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BRITISH ROMANTIC LITERATURE AND THE EMERGING MODERN GREEK NATION. By Alexander Grammatikos. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Pp. x + 221. ISBN 978-3-319-90439-9. £59.99 (£47.99 as e-book).

This book breaks new ground as the first to focus on the ways in which British Romantic writers, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, engaged with Greece and Greeks primarily as part of their own, *modern* world. Most studies of Romantic Hellenism, for understandable reasons, place the emphasis on the reception of classical antiquity. David Roessel, in his classic study *In Byron's Shadow: Modern Greece in the English and American Imagination* (2002), covered a much wider canvas. Now Alexander Grammatikos has homed in on a small group of texts, some of them very well known, others barely known at all, even to specialists, but all of them dating from the crucial decades when the foundations were being laid for the Greek nation-state that exists today.

After an introductory chapter that sets the scene, Chapter 2 pairs two novels, *Woman: Or Ida of Athens* (1809) by Sydney Owenson, and *Anastasius* by Thomas Hope. Although Hope's novel was published (anonymously) as late as 1819, there is no good reason to doubt its author's claim, in the title, that it had been *Written at the Close of the Eighteenth Century*. A different kind of pairing, in the next chapter, brings together Canto II of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812) with Hobhouse's non-fictional *Journey through Albania*, published the following year. Hobhouse's travel book draws on experiences shared while he and Byron had travelled together in 1809 and 1810, while the 'Notes' published with *CHP* II make extensive use of Byron's later solo investigations while living in Athens during the following winter. In both these chapters, the perspective on the Greek world belongs squarely to a historical moment when the possibility of a Greek uprising against Ottoman Turkish rule was generally considered unlikely – not least by these two.

The second half of the book brings us into the decade of the 1820s. Now, British writers were having to come to terms with what they knew about the reality of the Greek Revolution which began in 1821 and would lead to recognition of Greece as an independent state in 1830. Perhaps the most successful of the book's five chapters is the long Chapter 4, which juxtaposes Shelley's *Hellas* (1822) with the novel by Catherine Grace Godwin, *Reine Canziani*, and the narrative poem by Felicia Hemans, 'The Bride of the Greek Isle', which both appeared in 1825. All of these were written and published at a time when the future course of events in Greece could not have been predicted. The final chapter performs the same service for Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), juxtaposed with the novel of the previous year by Tertius Kendrick, *The Byron Journal* 48.1 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.3828/bj.2020.11>

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Travellers. A brief Conclusion brings the discussion of British literary attitudes in the early nineteenth century up to date by linking them to the financial and social ‘crisis’ experienced by Greece between 2010 and 2018, and to renewed controversy, in our own time, about the country’s place within the European Union and the broader culture of Europe.

There is much to admire here. What comes through most strongly are the nuances, not excluding self-contradictions, in the attitudes, perceptions and sometimes prejudices revealed by close reading of the chosen texts. Imaginative, Romantic-inspired Brits were at once excited and bemused by the stories they read or heard about ‘the descendants of that nation to which they owe their civilisation’ (as Shelley called the insurgent Greeks in the preface to *Hellas*, written in 1821). Most had no direct experience of the lands that were then loosely referred to as ‘Greece’. Of the authors considered here, only Hope, Byron and Hobhouse had travelled in the Ottoman Empire, Kendrick seemingly only in the British-ruled Ionian islands. Whether they were armchair philhellenes, returned travellers, or not philhellenes at all, each of them was roused to address, imaginatively, the question of what it might be like to live as a Greek in the modern world – and how they themselves, writing within the British Romantic tradition, might connect that experience to their own and their readers’ expectations.

Grammatikos is good on the variety and disparities among his chosen group. But of all the authors he deals with, Byron (in his ‘Notes’ to *CHP* II) and Hobhouse were the only ones who set out explicitly to inform the British public about the actual condition of the modern Greeks, and also to shape public attitudes at home. I was less convinced that a comparable ‘message’ necessarily exists, to be extracted from works of poetry or fiction – particularly in the case of authors who clearly had very little first-hand knowledge to begin with. It would have helped greatly to be told more, and more systematically, about the kind of access that the lesser-known authors could have had to such knowledge. Even in the case of the Shelleys, it would have been worth looking more closely at their acquaintance with Mavrokordatos and other Greek exiles in 1820 and 1821, while living in Pisa. It must surely, for instance, have been from the confidences that she enjoyed with Mavrokordatos that Mary Shelley understood that for educated Greeks at that time, the true capital of the Greek world was not Athens but the Ottoman capital and seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, namely Constantinople. This was noted only in passing by Byron and completely passed over by Mary’s husband, Percy, but is central to *The Last Man*.

Grammatikos is right to lay emphasis on attempts by westerners who engaged with Greece to ‘westernise’ the people they came into contact with, and the difficulty they encountered in coming to terms with an ‘exotic’ east. However, his reliance on the discourses of ‘Orientalism’ and of post-colonial critiques of British (or European) expansion abroad sometimes introduces an element of anachronism and blunts what could have been a more nuanced reading of words and attitudes inevitably embedded in the early nineteenth century. The pirates who brutally interrupt the idyll in Hemans’ poem, set in a partly idealised, partly ancient, Chios, are not an ‘Orientalist trope’, but a standard plot motif in the ancient Greek novel. *Daphnis and Chloe*, set in nearby Lesbos, was the best-known of these in the nineteenth century and surely underlies some, at least, of what Hemans is doing in ‘The Bride of the Greek Isle’. And I doubt whether Mary Shelley’s plague-stricken Constantinople represents an awful warning against British imperial adventures, so much as against the lure of a Hellenic ideal that had already dragged both her husband and Byron (respectively Adrian and Raymond in the novel) to their early deaths, and whose projected fulfilment in the future brings death to the entire human race.

Similarly, in Chapter 4 the juxtaposition of the female chorus in *Hellas* with fictional

heroines who more or less personify a victimised 'Greece' yields excellent insights. But I am not convinced that the drama ends as negatively as Grammatikos believes, with the female speakers 'bereft of solutions about Greece's future'. Does not the final chorus put into effect the triumph of 'thought' over the 'mutability' of history, that is enacted in the central scene (not discussed here) between Mahmoud and Ahasuerus? The drama ends with rejection of *political* solutions, agreed. But Shelley's 'brighter Hellas' does not have to be read as a re-enactment. Even 'classical' Greece was flawed, these lines suggest, and is to be imaginatively swept away, along with all the rest of the 'past', in these closing lines.

Overall, though, this is an informative and thought-provoking book that deserves to be on the shelf of everyone with an interest in Romantic Hellenism.

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THE WICKED LORD BYRON: A NOVEL. By Richard Deakin. London: Achilles Books, 2018. Pp. 350. ISBN 978-1-912572-00-7. £15.00.

It is April 1824. In the dank, marshy town of Missolonghi in Greece, and with the Greek rebellion against Ottoman rule escalating in the surrounding countryside, Lord Byron lies dying from a combination of fever and excessive bleeding by over-zealous physicians. In the poet's very final moments, however, his spirit separates from his still conscious body, and begins a sardonic review of a life that was certainly eventful, if perhaps not always 'well lived' in the conventional sense of that phrase. Together the two poles of Byron's personality – meant loosely to correspond to the stylish but cynical dandy (Spirit) and the more empathetic, suffering ordinary man (Body) – revisit the key scenes and episodes which shaped the poet's life and through which his destiny unfolded. Not least, they meditate on the core friendships and relationships in Byron's life: with his mother and half-sister Augusta, with his wife Annabella (and innumerable other lovers, both male and female), and with friends such as John Cam Hobhouse, Scrope Davies and later Shelley.

This scenario – an inventive variation on the 'his-life-flashed-before-him' trope – is the starting premise of Richard Deakin's energetic and often entertaining retelling of Byron's life. The principal narrator, as we move more or less chronologically through Byron's biography, is the cynical Spirit, for whom Deakin has fashioned quite a compelling, plausible voice, replete with upper-class Regency idioms: this is an effective vehicle especially for the more ribald or bawdy aspects of Byron's life, and there are some memorable scenes here of drunkenness and youthful high jinks. It is less successful, however, at capturing Byron the poet, who must surely have sometimes had his mind on higher things and who was certainly capable of articulating himself with sensitivity and lyricism. This is of course a common problem with fictions and films about writers, artists and similar figures: while their biographies can be easily sketched in terms of major events, it is well-nigh impossible to adequately convey the creative processes, and the complex intersection of craft and distinctive vision, that underpin their core claim to fame. *The Wicked Lord Byron* undoubtedly struggles in this regard, and the early Byron, the poet of *Childe Harold* I and II, to my mind comes across here as a bit of a boor. However, Deakin does make a valiant attempt to vary his narrator's register through some skilful interweaving of passages from Byron's own letters and journals, and in the latter stages of the novel especially, a richer, more complex portrait of the protagonist begins to emerge. In these sections

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the novel's original conceit, that of a dialogue between the core aspects of Byron's personality, largely falls away. But the switch to a more conventional narrative mode is I think to the novel's advantage, and the closing chapters paint an often moving picture of an aging Byron, weighed down by past losses and mistakes and by mounting responsibilities: particularly effective here, I felt, is the poet's growing realisation not only that the Greek cause needs some sort of grand symbolic gesture or sacrifice but that he himself is fated to be that sacrifice.

Overall, then, *The Wicked Lord Byron* is a commendable addition to the long and extensive tradition of fictional and filmic renderings of the poet's life. It may lack profundity in some places, yet it undoubtedly shares with its protagonist considerable energy and zest.

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SHELLEY'S LIVING ARTISTRY: LETTERS, POEMS, PLAYS. By Madeleine Callaghan. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017. Pp. 296. ISBN 978-1-786-94024-7. £75.00.

Madeleine Callaghan's incisive study begins with a discussion of the irrevocable connections made by scholars and critics between Percy Bysshe Shelley's art and his life. Shelley's poetry, loves, and beliefs, which were considered so unconventional during his lifetime, are now the stuff of Romantic myth, and the subject of countless biographies and critical studies. What Callaghan's work does differently to the multitude, however, is to abolish the use of 'crude biographical criticism', to instead successfully provide a 'long overdue reassessment of how the personal might inform the poetry of Shelley'.

Callaghan achieves this through the innovative use of a selection of Shelley's letters, which span from October 1811 to June 1822, and are addressed to notable figures including Thomas Love Peacock, and his future wife, Mary Godwin. These letters are then analysed alongside corresponding poems. The author makes the observation that Shelley's letters 'bridge [...] the personal and the poetic' and are thus used alongside the poems to scrutinise 'the relationship between individual private letters and the artistic work'. The rest of the text is comprised of eight chapters, each of which is focused around particular poems and the letters that Callaghan links to Shelley's fictional work. They are organised roughly chronologically in order to demonstrate the progression of Shelley's poetical prowess, and how his letter-writing supplemented and influenced this progression.

The first chapter explores the links between the *Esdaile Notebook*, the *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, and *Queen Mab*, when placed alongside Shelley's October 1811 letter to Elizabeth Hitchener, the young woman Shelley persuaded to join his family before shunning her. Callaghan indicates that the four examples of Shelley's written work shows his 'burgeoning interest in poetic artistry', as he considers in both his early works and the letter to Hitchener the ideas of thought, feeling, and considerations of death we have come to associate with Shelley. It is these works, the author argues, that reveal 'Shelley self-consciously presenting to the reader his transition into a mature artist'.

"These transient meetings": *Alastor* and *Laon and Cythna*' is the subject of the second chapter, as letters to Thomas Jefferson Hogg and Mary Godwin from 1814–15 are used to emphasise points and moments of plot within the poems. Close analysis of the poems combined with insight gleaned from the letters chosen by Callaghan, demonstrate that 'Shelley embeds his thoughts, emotions, and responses from incidents that moved him in his life into visionary

poetry', and indicate his attempts to track the development of the poet's mind. Chapter 3 emphasises editorial issues and the letter as its own definitive literary text, by exploring a July 1816 letter to Thomas Love Peacock alongside the Scrope Davies notebook, famously found in a Barclays bank vault in 1976. Considering the drafts within the Davies notebook in comparison with those already thought to be canonical, together with the elaborate journal-like style of the Peacock letter, ensure an alternative perspective of Shelley as a 'certain', rather than uncertain, letter-writer; that is to say, the sense of his confidence and self-assurance are predominant within this epistle.

Particularly interesting is Chapter 4's examination of Shelley and his poetic voice when responding to other poets, as seen in the poems 'To Wordsworth', 'Verses on Receiving a Celandine in a Letter from England', and *Julian and Maddalo*. The relationship Shelley has with Wordsworth and Byron – through both epistolary and poetic exchanges – is studied in detail here. The chapter culminates by emphasising how Shelley experiments with using aspects of his life, such as his correspondence and conversations with Byron, merging them with the fictional to create works such as *Julian and Maddalo*. Following this is a chapter entitled "In a style very different": *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, which focuses on the impact of politics on Shelley's letters and poems of the late 1810s. Shelley's fascination with Tasso's imprisonment by the Duke of Ferrara is demonstrated in his November 1818 letter to Peacock, and Callaghan notes that 'this preoccupation with the poet's attempt to survive tyrannical authority is mirrored in Shelley's imaginative writing'. Both *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci* are centred on the struggle between tyrannous authority figures and a poet's role in the world and demonstrate that Shelley's poetry and politics cannot be easily separated.

The final three chapters delineate the progression of Shelley's artistry in the 1820s, beginning with an exploration of *The Witch of Atlas* and *A Defence of Poetry* in the sixth chapter. A letter to an unnamed 'Lady' in spring 1821, which gives instruction and advice on how to write poetry, is the epistolary focus of this chapter, and Callaghan successfully demonstrates the similarities in content between this letter and *A Defence of Poetry*. Callaghan goes on to argue that *The Witch of Atlas* is the culmination and experimentation of the advice given in the letter and *A Defence of Poetry*, and labels them as 'two of Shelley's most significant statements on poetic language'. Poetic language is further explored in Chapter 7, which delves into conceptions of love in *Epipsychidion* and the poems written to Jane Williams in the early 1820s. A letter to John Gisborne from June 1822 is also placed alongside these poems to demonstrate Shelley's loneliness, distress, and desire at this troubling time. Callaghan spends time tenderly examining this letter, observing Shelley's transition from the personal (details of Mary's miscarriage and subsequent illness) to the poetic which utilises the personal, however unwillingly, in the discussions of *Epipsychidion*.

Chapter 8 concludes the text by examining 'the pinnacle of Shelley's poetic achievements', *Adonais* and *The Triumph of Life*, both of which for Callaghan push the limits of poetry. The author argues that both works are responses to and influenced heavily by epistolary exchanges. In the case of *Adonais* this is through previously critically ignored letters sent between Shelley and John Keats, whilst *The Triumph of Life* was created due to Shelley's contemplation of the poetry of his fellows, which he also explores in an 1822 letter to John Gisborne.

Not just an exploration of Shelley's letters or poetry, Callaghan has created a welcome and timely mixture of the two, which is of great interest not just to Shelley scholars, but also to those with an interest in Romantic letters, life-writing, and poetry alike. Particularly welcome is the focus on Keats's letters to Shelley: these have previously received little critical attention

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but Callaghan impressively highlights their significance. An interesting and exciting read, the author has successfully woven these two strands together to demonstrate that ‘what Shelley reports in his letters, he alters, aestheticises, and omits from his poetry, even as the life remains tantalisingly within touching distance of his poetry’.

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ROMANTIC WOMEN WRITERS AND ARTHURIAN LEGEND: THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE. By Katie Garner. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Pp. 311. ISBN 978-1-137-59711-3. £89.99.

Katie Garner’s *Romantic Women Writers and Arthurian Legend* is a wide-ranging and meticulously researched account of ‘how Arthurian literature was read and reimagined by Britain’s women writers between 1770 and 1850’. Building soundly on existing scholarship, it incorporates discussions of Victorian medievalism, the Arthurian Revival, antiquarianism, Romanticism, travel writing, the Arthurian Gothic, and gender studies.

The introductory chapter focuses on how Romantic women writers ‘encountered the Arthurian legend in different contexts to literary men’. Despite being an era that saw ‘an unprecedented number of women enter into print’, the medieval romance revival of the Romantic period had, according to Garner, a ‘hypermasculine nature’. Access to the manuscripts of medieval literature was, she explains, largely controlled by male antiquarians whose findings were then published by antiquarian book clubs whose membership excluded women. However, these attempts to ‘regender romance’ by divorcing medieval romance from feminine reading practices only served to make Arthurian romance more enticing to women writers. As Garner notes, their exclusion from formal education and male cultural circles made them ‘ideal critical readers’ as opposed to contributors to the scholarly revival being undertaken by antiquarians such as Richard Hurd and Thomas Warton.

In her second chapter, ‘Arthuriana for the “Fair Sex”’, Garner outlines the Arthurian texts available to Romantic women and explores how ‘the censorship of material deemed to be too lewd or violent for the female reader’ led to a more disparate miscellany of texts being used as source material for Romantic women writers. Considering how anxieties about the female consumption of romance in the later eighteenth century led to ‘a new investment in repackaging Arthurian material’ for female readers, Garner shows how modified versions of Arthurian texts designed for female readers ‘left a traceable mark on women’s imaginative responses to the myth’. Ragunda Roberts, for example, drew upon Paul Rapin de Thoyras’s *History of England* (1726–31) in addition to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain* (c. 1135) in order to portray Arthur’s erring queen Guinevere in a more favourable light for a 1775 piece on Queen Consorts in *The Lady’s Magazine*, whilst Susannah Dobson used medieval French sources for her Arthurian material in *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry* (1784). The chapter also considers the legacy of Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) and, more pertinently, the bowdlerised *Ancient Ballads* (1807), a collection edited by an anonymous lady which omitted Percy’s scholarly footnotes, censoring some of the language, and omitting the unsuitably bawdy ballad ‘The Boy and the Mantle’. Garner considers how the legacy of this truncated edition can be seen in the Arthurian poems of Louisa Stuart Costello, as her poem ‘The Dream’ is ‘a highly symbolic account of the female reader’s compromised proximity to

medieval texts'. Garner goes on to briefly consider female engagement with the 1816 reprints of Malory, noting that familiarity with his *Morte D'Arthur* can be seen in the works of Costello, Caroline Norton, and Charlotte M. Yonge as a result of these cheaply and widely available editions. However, Garner asserts, the 'reassertion of masculinity' seen in Malory's republication resulted in a persistent lack of attention to the *Morte* from female writers, who preferred instead to engage with the legends through alternative genres such as the Gothic, travel narratives, and literary annuals.

The interplay between Arthuriana and the Gothic is explored in Garner's third chapter on 'Haunting Beginnings: Women's Gothic Verse and King Arthur' in which she makes a compelling argument for 'a close connection between the medieval and the modern Gothic'. By considering the work of professional writers such as Sarah Scudgell Wilkinson, and female poets Matilda Betham and Elizabeth Smith, Garner contends that the Gothic 'provides a suitable language and form for exploring the Arthurian legend's inherent supernaturalism'. Garner's extensive analysis of Anne Bannerman's *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802), and in particular the Arthurian poem 'The Prophecy of Merlin', demonstrates how 'female Gothic motifs could be applied to Arthurian subject matter to create an original and proto-feminist version of Arthur's death'. This discussion indicates that 'the contemporary tendency to dismiss Gothic writing [...] as uninterested in medieval accuracy, meant that much of the scholarly seriousness underlying women's Gothic work was overlooked'.

