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CHAPTER 4

# Metadata mining

## The reception and translation of foreign cultures in British Romantic review periodicals (1809–1827)

Melanie Hacke | University of Leuven, Flemish Research Council

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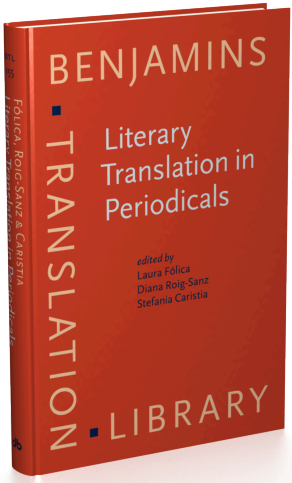


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# Metadata mining

## The reception and translation of foreign cultures in British Romantic review periodicals (1809–1827)

Melanie Hacke
University of Leuven, Flemish Research Council

Building on a quantitative survey that charts the presence of foreign cultures in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review*, this essay pursues a closer understanding of the ways in which British Romantic review periodicals engaged in intercultural mediation. After a brief introduction of the project, the essay zooms in on some of the methodological issues related to the construction and analysis of the database. As it is the first time that such quantitative research is being undertaken, particular attention is given to the difficult balance between distant reading of metadata and close readings of specific review articles, the selection of a representative corpus, and the position of the database within existing research.

**Keywords:** bibliometrics, British Romanticism, close reading, *Edinburgh Review*, France and Britain, periodical studies, *Quarterly Review*, reception, translation, *Westminster Review*

By building on a quantitative survey that charts the presence of foreign cultures in the *Edinburgh Review* (*ER*) and *Quarterly Review* (*QR*), the doctoral project on which this essay is based pursues a closer understanding of the ways in which British Romantic review periodicals engaged in intercultural mediation. After a brief introduction of the project, I will zoom in on some of the methodological issues related to the construction and analysis of the database, as it is the first time that such quantitative research is being undertaken.

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## State of the art

The project focuses on an understudied but prominent aspect of British Romantic periodicals: their reviews of foreign books, and their attitude towards other cultures and languages more generally. Such a study is timely, as during the last two decades Romanticist scholars have shown increased interest in periodicals. After Jon Klancher's seminal *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (1987) had pioneered the field, Mark Parker's 2000 monograph convincingly argued that Romantic journals and magazines should be considered valuable research objects in their own right, instead of merely serving as supporting background information in the study of canonical texts. Periodicals not only acted as the predominant purveyors of scientific, economic and social information in Romantic Britain, but also played a crucial role in the development and dissemination of Romantic literature (Schoenfield 2009: 1). During the past three decades, scholars have therefore shed light on a wide variety of aspects of periodical culture: the collaborative tension between poetry and periodical criticism (Newlyn 2000), the economic side of periodical publishing (Erickson 1996), the periodical's collective voice and its relation to the contributor's individual identity (Schoenfield 2009), the nexus between periodicals and empire (Fang 2010; Christie 2016), the influence of popular metropolitan culture on literary magazines (Stewart 2011), celebrity and performativity (Mole 2013a, 2013b), or periodicals as performative media (Esterhammer 2013, 2015). Several monographs and essay collections have been specifically devoted to the *ER* (Demata and Wu 2002; Fontana 2008; Christie 2009) and *QR* (Shattock 1989; Cutmore 2007).

Nevertheless, few scholars have studied the role of the review as a cultural mediator. J. H. Alexander and Peter France both produced short articles (published in 1990 and 2009, respectively) that have paved the way for a closer analysis of the subject: both articles point out the prominence of foreign texts reviewed and/or translated in the *ER* and in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and underline the urgency of a "much more thorough and systematic study" (Alexander 1990: 18). In his most recent book Diego Saglia (2018) has tried to meet this need with a short chapter on the reception of European literatures in Romantic periodicals. Christopher Stray's 2007 essay, which includes a small quantitative survey of the presence of classics in the *QR,* should also be mentioned here. In addition, works that do not concentrate on periodicals, but examine the general reception or translation of foreign cultures in Britain, are equally valuable. While Peter Mortensen (2004) and Esther Wohlgemut (2009) examine the cosmopolitan and Europhobic impulses in Romantic Britain, Rosemary Ashton (1980), Marcus Tomalin (2016), and Diego Saglia and Ian Haywood (2017) study the reception of specific national cultures. Lastly, scholars as Peter France and Kenneth Haynes (2006), Frederick Burwick

(2008), Padma Rangarajan (2014), and Tom Toremans (2017), look into the practice of translation during the Romantic period.

Although several of the studies listed above include chapters or remarks on Romantic periodicals' engagement with foreign languages, none has yet performed the more thorough systematic study proposed by France and Alexander. Moreover, when faced with the extensive amount of source material that the topic inevitably requires, the majority of reception scholars have either tended towards a bibliometrical method, or towards a qualitative analysis, rather than combining the two. While book historians such as Bill Bell (2007) or Quincy Bayard Morgan and A. R. Hohlfeld (1949) quantify instances of translation and reception, others carry out close readings of specific case studies. My work therefore attempts to integrate these two approaches. Even though no such combined analysis has yet been undertaken in the field of British Romantic Studies, there are multiple examples of similar projects across other languages: Andrea Penso's online database (2018) charts the Italian reception of English eighteenth-century novels, the University of Nantes's project "Traduire sous l'Occupation" (Lombez et al. 2017) studies the practice of translation in review periodicals during the German occupation of France, and Stefania Caristia's doctoral dissertation (2019) examines the position of French literature in twentieth-century Italian reviews.

## Foreign cultures in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review*

As their name suggests, the *ER* (est. 1802) and *QR* (est. 1809) appeared four times a year, and contained reviews of newly published books, both in fiction and nonfiction. These review articles easily ran into 30 to 40 pages, since more often than not the book under review functioned as a pretext to write about a topical issue related to the book's subject. That way, the essay-like reviews, as Walter Bagehot (1879: 5) termed them, did not only provide an evaluation of the newest books, but also an opinion on current affairs. In this sense, the Romantic quarterlies can be compared to contemporary magazines as *Time* or *The Economist*; in contrast to newspapers they do not report on the latest events, but offer readers an interpretation of them. The quarterlies' editor and publisher employed an ever-varying set of anonymous contributors, most of whom identified with a certain ideological current: while the *ER* was associated with the liberal (or "Whig") party, the *QR* was the organ of the conservative (or "Tory") party – it was even founded with the specific aim of offering an alternative counter-voice to the *ER*. As a result of this ideological opposition, the *ER* and *QR* regularly reviewed the same books, but offered a different opinion on the same topic. Because of the frequent polemics between them, the Romantic critic William Hazlitt once compared them to

the famous duo "Tweedledum and Tweedledee" (*Political Essays* xxxii). Hence, contrary to what many titles of Romantic periodicals (*The Mirror*, *The Spectator*, *The Repository*, and even the etymology of the word "magazine", as a storehouse of information) suggest, periodicals were not objective windows to the cultural and political reality of their time. They should not be regarded as objective witnesses of their time, since the information they present is necessarily colored, selective, and limited. Instead, they are mediators that interpret the ideas circulating in books and society for a broad middle-class audience.

