into the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* exerted a powerful influence on aesthetic thought and the practice of writing and remains a seminal work for certain genres of fiction. Similarly, each of Laurence Sterne's two major works of fiction, *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*, has its own history of reception, giving rise to a whole line of literary movements, innovative progeny and concomitant critical theory in most European countries. The reception of a writer's different works may also differ markedly from country to country; in the case of Hume, his most ground-breaking and original work, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, was much less read, in France, than the attractive essays of the *Enquiries*; but in Germany it was translated and actively discussed, leading to what Kant himself termed his 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy, after Hume had 'awakened him from his dogmatic slumber'. Darwin too presented different faces through his different works, whether his detailed, painstaking studies of individual organisms (which gained the trust of naturalists, for example the Norwegian students of deep-sea phenomena, or those in Moravia engaged in breeding studies that led also to Mendel's genetics); his *Origin of Species*, the book that seized public attention for its general thesis of evolution powered by natural selection; and his *Descent of Man*, widely denounced for carrying evolutionary theory and its mechanisms too close to the human race.

While it is generally recognized that the receptions of Byron and Scott in Europe were amongst the most extensive of British authors, it may be surprising to find that Ossian's was at least as great. The extent of reception, moreover, may not be a true index of its interest. If the spirit of the age had spoken through Byron, as was widely accepted, it had spoken in as many forms and as many tones as his individual works could suggest to the diverse writers of Europe, while Scott summoned the historical energies of nations and energized the most vital genre of the nineteenth century, the realist novel. Yet Swift was seen to query the nature of man itself; and Hume shifted the boundaries of what could be securely known by the human race. Darwin seemed to tread on God's own territory, the very process of making His creation.

The research project examines the ways in which selected authors have been translated, published, distributed, read, reviewed and discussed on the continent of Europe. In doing so, it throws light not only on specific strands of intellectual and cultural history but also on the processes involved in the dissemination of ideas and texts. The project brings to bear the theoretical and critical approaches that have characterized the growing fields of reader response theory and reception studies in the last quarter of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. These critical approaches have illuminated the activity of the reader in

bringing the text to life and stressed the changing horizons of the reading public or community of which the reader is a part. The project also takes cognizance of the studies of the material history of the book that have begun to explore the production, publication and distribution of manuscripts and books. Increasingly, other media too are playing a role in these processes, and to the history of book illustration must be added lantern slides (as in the popular versions of both Scott's and Dickens' works), cinema (whose early impact forms an important part of our H. G. Wells volume), and more recently television (as recounted in the Jane Austen volume). Some writers have almost as extensive a history in images or in sound as in writing, whether in painting, song or opera.

The study of material history, that is, of the objects that form durable traces of the vogue for a particular author, which may be parts of himself (as with the macabre story told in our Shelley volume of the wish to possess the poet's heart), or items of his wardrobe (as with Byronic shirtsleeves), or mementos of his characters such as Wedgwood plates depicting scenes of Sterne's Maria. The Polish statesman Czartoryski had in his grand collections Ossianic mementos such as a blade of dried grass from the hero Fingal's grave. Darwin's undergraduate rooms at Christ's, Cambridge will be furnished with a cabinet of beetles for his bicentenary. The significance of such cults and cult objects requires further analysis as the examples multiply and diversify.

The Series as published by Continuum Books is open-ended and multi-volumed, each volume based on a particular author. The authors may be regarded according to their discipline, or looked at across disciplines within their period. Thus the reception of philosophers Bacon and Hume may be compared; or Hume may be considered as belonging to an eighteenth-century group that includes writers like Swift and Sterne, historians and political figures such as Gibbon and Burke. Hume finds immediate recognition by the countrymen of Voltaire and Diderot, enlarging and adorning the circles of European Enlightenment. Darwin was a founder of a new kind of philosophy, rooted in scientific observation and experiment, generating new kinds of organization, education and leadership; and although he was not the first or the only such figure – Newton had done it for the physical sciences – the *Origin of Species* became its most recognizable model for the nineteenth century. As the volumes accumulate they enrich each other and our awareness of the full context in which an individual author is received.

The Sterne and Swift volumes taken together show that in many places the two eighteenth-century humorists were viewed sometimes as a pair of witty ironists, and sometimes as opposites representing traditional satire on the one hand (Swift) and modern sentimentalism on the other (Sterne), and equally or diversely valued as a result. Darwin's reception takes an entirely new turn when Mendel's work on inheritance at the monastery at Brno (Moravia) is rediscovered at the beginning of the twentieth century, setting off a new controversy about the relative importance for evolution of natural selection and genetic processes, until they are reunited in what became known as 'the evolutionary synthesis' by the 1930s. These chronological shifts, bringing different authors and different works into view together, are common to the reception process, so often displacing or delaying them into an entirely new historical scene or set of circumstances. The kaleidoscope of reception displays and discovers new pairings and couplings, new milieux, new matches and (as Sterne or Darwin might say) mismatches; and, of course, new valuations and even new world views.

