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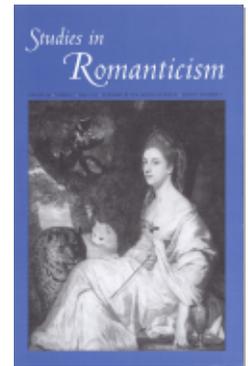
The Orient and the Young Romantics by Andrew Warren (review)

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affects (appreciation, thankfulness, gratitude, humility)” can quietly emerge apart from “the logic of mutuality” (128). Interestingly, the section on “Frost at Midnight” is one of the few moments where *Romantic Intimacy* explicitly addresses extant political renderings of its particular Romantic canon. Yousef is fully cognizant of the unsettling implications of Dorothy’s silence in “Tintern Abbey” and Sara’s abstraction in “Eolian Harp” (126–27), or the politics of utility in “Old Cumberland Beggar” (91), and she is careful to note that “[t]he sense that self-involvement precludes, or seeks to evade, engagement with communal and civic life only duplicates the rigid opposition between solitude and sociality that a poem such as ‘Frost at Midnight’ interrogates” (123). As rejoinders go, this is entirely reasonable, and left me wondering what Yousef’s dexterous argument about the complexities of mute presence would look like in more explicitly political settings, such as Wordsworth’s “September 1, 1802,” with its supremely awkward silence around the sonnet’s black female refugee. This is to say, there is a certain insularity to *Romantic Intimacy* that isn’t surprising given its method and critical program: it reconsiders a range of highly canonical Romantic texts we thought we knew, and attunes us to the strangeness of that knowledge.

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Andrew Warren. *The Orient and the Young Romantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. 279. \$99.

The answers Andrew Warren offers to the question with which he begins this book—why did the young Romantics so often set their poems in the Orient or in Orientalized settings—are doubly pitched toward a poetics of Lacanian mirrors that refract self and world and the political moment of post-Terror Romanticism. These features of Romanticism in its second phase (and, arguably, soon into its first) are complexly and valuably joined in this book. For if the figure of the Oriental despot repeats, at a seemingly safe cultural distance, the solipsism that the Romantic interiority of being necessarily risks, despotism and a putatively “Oriental” fatalism together constitute the political predicament of liberal Romanticism, even as the threat of global likeness makes conservative Romantics edgy. For the second Romantic generation, Warren contends, a poetics caught or entangled in the mirror imaginings of the poetic self as exile, foreigner, and other is enmeshed in a political impasse whose Orientalized name is “despotism,” but whose political contours look more like the impossible inheritance,

post revolution, of a social contract that is flawed (or inevitable) in the same way that the figure of the solitary poet who would change the world is flawed. Both, this book suggests, figure in the political imaginary of Romantic poets and nation states and become the troubled and reworked poetic ground for Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Keats.

For this second generation, Warren insists, multiple ironies, a virtual hall of mirrored ironies, mark their poetic, imagined "Orient" in ways that presage Edward Said's analysis of the Orientalism of Western writers as itself a phantasmatic, over-decorated fiction. The difficulty of separating what the Orient is or was from the way it was Orientalized is from this vantage point as much a Romantic problem as it would become Said's and ours. What Warren's study brings to scholarly understanding of Romantic Orientalism is a more critically poised recognition of how the second generation understood, rather sharply, the ricochet effect of projecting their poetic and political anxieties onto an Oriental scene that refracted their own dubieties.

The shape of Warren's argument helps to make its double impact effective. A fine introduction considers the rhetorical and figurative impulses of Romantic Orientalism: a tendency to invoke earlier texts as pre-texts, a predisposition to worry about solipsism as both a poetic condition and globally untenable, and a recognition, philosophical and poetic, of belatedness. These features mark Warren's analysis of Wordsworth's famous *Dream of the Arab*, and the post-Wordsworthian echoes of that episode. Subsequent chapters feature astute readings of poems by Shelley, Byron, and Keats that emphasize the difficulty of arriving at an external perspective. Being entangled with their Orientalist fictions, being orientalized by them, constitutes for these poets a pointed recognition of what Warren summarizes as "internal threats and limits *within* Western ideologies" (13). Two interchapters, one on Montesquieu, the second on Rousseau's vexed rendition of the nation state and the foreign, develop the specific political contours of those immanent threats. Romantics thus speak "from within the symptom" (13) such that any cure they might effect must be routed via the Orientalist fiction that half-posit the (seeming) externality of the despotism and fatalism they also recognize as themselves.

In the first chapter, Warren stages something like a considered revival of critical attention to the verse as well as the notes of Southey's *Thalaba*. Like other "High Romantics" (Warren is committed to such terms and this category), Southey is by philosophic disposition desirous of unity, wholeness, irony, and a strong binding of poet to language. Having suggested in the Introduction that fatalism operates as an Orientalizing buffer against self-will, here Warren tracks Southey's staging of fatalism in *Thalaba*, as its protagonist wavers between resigning himself to whatever fate seems marked

as is, and not. In formal terms as well, *Thalaba* stages an ongoing tension between the poem's self-enclosed (Oriental) world and quasi-Oriental, not quite classical verse form, and the orientalist facts of the notes. Then too, the mythical tendencies of this poem work against its historically laden note apparatus. All these balance points tip unsteadily, their ironies wobbling as well. The problems of self and nation, of foreign and despot, that Southey's poem proposes become a point of departure for the second generation poets, who mine Orientalist imaginaries to hone sharper ironies that recognize their own embeddedness in questions about nation, self, and governance. As Warren notes, the Orient becomes from Southey forward a "charged figure in the British ideological imaginary" (81) that reflects the internal politics and colonialist enterprise of Regency Britain back to itself. Other important scholars have made this argument without fully recognizing how ironies point toward a Romantic poetic understanding of unwelcome complicity with the colonialist project.

The two interchapters stage the intellectual itinerary of these questions via Montesquieu and Rousseau. Warren observes that Montesquieu helped to instruct Romantics on the loss of will that fatalism and submission to despotic power styled as Oriental waste and decorative excess. What makes this claim so difficult for Romantics to unseat, Warren notes, is Montesquieu's insistence that despotism, and other forms of governance, are grounded in nature: depending on climate and place, one or another form of government is, as this argument goes, natural, hence doubly inevitable. Rousseau's placement in the argument of this study is even more arresting. Warren argues that Rousseau's tricky account of the social contract creates an enduring problem for Romantic poets and their heirs: the slide from individual to general will arrives at collectivity by secret, unearned means. For what collective body is thus made? Only, Warren suggests, a nation state that insists on its boundaries as consisting of what will keep the foreign out. Rousseau's own struggles with being a foreigner to the duchies and classes that alternatively welcomed and excluded him are not at issue here, though they could be insofar as they register chez Rousseau the same refracting mirrored being of Orientalist poetics, Romantic style. And yet Warren is surely right to imply, as he does later in this study, that Kant's cosmopolitics posits peace as the cautious recognition of national boundaries, recognizing as Kant does that there will be no effacing them and no peace without (and possibly with) them.

Coming after, as they do, the second generation of Romantics must work out how to go forward into modernity. It is an open question whether they do so, or even can do so—a question made persistent by Orientalizing scenarios that mark how much their poetics seems bound to these conditions. In later chapters of the book, the word "entanglement"

turns up more frequently to characterize the poetic difficulty that accrues as poets recognize their symptomatic location inside the Orientalizing worlds they construct. Byron's *Lara* is a case in point. Looking back on Byron's own career as a writer of popular Oriental Romances, this poem and protagonist look back at a spectral haunted moment, what Warren characterizes as the wound of the Orient, that is itself wound about the poem—a pun and spectral haunting that marks Byron's relation to the Oriental Romance, a relation the poem also works hard to put aside by its very material notices of death and waste. The Orientalism of *Lara* is, as Warren notes, a gap that somehow, phantasmatically, organizes and produces real effects in the world, a strange paradox that reappears in the final chapter on Keats, where Lamia is that Orient whose entanglement marks Lycius as an unhappy, nervous solipsist.

In Shelley's poetics, Orientalism projects both the bad faith of British politics as such and the relation between self and world that politics appears to authorize (a colonial, imperial self vs. a submissive world). In *Alastor*, Warren observes, Shelley stages the solipsist poet as the one who slips into a grave by following an Orientalist fantasy (and geography) of his own sufficiency, a trajectory that Shelley revises and again critiques in the anti-idealist poetics of *Epipsychidion*, a poem where critique takes the interesting form, according to Warren, of Lucretian materialism. The longest analysis of Shelley's poetics occurs in the chapter on *The Revolt of Islam* as a work struggling with all of the figures of Orientalism that Warren's study develops: erotic solipsism, Oriental binding and wounding, the strange twinning and sought after wholeness of the lovers Laon and Cythna, and the foreign as the force that seeks to lead Islam in revolt against its despot. Warren understands the lovers as psychologically regressive in their self-involvement. He is certainly right to notice their foreignness to the Constantinople they hope to liberate by starting a revolt of its citizens, whose ultimate passivity seems to reinstate an East/West axis of traits. Few recent readings of this poem reckon so trenchantly with the shared, even when estranged, solitude of Laon and Cythna. My reservation about this chapter concerns how to posit where its irony is headed: I would understand the failure of Laon and Cythna/Laone as the failure of a hope that was too big not to fail—a reading that would give Shelley a strong grasp of the political impossibilities of Regency England.

As this review is intended to suggest, this book is a compelling critical achievement in part because it is finely wrought, but also because in it Andrew Warren raises questions about the poetry of the second generation that are very much worth raising and discussing. I may (and do) dispute the slightly too swift alliance of Kantian introspection with Romantic self-criticism, inasmuch as Kant's project assumes a priori options that Roman-

tic poets may not assume, and with the suggestion that 1000 of something constitutes a moment of mathematical sublimity, but these are local disagreements. Warren's study offers us real insight and sustained critical pleasures.

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