The *ER* and *QR* were aimed at busy middle-class professionals (and their families), who looked to the journals for a digest of the most recent publications and current affairs. As most readers did not have the time to actually read the books under review, or would only read a book after the review had sparked their interest, their first reader-response took place within the medium of the periodical. The writer and critic Thomas Carlyle even compared this digestive movement with the capitalist mechanization of modern life, where machines, bureaucratic systems, and periodicals "grind the meal for society" (1829: 443) and throw it ready-made into the public's mouths. As Marc Schoenfield and Jon Klancher have convincingly argued, periodicals thus envisaged a certain kind of readership, or, in Benedict Anderson's words, an imagined community (Anderson 2006 [1983]). By articulating their views on socio-political reality, periodicals created a ready template of identity for their readers, that closely corresponds to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1984). Though many early-nineteenth-century readers read multiple periodicals from various ideological currents, most readers identified with the specific set of dispositions of one particular journal: apart from the literary taste for certain books that the periodical adhered to, readers also found their socio-political identity exemplified in the writing of the editors and contributors.

Given the share of foreign cultures in British Romantic periodicals, it seems odd that no analyses of the topic have appeared as yet. As the next section will demonstrate, in the *ER* and *QR* about a quarter of the reviews in each issue deals with foreign books. Even reviews of English books show significant engagement with non-British cultures, as travelogues and books on foreign or colonial politics were among the most frequently reviewed genres. (Auto)biographies of foreign celebrities, such as socialites residing at the European courts, famous authors, or international politicians, were equally popular. During this era of colonial exploration, empire-building, and war, there was a keen interest in other cultures. Global conflicts as the French Revolutionary Wars (1792–1802), and the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15) equally impacted the Romantics' views of other cultures. Nevertheless, import costs made foreign books costly and hard to come by. The same was true of travelogues, which were more expensive due to their illustrations and occasionally larger format. For information about distant cultures readers therefore relied on

the mediation of the periodicals they bought, borrowed, or read at coffee houses. The periodicals' representation of foreign cultures, however politically colored, thus distinctly determined the ways in which the British audience conceived of them. During the Napoleonic Wars the book trade's predicament intensified, as Napoleon's Continental Blockade, his strict censorship system, and the general difficulty of travel and trade in a war situation made it difficult for British publishers to import books or to travel to the Continent themselves. In 1809, the tax on foreign books that had been levied since 1787 was increased to pay for the costs of war. Yet even in the confusion of these war years editors and publishers did their best to procure foreign intelligence and to ensure the process of cultural transfer.[1] Hence, to use Bruno Latour's terms, Romantic periodicals were responsible for trans-lating (in the sense of the Latin *transferre*; to bring across), accumulating, displaying, and commodifying indigenous knowledge for a wide audience (Latour 1987, Leask 2002: 21). It is precisely this process of cultural mediation that makes the often overlooked late-Romantic prose culture so intriguing. As both distributors and mediators of information about other cultures, periodicals are ideal research objects for the study of cultural transfer.

## Database and results

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which cultural transfer is at work in the *ER* and *QR*, the project is divided into two major parts: a quantitative analysis of the presence of foreign cultures in the periodicals, and a more in-depth historical analysis of a selected number of review articles. The quantitative component consists of an extensive database that records the interaction between the British and other national literary systems, as represented in the *ER* and *QR*. The

1. The following letter provides a good example of periodicals' efforts to obtain interesting books for review. In March 1809 the *QR*'s publisher John Murray asked diplomat Stratford Canning, then accompanying Robert Adair in Constantinople, to send him any interesting foreign works he could lay hands on. Canning replied: "With regard to the comission [sic] which you have given me, it is, I fear, completely out of my power to execute it. Literature neither resides at Constantinople nor passes through it. Even were I able to obtain the publications of France and Germany by way of Vienna, the road is so circuitous, that you would have them later than others who contrive to smuggle them across the North Sea. Every London newspaper that retails its daily sixpennyworth of false reports, publishes the French, the Hamburgh, the Vienna, the Frankfort, and other journals, full as soon as we receive any of them here. This is the case at all times; at present it is much worse. We are entirely insulated. The Russians block up the usual road through Bucharest, and the Servians prevent the passage of couriers through Bosnia. And in addition to these difficulties, the present state of the Continent must at least interrupt all literary works" (qtd. in Smiles 153–154).

database spans the period 1809–1827; in 1809 the *QR* begins publication, 1827 marks the start of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, a periodical that only reviews non-British works and thus heralds a new era in periodical publishing.

The database is primarily constructed as a Microsoft Excel document, in which the metadata of each review article were entered (see Appendix 1 and 2). This was easy to do through Proquest's *British Periodicals Online*, which has digitized both periodicals. I thereby focused on parameters that could help measure the presence of other languages, such as "Is the work under review a work originally written in English, a work in a foreign language, or a translation?", "What is the original language of the work under review?" As reading all review articles in the corpus – some 2000 – was not possible, I selected a sample of approximately 150 articles for in-depth qualitative analysis, the second component of the project. Nevertheless, while constructing the database, we did scroll through every review and scanned it for quotations from other languages, as well as for translated fragments. Since it was common for Romantic book reviews to quote long passages from the book under review, many of these quotations can be found. It is needless to say that this method is not perfectly reliable, but it can still yield a good idea of the languages that are most frequently quoted and translated. These parameters allowed me to document, among other things, the ratio between reviews of British and of non-British works, the relation between foreign works reviewed in translation and those reviewed in their original language, the amount of translated passages and foreign-language quotations within the articles themselves, or the disciplinary distribution of non-British texts.[2]

Although more examples will be explored in the section on "Methodological challenges", Figures 1 and 2 already demonstrate how the results of the database can be displayed and analysed. Figure 1 shows the different types of reviewed works.

Since there are no significant differences for this parameter, the results for the *ER* and *QR* are displayed in the same chart. As already mentioned above, about a quarter of the articles in each issue deals with non-British works, while 74% reviews works originally written in English. Interestingly, too, most foreign works are reviewed in the original, rather than in translation. In the section on "Close and distant reading", I will seek to offer an explanation of why this is the case for French books.

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**2.** I first set out by inventorizing three four-year periods within the period 1809–1827, which I hoped would be representative of the late-Romantic period. After I had compiled these samples, however, it turned out to be necessary to get the entire data set, in order to ascertain whether certain trends would persist. Luckily, I was fortunate enough to be able to hire three MA students to complete this task; my thanks therefore go to Lukas De Coster, Astrid Dewaele, and Stiv Vadahi, who entered the remaining seven years into the database.

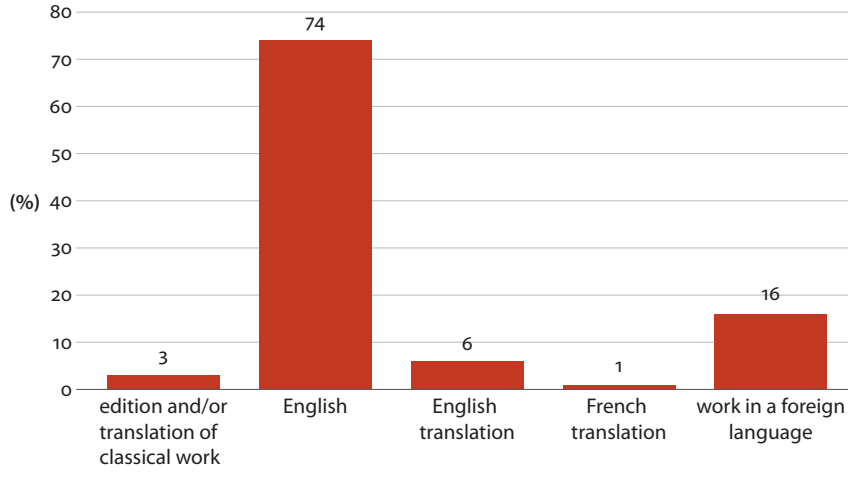


**Figure 1.** Types of works reviewed in *ER* and *QR*, 1809–1827

Figure 2.1 and 2.2 display the spread of the original languages of reviewed books, for the *ER* and *QR* separately.

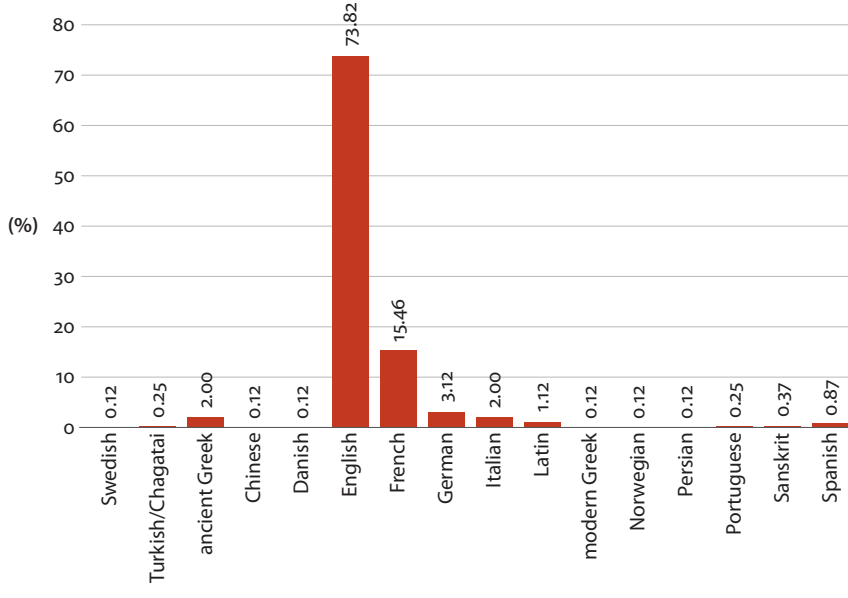


**Figure 2.1** Original languages of reviewed works, *ER*, 1809–1827

Both charts confirm that a quarter of the reviews deals with foreign works, among which French unsurprisingly prevails as the dominant language of the period, followed by Latin, ancient Greek, German, Italian, and Spanish. Examining the evolution of these data through time shows that books in modern languages are

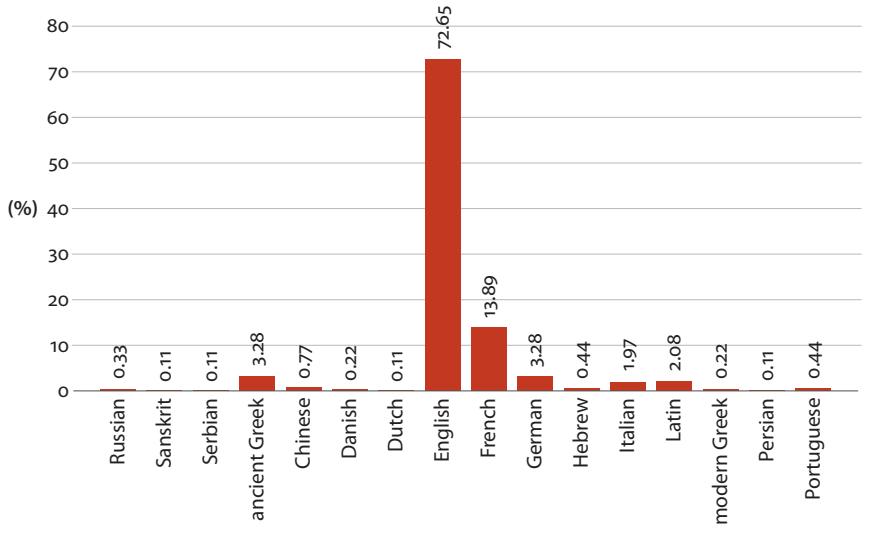


**Figure 2.2** Original languages of reviewed works, *QR*, 1809–1827

reviewed more frequently as time goes on, while the classical languages are in decline. As my doctoral thesis aims to argue, these evolutions spring from the quarterlies' (at times slightly different) reactions to shifts in Britain's educational system, (inter)national politics, literary movements, etc.

## Methodological challenges

### *Corpus selection*

The project originally set out as a comparative analysis of the *ER* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (*BM*, est. 1817), a literary magazine with a Tory outlook. Yet when constructing the database, it soon became clear that *BM*'s miscellaneous format was not compatible with the homogeneous format of the *ER*. While the *ER* and *QR* are wholly made up of book reviews, *BM* also includes essays, original poetry and prose, humorous sketches, etc. It was therefore not possible to enter *BM*'s metadata into the database by means of the same criteria that had been used for the *ER*. I accordingly substituted *BM* with the *QR*, the most prominent Romantic quarterly after the *ER*, and, like *BM*, the *ER*'s Tory rival. This allows for a much more unified corpus. It initially seemed unfortunate to have to leave behind such a rewarding research object as *BM*, for the magazine contains regular features centring on foreign literature, such as the "Horae Germanicae" or "Horae Hispanicae". Luckily, a few months later Ernest De Clerck joined our research team, where he concentrates on the reception of foreign cultures in the literary magazines *BM*,

*The London Magazine*, and the *New Monthly Magazine*. Our PhD projects are thus complementary, and work together towards a more thorough and representative description of the international scope of British Romantic periodical culture.

Besides replacing *BM* with the *QR*, I decided to include the radical Benthamite *Westminster Review* (*WR*, est. 1824) into my corpus, which can consequently represent the three main political currents in Romantic Britain: conservative, liberal, and radical. But as the *WR* was only founded in 1824 – much later than the *ER* and *QR*, I could only include a few years of it in the database without too greatly exceeding the period originally intended for research. The *WR*'s later start date also makes it less suitable as an object of comparison to the *ER* and *QR*. On top of that, the *WR* does not show any quantitative patterns deviant from those in the other two quarterlies; yet just as with the *ER* and *QR*, a closer analysis of the articles' content shows that the periodicals did evaluate foreign books differently, according to their particular cultural and ideological perspective. Taking these issues into account, I chose not to extend the *WR*'s sample beyond 1827: instead, I plan to include the *WR* into my doctoral dissertation only as an excursus, in which my argument will be based on a close reading of a number of articles, rather than on database analysis. This analysis of the *WR* can still function as a point of reference for the debates pursued by the *ER* and *QR*.

### *Diachronic evolutions*

When looking at Figure 1, an obvious research question manifests itself: how does this graph evolve chronologically? Does the number of foreign books that is reviewed increase or decrease over time? My hypothesis was that something would change, especially after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. First, Napoleon's Continental Blockade, his strict censorship system, and the general difficulty of trade in a war situation, made it hard for publishers and booksellers to import foreign works during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. I therefore expected that the post-Waterloo period, during which communication with the Continent opened up again, would feature more reviews of foreign books. Many critics support this view. In his monograph on the reception of the French language in Britain, Marcus Tomalin writes "the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars resulted in a flurry of transnational European interactions, both political and cultural, on a scale which had been impossible since the outbreak of the French Revolution, and, gradually, the […] literature of France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Germany became increasingly admired in Britain" (2016: 152). Diego Saglia affirms this when he treats "the newly intensified interest in Continental literatures between the mid-1810s and the mid-1830s" (2018: 18). The *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* makes a similar statement, albeit adding that this openness is slightly

belated: "Though the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 had once more made possible both travel on the Continent and importation of books from abroad, considerable interest in foreign works did not seem to develop until the late 1820s" (Houghton et al. 1972: 130). In her book on Romantic cosmopolitanism, Esther Wohlgemut even specifically refers to the *ER*: "As other British periodicals limited their reviews of foreign literature as a precaution against charges of Jacobinism during the Napoleonic wars, the *Edinburgh Review* remained unapologetically international in scope" (2009: 6).

On the other hand, various scholars argue the opposite, i.e. that the internationalism of the Enlightenment was followed by a period of increasing xenophobia and patriotism. For Peter Mortensen, for instance, the Romantic era was characterized by Europhobia: "During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain, new nationalist narratives began to displace older universalist and cosmopolitan forms of understanding" (2004: 19). Reception scholar Lucy Newlyn writes that "Romantic writers experienced Anglocentric fears that the infiltration of foreign literary tastes into national culture might threaten identity on a larger and more pervasive scale" (2000: 44). Marilyn Butler's seminal literary history *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760–1830* (1981) states that around 1800 "the English cultural habit moved from internationalism to Francophobia, and deep-rooted popular modern English Toryism was born" (1981: 98). Rather than characterizing British Romantic writing as a transnational activity, these critics point to its nationalist tendency to isolate itself from its European neighbors.

As the quotations cited above confirm, Romanticist scholars have not yet reached a consensus about the state of international cultural relations during the early nineteenth century. This lack of agreement can be partly put down to the complex and ambiguous historical reality, where attestations both of xenophobic and cosmopolitan feelings can indeed be found, but should equally be attributed to the lack of research that has been done on the topic. The database does not provide an immediate solution either. The amount of reviews of foreign works stays between 20% and 30% throughout the period 1809–1820, only to undergo a slight – but statistically insignificant – drop in the 1820s (See Figure 3).[3]

**3.** As there are few noteworthy divergences between the *ER* and *QR* here, I chose to display the results for both periodicals within the same graph.


**Figure 3.** Chronological evolution of reviews of foreign books in the *ER* and *QR*, 1809–1830

Since critics as Mortensen, Newlyn, and Butler are primarily concerned with the relationship between France and Britain, the diachronic evolution of the quarterlies' reviews of French books (Figure 4) should likewise be examined.

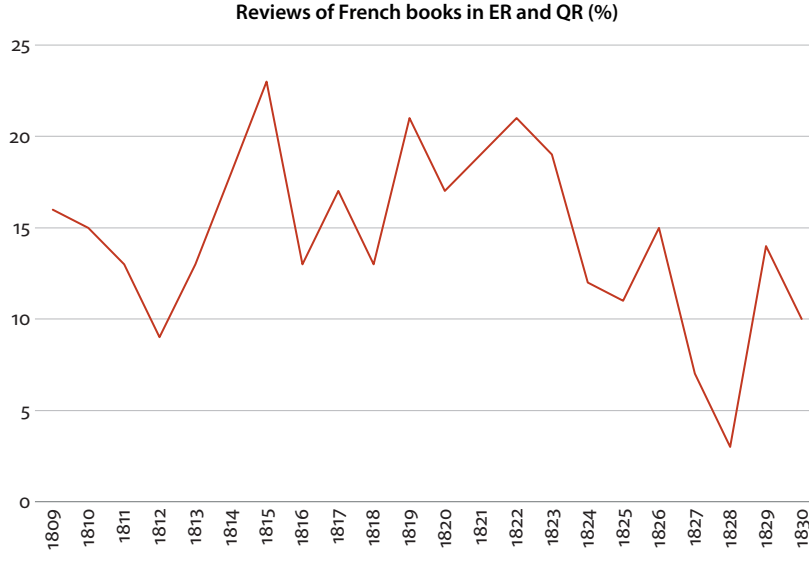


**Figure 4.** Chronological evolution of reviews of French books in the *ER* and *QR*, 1809–1830

This graph diverges somewhat from the general pattern of Figure 3. Overall, reviews of French books make up some 15% of each issue. During, and especially

after the Napoleonic Wars, there is increased interest in French books, with the share of French rising to 20% – this seems to link up with the belated openness pointed out by *The Wellesley Index*. Except for a sudden drop in 1828, the number normalizes again after 1824.

The lack of correspondence between these findings and the secondary sources at first puzzled me. Was the dataset too large or too small? Should statistically insignificant fluctuations be considered as qualitatively meaningful changes? Did I need additional material, such as lists with the numbers of books imported during this period or statistics of lending libraries – and would tracing these seldom-found documents not be a doctoral project in itself? Could the data of only three periodicals be used to make claims about the wider Romantic period? However, it soon became clear that when placed in their historical context, the graphs below can endorse the arguments of Tomalin, Saglia, Wohlgemut, and *The Wellesley Index*, albeit by arguing for a persistent and steady cosmopolitanism rather than for a full-blown revolution in transnational contacts. First, we perceive signs of a growing openness towards other cultures: interest in French books intensifies around Waterloo, and, as mentioned earlier, classical languages are in decline, while books in modern languages are reviewed more frequently during the late-Romantic period. Secondly, if Romantic society was indeed becoming as isolationist as Butler, Mortensen and Newlyn contend, periodical literature would reflect this shift somewhat more strongly than by a slight drop in reviews of foreign books in the 1820s. Moreover, Butler, Newlyn and Mortensen's claims are aimed at the period 1800–1820, while the decrease in the *ER* and *QR* only sets in around 1824. Additionally, in the very period of the late 1820s, we witness the foundation of several magazines devoted entirely to non-British literature, such as the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (est. 1827) and the *Foreign Review* (est. 1828). As Ernest's project shows, the new culture of weekly and monthly literary magazines that emerged during the 1810s and 1820s equally gave a fresh impetus to Britain's interest in European literatures. It could be argued that the task of reviewing foreign literature, which previously belonged to the established quarterlies, is supported and even partly taken over by these new publications. This could help to explain the slight decrease in the number of foreign books reviewed. Lastly, of course, not all foreign books were reviewed positively, but the constant number of foreign book reviews throughout the Napoleonic Wars attests to the fact that the *ER* and *QR* did their best to keep their readers informed about Continental literature, despite the difficulty of obtaining foreign intelligence.

Accordingly, the project can show that the remarks of scholars as Newlyn, Butler, and Mortensen do not apply to periodical culture. This argument can be illustrated further by a remark that Marcus Tomalin makes when writing about the position of French in Britain: "Whenever nationalism and foreignness are

contested, appearance and reality are frequently divergent" (2016: 2). Indeed, when we think about the presence of foreign cultures in Romantic Britain, anecdotal evidence, often based on our knowledge of certain canonical works, is quick to offer us an image of an increasingly nationalist Britain. For instance, the stories of canonical Romantic poets William Wordsworth, Robert Southey or Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who in their youth eagerly travelled the Continent and imbibed the ideas of the French Revolution but later turned into staunch patriotic conservatives, are widely disseminated in both academic and lay circles. Their lives are too easily extended to the whole nation, which is equally perceived as having cut itself off from the Continent after the turn of the century. Canonical authors' stereotypical representations of certain cultures, such as John Keats calling French "the poorest [language] ever spoken" (1899: 265) or William Hazlitt's evaluation of Goethe's works as "insipid and preposterous" (1816: 105), have also determined our view of Romantic Britain's international outlook. Lastly, the general tendency of thinking about the Romantic period as a period of growing nationalism still inhibits more nuanced research. We nevertheless need to look beyond these obvious and readily available sources, and dig deeper into sources that have hitherto been overlooked, such as periodicals. When we then pitch traditional suppositions against the bibliometric data of the periodicals, the picture can change markedly.

### *Close and distant reading*

A third and last difficulty is the combination of the distant reading method of the database with a more traditional analysis of the periodicals in their historical context. How can these two methods best be combined in order to arrive at productive conclusions about the reception of foreign cultures? The following case study, on the reception of French culture, is intended as an example of how challenging – but above all useful – it can sometimes be to integrate bibliometrics with close reading.

Revisiting Figure 2.1 and 2.2, we perceive that 15% of all reviews in the *ER* in the time period 1809–1827 deal with French works. There is very little difference with the *QR*, where this is 14%. As French was the lingua franca of the time, French books are usually reviewed in the original. Here however, a difference can be discerned between the *ER* and *QR*. In the *ER* 84% of the reviews of French books review the books in the original, while only 16% reviews French works in translation. In the *QR* 76% is reviewed in the original French, and 24% in translation. A similar pattern can be detected in the amount of French quoted within the reviews themselves. In the *ER*, out of a total of 515 fragments from foreign languages that occur in the reviews, whether translated or untranslated, 216 are from French; this is almost half, 42%. For the *QR* this is only 30% (176/578). Even if both quarterlies devote an equal amount of articles to French books, the presence

of French within the reviews themselves is notably bigger in the *ER*. Lastly, within these fragments quoted from the French, the ratio between those that are translated and those that are left untranslated can be examined. Of the 216 fragments taken from the French in the *ER*, only 33% (72) are translated, while the remaining 67% is cited in the original French. In the *QR*, almost half (82/176, or 47%) of the French fragments are translated, even though most readers would have been able to understand them in the original.

It is of course hard to draw any conclusions from these data without first consulting the review articles themselves. I therefore selected some 50 reviews of French works for closer analysis, thereby preferring books reviewed in both the *ER* and *QR*, as these best illustrate the antagonism between the two periodicals. A closer investigation of this selection confirmed that even though the *ER* and *QR* review an equal amount of French books, they use a different rhetoric on France.

Since its outset in 1802, the *ER* was regarded as a Francophile publication. This had much to do with the first article of its first number, written by the journal's editor Francis Jeffrey. It was a review of the French author Jean-Joseph Mounier's *De L'Influence attribuée aux Philosophes, aux Francs-maçons, et aux Illuminés, sur la Revolution de France* (1801). Mounier's book combatted the popular belief that the Revolution was a conspiracy organized by French philosophers (such as Rousseau, Mably, Condorcet), freemasons, and illuminati. The *ER* agreed with Mounier that this conspiracy theory was pure nonsense, but disagreed with Mounier on another point: they thought that he had underrated the agency of the French philosophers (and intellectuals in general) in the Revolution. By alerting their readers to the shortcomings of the French monarchy, the writings of the French philosophers had helped to trigger the Revolution. However, the *ER* writes, the philosophers should not be blamed for their deeds, as it is only the natural function of philosophers, writers, and journalists, to provide and interpret information for the people, and so to guarantee the free circulation of knowledge in society. Sometimes, this free circulation of knowledge inevitably leads to social change, of which the French Revolution is an extreme case.