In period terms one may discern a Romantic group; a Victorian group; a *fin-de-siècle* and an early Modernist group. Period designations differ from discipline to discipline, and are shifting even within a discipline: Blake, who was a 'Pre-Romantic' poet a generation ago, is now considered a fully fledged Romantic, and Beckford is edging in that direction. Virginia Woolf may be regarded as a *fin-de-siècle* aesthete and stylist whose affinities are with Pater or as an epoch-making Modernist like Joyce. Terms referring to period and style often vary from country to country. What happens to a 'Victorian' author transplanted to 'Wilhelmine' Germany? Darwin is a 'Victorian sage', like Carlyle, Mill, Arnold; but on the Continent the name that is most often bracketed with his is that of Lamarck. It is most straightforward to classify the authors simply according to century, for the calendar is for the most part shared. But the various possible groupings will provide a context for reception and enrich our knowledge of each author.

Division of each volume by country or by linguistic region is dictated by the historical development of Europe; each volume necessarily adopts a different selection of countries and regions, depending on period and on the specific reception of any given author. Countries or regions are treated either substantially, in several chapters or sections where this is warranted – for example, the French reception of Sterne, Woolf or Joyce (and nearly all English-language works until after World War II pass first through the medium of French language and the prism of French thought), or in the case of Darwin after the early German and French translations the extensive reception in several countries – or on a moderate scale; or simply as a brief section. In some cases, where a rich reception is located that has not been previously reported or of which the critical community is not aware, more detailed coverage may be justified, for example, the reception of Woolf in the different linguistic communities of the Iberian peninsula. In general, comparative studies have neglected Spain in favour of France, Germany and Italy, and this imbalance needs to be righted. The Spain that largely rejected Darwin until very recently finds a place here. Other language communities may not be confined within national boundaries, like some of the religious groups discussed in this volume. Brevity does not indicate lack of interest; where separate coverage of any particular country or region is not justified by the extent of the reception, relevant material is incorporated into the bibliography and the Timeline, as with the Russian reception of Pater. Thus an early translation may be noted, although there was subsequently a minimal response to the author or work, or a very long gap in the reception in that region.

This kind of material will be fully described in the database (see below). It is, of course, always possible, and indeed to be hoped and expected that further aspects of reception will later be uncovered, and the long-term research project forwarded, through this initial information. Reception studies often display an author's intellectual and political impact and reveal effects abroad that are unfamiliar to the author's compatriots. Thus, Byron, for example, had the power of carrying and incarnating liberal political thought to regimes and institutions to whom it was anathema; it is less well known that Sterne had the same effect, and that both were charged with erotically tinged subversion; and that Pater suggested a style of aesthetic sensibility in which sensation took precedence over moral values. Woolf came to be an icon for women writers in countries where

there was little tradition of women's writing. By the same token, the study of censorship, or more broadly, impediments to dissemination and modes of circumventing control, becomes an important aspect of reception studies. In Bacon studies, the process of dissemination of his ideas through the private correspondence of organized circles was vital. For Hume, his proscription by the Catholic Church in 1761 exerted a strong braking effect on his direct reception in Catholic countries, whilst flagging up the profound challenge of his arguments in theological and epistemological controversies, in particular, on causation, on miracles and the fallibility of testimony. Studies of changing attitudes of churches towards Darwin have led to the opening of Vatican archives dealing with the Church of Rome's relations with scientists. Certain presses and publishers also play a role, and the study of modes of secret distribution under severe penalty is a particularly fascinating subject, whether in Catholic Europe or Soviet Russia. Much translation was carried out in prisons. Irony and aesopian devices, and audience alertness to them, are highly developed under controlling regimes. A surprising number of authors live more dangerously abroad than at home.

Translation itself may provide a mode of evading censure. There is probably no more complex and elaborated example in the annals of Europe of the use of translation to invent new movements, styles and political departures than that of Ossian, which became itself a form of 'pseudo-translation', that is, works by writers masquerading under pseudonyms suggestive of 'dangerous' foreigners but providing safety for mere 'translators'. 'Ossian' became the cover name for new initiatives, as 'Byron' flew the flag of liberation and openly embodied the union of poetry and political action. 'Darwin' still represents an embattled scene in which 'free inquiry' faces religious system.

New electronic technology makes it possible to undertake reception studies on this scale. An extensive database stores information about editions, translations, accompanying critical prefaces or afterwords, illustrations, biographies and correspondence, early reviews, important essays and book-length studies of the authors, and comments, citations and imitations or reworkings, including satire and pastiche by other writers. Some, as often Pater, live in the echoes of their style as understood in another language. Some authors achieve the status of fictional characters in other writers' works; in other cases, their characters do, like Sterne's Uncle Toby, Trim and his own alter ego Yorick; or even their characters' family members, as in the memorable stories by a major contemporary Hungarian writer chronicling the early career and writings of the (Hungarian) father of Joyce's Leopold Bloom.

The recording of full details of translations and translators is a particular concern, since often the names of translators are not supplied, or their identity is concealed behind pseudonyms or false attributions. The nature of the translation is often a determining factor in the reception of a work or an author. The database also records the character and location of rare works. Our research has served to locate hitherto unrecorded material, for example English-language originals that had penetrated further than expected into regions where French or German translations are assumed to be the sources; in Hume's case, a cache of his letters, carried by the Scottish bride of Czartoryski, was relocated in Poland. The database of the project can be searched for a variety of further purposes, potentially yielding a more complete picture of the interactions of writers,

translators, critics, publishers and public across Europe in different periods from the Renaissance to the present.

Dr Elinor Shaffer, FBA
Director, Research Project
Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe