



British Romanticism and the Reception of Italian Old Master Art, 1793-1840 (Studies in Art Historiography)

Maureen McCue

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As a result of Napoleon's campaigns in Italy, Old Master art flooded into Britain and its acquisition became an index of national prestige. Maureen McCue argues that their responses to these works informed the writing of Romantic period authors, enabling them to forge often surprising connections between Italian art, the imagination and the period's political, social and commercial realities. Dr McCue examines poetry, plays, novels, travel writing, exhibition catalogues, early guidebooks and private experiences recorded in letters and diaries by canonical and noncanonical authors, including Felicia Hemans, William Buchanan, Henry Sass, Pierce Egan, William Hazlitt, Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, Anna Jameson, Maria Graham Callcott and Samuel Rogers. Her exploration of the idea of connoisseurship shows the ways in which a knowledge of Italian art became a key marker of cultural standing that was no longer limited to artists and aristocrats, while her chapter on the literary production of post-Waterloo Britain traces the development of a critical vocabulary equally applicable to the visual arts and literature. In offering cultural, historical and literary readings of the responses to Italian art by early nineteenth-century writers, Dr McCue illuminates the important role they played in shaping the themes that are central to our understanding of Romanticism.

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