Accordingly, the Mounier article has often been read as a programmatic statement of the *ER*'s editorial policy and liberal political agenda. The *Edinburgh* reviewers see themselves acting the part of the French philosophes. They too are mediators that select the most relevant information from recently published texts, and interpret it for the people. Moreover, in a political climate dominated by Tories, this new periodical associated with the Whig minority could offer an alternative voice to that of the establishment, just as the philosophes had questioned the righteousness of the French monarchy. Even so, we need to bear in mind that the *Edinburgh* reviewers were liberals and not radicals: as they still very much belonged to the gentlemanly upper middle class culture, the social change

they were aiming for was parliamentary and electoral reform (which they achieved with the Reform Act of 1832), not universal suffrage; and certainly not the violent and bloody social revolution of 1789, from which they distanced themselves.

Thus, from the very start, the topic of France is connected with discussions on the role of the press in influencing the public opinion. After the Mounier article, the *ER* confirmed its sympathy for French culture by its resistance to Francophobic perspectives on the Revolution, and by its defence of French Enlightenment figures such as Rousseau and Voltaire. The *ER*'s support for reform and democracy was continually attacked by the conservatives of the *QR*, whose articles made clear that they wished to preserve the current limited franchise and traditional social hierarchies. The *QR*'s reviews of French books therefore tend to stress issues such as the necessity of the aristocracy and clergy, or the danger of French society gatherings as breeding grounds of anarchy. While the *ER* and *QR*'s basic evaluation of the French books they reviewed often did not differ greatly, the reviewers did add small political touches to their articles that ideologically differentiated the periodicals' positions towards France.

Two reviews of the same book, reviewed in the *ER* as well as in the *QR*, can function as an exemplary illustration of the reception of French culture in both journals. *Biographie Moderne, ou Dictionnaire Biographique*, a biographical dictionary listing all persons involved in the French Revolution and its aftermath, was reviewed in the *ER* in 1809, and in the *QR* in 1812. The book appeared in French in 1806, and was translated into English in 1811. The American lawyer Robert Walsh reviewed the French original for the *ER* in April 1809. After his studies in the United States, the young Walsh travelled Europe for a few years (1806–9), during which he contributed a number of articles to British as well as to French newspapers. Among these were two reviews for the *ER*, both on French topics: the review of *Biographie Moderne*, and a review of *Code de La Conscription*, a book that explained the system for military service under Napoleon. This last review disapproves of Napoleon's harsh conscription laws. It contains an undertone of dread at the strength of the French army, and concludes with a Francophobic warning to Britain to be wary of Napoleon's dream to conquer the world.

Walsh's review of *Biographie Moderne* begins by recounting the book's publication history. Its authors published a first edition in 1800, but its circulation was stopped by the police. The edition under review is a later modified version, but even that was suppressed, and "The copy now before us was secreted, and given to the individual from whom it has passed into our hands." (Walsh 1809: 212) Walsh hopes that the passage of time will allow French historians to judge objectively of the French Revolution. But that can only happen, "should our neighbours ever enjoy that *rare felicity* of a free press" (Walsh 1809: 214, original emphasis). In a long footnote to this remark, Walsh elaborates on the ills of French censorship.

Walsh then goes on to discuss why he thinks the French Revolution failed. He claims that those in power, those "best able to fashion public sentiment" (Walsh 1809: 218) – the king, the higher classes; everyone in positions of local or national authority – should have tried to placate the mob earlier. They should have let their voice be heard, instead of allowing revolutionaries to direct public opinion. Instead, they looked on indifferently during the first phase of the revolution, as they did not think they themselves were in danger:

> If those who were upon "the slippery heights" of the kingdom of France, had been less confident of their security, and more attentive to the progress of public opinion […] they might have stood firm upon the basis of their own authority, – in spite of all the machinations of philosophers and deists, encyclopedists and levellers, to whom their misfortunes are so piously and loyally ascribed.
>
> (Walsh 1809: 217)

This is a clear allusion to the *ER*'s 1802 review of Mounier: after it was too late, Walsh argues, the higher orders blamed the failure of the Revolution on the conspiracies of philosophers. However, Walsh points out that it was not a conspiracy, but their own apathy and failure to act that lay at its roots. With this reference to Mounier, Walsh returns to the idea of freedom of the press articulated in the *ER*'s first issue: only if all political parties take their share in influencing public opinion, can the circulation of information and thus the process of social change function normally. Each worldview should be represented in the press, so that the individual reader can use them to forge his own social, political, and personal identity.

Since it reviews the English translation of the book, the *QR*'s article on *Biographie Moderne*, reviewed by Robert Southey, appeared three years after Walsh's review. Nevertheless, it is clearly written as a response to Walsh's article, and to the *ER*'s views on the press in general. The fact that Southey was made Poet Laureate in 1813 makes this case extra interesting, as the review was written at a crucial point in his career, when he was creating an authorial identity for himself. As a young man, Southey was an ardent supporter the French Revolution. However, his work for the *QR* and the increasing social unrest in Britain gradually turned him into a conservative. He came to think that the divide between rich and poor in Britain was growing dangerously wide: it threatened social cohesion, and a revolt of the poor against the rich was likely. With such a social divide, he thought, parliamentary reform and extension of the franchise would only lead to anarchy. Instead, he believed that liberty for all should come from the current ruling classes, who knew what was good for the people and would lead the country to prosperity.

Southey's fear of a popular insurrection in Britain was fed by the assassination of Britain's Tory prime minister Spencer Perceval in May 1812, which occurred while he was writing the review. When news of the murder spread, crowds of

hungry workers gathered in the streets and rejoiced at Perceval's death, since they blamed him for the depression and unemployment that Britain was going through. The army had to be called upon to restore order. Though the murderer had acted alone, motivated by a personal grievance against the government, the joy of the crowds initially made it seem as if the assassination had been part of an organized social revolution. Southey also seems to have thought this; to him, the event was "like a dream […] a sort of nightmare that overlays and oppresses my thoughts and feelings!" (Letter to Grosvenor Bedford, 14 May 1812, Southey 1849: 283).

Southey's anxieties concerning the possibility of a revolution in Britain are reflected in his review of *Biographie Moderne*. Like Walsh, Southey explains why he thinks the enactment of the pure ideals that started the Revolution had failed. The main causes lie with the press and with selfish ambitions of those in power. He writes:

> A feeble court, surrounded by false servants, suffered (during the first heats) a set of journalists to abuse the liberty of the press – an abuse which must overthrow any government that permits it. The liberty of the press or death, was the motto of one of these writers, who continually inveighed against the king and queen, till such invective brought on their destruction. The government that suffers itself to be insulted with impunity, is from that moment in danger. (Southey 1812: 437)

Thus, contrary to the *ER*, whose motto can (with some exaggeration) be described as "the liberty of the press or death", the freedom of the press is here portrayed as the greatest danger rather than the greatest good for society. I would argue that Southey's reasoning in this article was instigated by Walsh's remark on the fatal indifference of the upper classes: by letting revolutionaries and demagogues control the press during the first phase of the revolution, the monarchy had let its power slip. Soon, the republican party "saw the consequence of having inflamed an ignorant and ferocious people" (Southey 1812: 415), but "wanted strength or courage to try the only means of averting it – that of punishing the Septembrizers, and curbing the press" (Southey 1812: 415). Interestingly, the "only means of averting" lawlessness, is to exercize stricter censorship over the press. Southey seems to take Walsh's advice one step further: not only should the monarchy have tried to influence public opinion earlier, they should have taken control of the press and made it their mouthpiece, censoring other political voices.