The fourth chapter, 'Next Steps: Recovering the Arthurian Past in Women's Travel and Topographical Writing', explores the ways in which women used the flexibility of the travel writing form 'as a means of exploring the inner conditions of the human psyche'. Garner points to Lady Charlotte Guest's first-hand knowledge of the topography of the Welsh landscape to give scholarly authority to her work on *The Mabinogion* (1848) and considers how Mary Morgan utilises the epistolary travelogue to conduct an investigation of Merlin in *A Tour of Milford Haven* (1795). In her consideration of Louisa Stuart Costello and Felicia Hemans, Garner demonstrates how female writers pushed at the boundaries of both travel discourse and acceptability by 'blurring poetry with prose, and romance with reality', allowing them to be 'confronted with the remains of the Arthurian past in the present'. Though not as wide in scope as previous sections, the chapter demonstrates the variety of modes and genres through which Romantic women writers engaged with Arthurian materials, whilst continuing to illustrate the complex anxieties and uncertainties that underpinned these engagements.

Although women faced continuing limitations on access to medieval source materials, Garner devotes her fifth chapter to 'The Rise of the Female Arthurianist: Satire and Scholarship', arguing that female Arthurian scholars were 'determined to make their mark on Arthurian and medieval studies'. Without access to the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* (c. 1400), for example, the unidentified T.B.G. utilised George Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (1805) to write 'The Maid of Ascolot. A Romantic Fragment' for the *Ladies Monthly Museum* in 1821. Substantially pre-dating both Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832) and Costello's 'The Funeral Boat' (1829), T.B.G.'s early attention to the Maid of Astolat illustrates the way in which women writers 'self-construct and deconstruct themselves in ways which chimed with the experiences of the tragic maid', providing new perspectives on the legend. Similarly, Anna Jane Vardill's abridged translation of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* (1821) and her satirical work for the *European Magazine* made their own attempts to emulate Ellis, whilst Costello's *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France* (1835) used Ellis' model to create her own anthology, leading her into 'direct correspondence with a network of French and English romance scholars' and finally

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granting her access to many medieval texts in manuscript. Garner also spends some time at the end of the chapter considering Lady Charlotte Guest's influential translation of *The Mabinogion* (1848). However, Garner demonstrates that 'the work of Guest's lesser-known predecessors challenges previous accounts that name her as the inaugurator of women's Arthurian writing'. Often overlooked by other accounts of Arthurianism in the period, the consideration of these lesser-known materials is one of the strengths of Garner's extensive study.

In her penultimate chapter, 'A Fashionable Fantasy: Arthur in the Annuals', Garner examines the annuals and gift books that so often served as the means of dissemination for women writers' engagement with Arthurian subjects. Returning to a number of female poets discussed in Chapter 2, including Costello and Landon, Garner contends that 'medieval romance was an acceptable subject for annual contribution, but only if the sentiments it offered were not too deeply entrenched in antiquarian research, or did not draw undue attention to the more morally suspect aspects of the myth'. Often mocked as vapid or lacking in scholarly and literary integrity, popular annuals from the period were, Garner argues, rich sites for female engagement with Arthurian texts. As Garner asserts, 'they are relics of a now exhausted annual style, and a reminder that King Arthur and medievalist poetry became truly fashionable in the pages of *Forget Me Not*, *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book*, and their many contemporaries'.

As Garner demonstrates throughout, 'navigating Arthurian terrain was far from easy for Romantic women writers'. The homosocial culture of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literary antiquarianism restricted access to key medieval texts and led to female writers accessing Arthurian materials via alternative versions. However, far from being completely divorced from Arthurianism, the Romantic women writer found ways of encountering and engaging with the mythology that, as Garner's authoritative study shows, allowed for the 'exploration of her identity, and her own literary history, well before the second half of the nineteenth century'.

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