In a letter to the *QR*'s publisher John Murray, Southey touches on the link between the article and his fears of a popular insurrection following the assassination of Perceval. The letter offers a good insight into Southey's motives for writing the article:

> I have laid the first stone of an article for our next number upon the French revolution – a subject most mournfully well-timed. The direful state of the populace

> which this late deplorable event has disclosed, tho it may have surprized me less than it has done most people, has alarmed me more deeply, because I have long distinctly seen the causes which were at work to produce it. […] At this moment, nothing but the army preserves us from the most dreadful of all calamities, an insurrection of the poor against the rich, and how long the army may be depended upon is a question which I scarcely dare ask myself. Of this I feel certain that unless the most vigorous measures be speedily taken against those who by their speeches and writings are instigating the mob to rebellion, it will be too late; and they who may survive the coming horrors will see that the abuse of liberty is uniformly and inevitably punished with the loss of liberty. Its danger I will show in the *Quarterly*, but I believe the best means of stirring up the public mind is through the newspapers. (19 May 1812, qtd. in Smiles 1891: 202)

The last sentence of the above quotation contains an interesting line of thought. Similar remarks can be found in other letters, for example: "I am going to write upon the French Revolution for the Quarterly Review – a well-timed subject: the evil is, that it is writing to those readers who are in the main of the same way of thinking. Our cotemporaries [sic] read, not in the hope of being instructed, but to have their opinion flattered" (Letter to Grosvenor Bedford, 14 May 1812, Southey 2013: letter 2094). Both quotations show that Southey is not satisfied with the limited circulation of the *QR*, which would primarily be circulated among the higher and middle classes, the majority of whom shared his conservative views. Ideally, Southey wants to reach the lower classes through the mass media of the newspapers, in order to advise them against a revolution.

Even though Southey thought press freedom a mortal danger rather than, in Walsh's words, a "rare felicity", he did take Walsh's warning about influencing the public opinion seriously. There even is evidence that Southey liked Walsh's critique of French politics, which was harsher than the *ER*'s usual discourse on France: "I thought those articles upon the Conscription and the Revolutionary Biography could not come from any ordinary writer in that journal; they were in so much wholesomer a stream of thought and feeling, and accordingly they appear to be the work of an American, by name Walsh" (Letter to C. W. Williams Wynn, 6 July 1809, Southey 1856: 151). Southey noticed that Walsh was more Francophobic than the typical *Edinburgh* reviewer. Earlier in the same letter, Southey returns to the topic of influencing the public opinion, and calls the editors of the *ER* Jacobins, and "such unballasted politicians, that the public mind could not be worse guided" (151).

My analysis of other reviews of French books confirms that discussions of French culture do not centre around France itself, but as a rule come back to the radical idea of democracy that France had come to stand for since the Revolution. Almost all reviews of French books, whether they discuss a work of science,

literature, or politics, revolve around the question of the ideal form of the French democratic state. This tendency to focus on politics was a natural consequence of the ongoing British debate on parliamentary and electoral reform, which the outbreak of the French Revolution had intensified. Radicals hoped that a popular revolution in Britain would lead to more votes for the working classes. After years of intermittent protest, most of which was subdued by the conservative government's repressive measures, a Reform Act was passed in 1832. As many radicals were inspired by the example of France, a person's ideological standpoint could easily be gauged by asking his or her opinion on the situation in France. The same can be said of periodical publications, whose views on France betrayed the journal's political leanings. Even though the public debate on ideal government forms was less a concern for the wealthier middle classes that bought the quarterlies than for the working classes, it remained a central issue in periodical culture for the whole late-Romantic period.

Reviews of foreign-language works hence function as sites to explore political identity. As already indicated at the beginning of this article, periodicals did not mirror the politico-cultural reality around them, but, to use a particularly apt term, translated it through the lens of their own ideology. When reading the *ER* and *QR*'s evaluations of French books side by side, it can be demonstrated that each periodical interpreted the French Revolution in their own way. Even if William Hazlitt criticized the too moderate Whig party for being "but the fag-end of a Tory" (1819: xxx), the Whigs of the *ER* to a certain extent endorsed French revolutionary models, often linking them to the liberal movement for reform in Britain. The conservative *QR* is much more reactionary, and blames the *ER* for being overly Francophile. For the *QR* reviews of French books served a polemic purpose: they were mostly triggered by articles on similar topics in the *ER*, to which the *QR* responded with anti-French sentiments. Consequently, when foreign texts are reviewed they undergo a process of translation and mediation as well as a transformative acculturation, in which they are lifted out of their source culture in order to serve contemporary debates in the target culture. The *ER*'s Francophilia is not as manifestly borne out by the data, but when we lay the metadata side by side with what is written within the reviews themselves, we can interpret the *ER*'s choice to review French books in the original, and to use much French in the reviews itself as a sign of their sympathy for French culture. The *QR*'s tendency to review French works and quote French fragments in translation can be said to arise out of a fear of being perceived as too sympathetic towards French ideas about democracy. Moreover, its habit to translate French can be interpreted as an act of distancing, or even as an act of appropriation, of moulding French ideas to its own conservative standards. The fact that the *QR* reviews an equal amount of French books as the *ER* can be interpreted in several ways. First, as French was the

dominant foreign language on the book market, it would be commercially unwise not to cater to the tastes of the public. Secondly, a close reading of Walsh's and Southey's reviews of *Biographie Moderne* makes clear that reviews of French works were deployed in the ideological struggle between the quarterlies.

Caution should however be used in generalising the case of French texts to the reception of all foreign cultures in the *ER* and *QR*. The majority of reviews of foreign-language texts are indeed used to explore social, political, or cultural issues, but these issues vary depending on the language or subject of the book under review and on their immediate societal context. For instance, while reviews of French books in this late-Romantic period usually revolve around the state of Europe after the Revolution, reviews of classical works debate the position of classics in education, and articles on non-European topics focus on colonial administration and exploration. The quarterlies' regularly conflicting perspectives on this wide range of topics once again confirm that distant and close reading should always go hand in hand, and cannot be relied on separately.

## Conclusion

In a field that is still largely dominated by studies of canonical Romantic authors, research projects on periodicals can fill in previously overlooked gaps about the position of other cultures in early-nineteenth-century Britain. Nevertheless, a research project that aims to combine bibliometrics with literary-historical analysis should be aware of methodological challenges. First, the corpus should be carefully selected so as to enable comparative analysis between the periodicals, both on the level of their metadata and their content. Secondly, we should be mindful that seemingly contradictory or insignificant evolutions in the data can be relevant too. As the section on "Diachronic evolutions" illustrates, the constant number of reviews of foreign books can help to nuance previous researchers' claims about Romantic Britain's increasing cultural isolation. In cases like these, the need for scholarly collaboration manifests itself. The complementariness of Ernest De Clerck's and my doctoral project is an excellent example of this: as each focuses on only three periodicals, our projects are necessarily limited, but regularly discussing and comparing our work allows us a broader overview of the Romantic periodical market. On a larger international level too, collaboration is vital, as this volume repeatedly emphasizes. Through conferences and essay collections as these, global researchers in periodical studies can exchange methodologies and results across the various languages and forms of translation they investigate. Over time we can hence develop a framework for the study of translation in periodicals, from which future students and researchers can profit. I hope to make my database publicly

available in the coming months – in this respect an online platform that provides a standard for setting up, storing and exchanging databases would be an appealing prospect for the future. Lastly, the case of French book reviews in the section on "Close and distant reading" demonstrates that the liberal *ER* and the Tory *QR* use a different discourse on France, even if the metadata suggest that both periodicals are equally interested in French culture.

We should nevertheless be careful not to ascribe too much agency to the periodical as a coherent and unified body. Chance factors to a large extent determined the way multiple voices and circumstances combined into the polyphonous but seemingly authorless periodical.[4] When analysing metadata or performing close readings of individual reviews, we should keep in mind that the periodicals' selection and evaluation of books is considerably more arbitrary than the consistent editorial and ideological policy we tend to take for granted leads us to suspect. Much depended on the editor's personal preferences (e.g. the *QR*'s William Gifford's fondness for classical literature), contributors' individual viewpoints, the books rival periodicals were reviewing, the state of the literary marketplace, and the general hastiness of periodical publishing. Moreover, as much as contributors writing for multiple periodicals did their best to adopt the journal's style and "personality", behind this mask their individual views inevitably shone through. Even though editors corrected and modified articles, not every contributor embodied the core political views of the journal as strongly, as is the case for Robert Walsh, who is more Francophobic than the typical *Edinburgh* reviewer. As both Mark Parker and David Stewart have pointed out, in spite of the seemingly unified corporate identity they assume, periodicals were inherently collective ventures made up of a multiplicity of voices, which at times contradicted each other. In sum, the database is a helpful tool, but only really comes alive when it is complemented by in-depth qualitative analysis, since historical reality is always more complex and ambiguous. It is important to "mine" the data further, so as to arrive at more valuable conclusions.

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## Appendix 1. Database criteria

- periodical code: volume number, issue number, article number
- What is the title of the periodical?
- In which year was the article published?
- What is the title of reviewed book(s)?
- What is the running title of the article?
- Who authored the review?[5]
- page numbers
- What type of text is the work under review? (English work, translation, work in foreign language)
- if translation: is the translator's name mentioned?
- What is the original language of the reviewed work(s)?
- Does the review contain fragments in a foreign language?
- Does the review contain translated fragments?
- Does the review contain explicit comments on translation? (This parameter could only be filled in for the articles that were selected for close reading)

**5.** Articles were published anonymously until the 1860s, but projects as *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* (Houghton et al.) or Jonathan Cutmore's *Quarterly Review Archive* have compiled lists of author attributions based on correspondence and other historical evidence.

- In what genre/field can the work under review be classified?[6]
- What is the gender of the author(s) whose book is being reviewed?
- Does the article contain any references to foreign cultures?

## Appendix 2. Screenshot database

| Code | Periodical | Year | Title |
|---|---|---|---|
| ER 14_28_6 | Edinburgh review | 1809 | 1. Memoirs of Sir Thomas More, with a New Translation of his Utopia, his History of King Richard III, and his Latin poems. By Arthur Cayley the Younger. 1808. 2. 'A Most Pleasant, fruitful, and witty work of the best State of a Public Weal, and of the New Isle called Utopia: written in Latin by the right worthy and famous Sir T. More, and translated into English by Raphe [sic] Robinson, A. D. 1551." A New Edition, with copious Notes, and a Biographical and Literary Introduction. By the Rev. T. F. Dibdin. 1808. |
| ER 14_28_7 | Edinburgh review | 1809 | Tales of Fashionable Life. By Miss Edgeworth. 1809. |
| ER 14_28_8 | Edinburgh review | 1809 | Histoire de l'Anarchie de Pologne, et Démembrement de cette République. Par Cl. Rulhiere. 1807. |
| ER 14_28_9 | Edinburgh review | 1809 | Voyages à Peking, Manille, et l'île de France, faits dans l'Intervalle des Années 1784 à 1801. Par M. De Guignes. 1808. |
| ER 14_28_10 | Edinburgh review | 1809 | Strabonis Rerum Geographicarum Libri VII. &c. Juxta Ed. Amstelodamensem. Codicum MSS. Collationem, Annotationes, Tabulas Geographicas adjecit Thomas Falconer. 1807. |

**6.** As the Romantics did not yet think of genre in our present-day terms, this category is somewhat anachronistic. Moreover, genre (e.g. travelogue, poetry) and subjects (e.g. politics, law) are here used indiscriminately. For now "Genre" should therefore be regarded as a mere working category, which will be reconsidered once the database is published online.

| Running title | Author | Page nos | Reviewed work | Translator mentioned |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Memoirs, &c. Of Sir Thomas More | anon. | 360–375 | English translation | yes |
| Miss Edgeworth's Fashionable Tales | anon. | 375–388 | English | NA |
| Rulhiere – Anarchie de Pologne | anon. | 388–406 | work in a foreign language | NA |
| De Guignes, Voyage à Pekin, &c. | anon. | 407–429 | work in a foreign language | NA |
| The Oxford Edition of Strabo | Richard Payne Knight | 429–441 | edition and/or translation of classical work | NA |

| Original language | Foreign-language fragments | Translated fragments |
|---|---|---|
| Latin | no | Latin |
| English | no | no |
| French | no | French |
| French | French | French |
| Latin | Latin | no |

| Comments on translation | Genre | Gender of reviewed author | Reference to foreign cultures |
|---|---|---|---|
| no | (auto)biography/memoirs/letters | male | no |
| no | literature | female | no |
| no | international politics/politics of foreign countries | male | yes |
| no | travel account/anthropology | male | yes |
| no | geography | male | yes |