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Book Reviews

Peter W. Graham ^a; Thomas Pfau ^b

^a Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,

^b Duke University,

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Book Reviews

The Reception of Byron in Europe

RICHARD A. CARDWELL (ED.)

London and New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004

2 volumes: lv, viii + 500 pp.

Richard A. Cardwell's *The Reception of Byron in Europe* is the sixth installment in The Reception of British Authors in Europe, an Athlone Critical Traditions series under the general editorship of Elinor Shaffer. Previous volumes have centered on Virginia Woolf, Laurence Sterne, James Joyce, Walter Pater, and Ossian—all literary figures—but the ultimate aim of the series is to include such British authors as Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Edmund Burke, and David Hume, who have influenced intellectual and cultural history in other fields and ways. One might argue for Byron as preeminent in such a series, for no British author but Walter Scott comes close to Byron's status as literary influence, inspiration, and motif-provider on the European continent—and, distinct from his literary stardom, Byron's influence extends into the political realm. Besides the aesthetic influences his works and life (and the potent myth that blends them almost indistinguishably) exerted on European Romanticisms and the movements that followed, his devotion to liberal causes in Italy and Greece and most conspicuously his death at Missolonghi, where he had gone to devote his talents, energy, and fortune to the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire, made him the poster boy of progressive political movements during a century and more of nation-building on the European continent. Byron's life, legend, and literary effusions provided words, postures, inspirations, and epitaphs for a range of political and social phenomena. His influence extends from the post-Napoleonic realm of *weltschmerz* and political reaction to the democratic struggles of 1848 and well beyond.

To cover the broad, important territory of Byron's continental reception, Richard A. Cardwell, himself a specialist in Spanish literature with concurrent strength in Byron studies, has assembled a comprehensive and learned group of academics specializing in Byron, particular European literatures, or both. The two-volume reception study at first glance might seem to be organized geographically—Volume 1 treats Southern Europe, France, and Romania while Volume 2 is devoted to Northern, Central, and

Inquiries about the Book Review Section may be addressed to Diane Long Hoeveler, the Review Editor for *European Romantic Review*. Correspondence to: Diane Long Hoeveler, Department of English, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI 53201, USA; email: diane.hoeveler@marquette.edu

Eastern Europe—but in fact linguistic principles determine the shape of the volumes, with literatures of the Romance languages treated in one volume, literatures from other linguistic traditions in the second, and with the chapters in the Table of Contents headed by names of languages, not countries. The essays, of high overall quality and engagingly diverse in their approaches and foci, gather together a range of information not previously distilled for readers interested in Byron's European reputation beyond the "tight little island" he left behind in 1816.

The first volume starts strong with a pair of essays on Byron's reputation in France: "Infernal Magnetism': Byron and Nineteenth-Century French Readers" by Joanne Wilkes and "From Pichot to Stendhal to Musset: Byron's Progress through Early Nineteenth-Century French Literature" by Peter Cochran. These complementary pieces, the first more historical in its emphasis, the second more intensively interpretative, show the early evolution of Byron's literary reputation in the literature of the continental nation whose power loomed largest in Byron's lifetime. France also provided the translation most important for spreading Byron's reputation on the continent during his lifetime and in the two decades thereafter—Amédée Pichot's 10-volume prose translation (or "crib," as Cochran terms it) of the *Oeuvres de Lord Byron*—and held a range of reader-authors keen to make Byron's acquaintance and to profit by his literary example through the 1830s. Ernest Giddey's "A Meteor in the Sky of Literature': Byron and Switzerland" concisely traces Byron's reception in French-speaking Switzerland, where Byron based himself on the shores of Lac Lemman for the famous "haunted summer" of 1816, from 1814 onwards. Edoardo Zuccato's "The Fortunes of Byron in Italy (1810–70)" foregrounds the chronological and geographical variations in still-fragmented Italy's first sixty years of response, from the sentimental Catholic view prevailing in Lombardy during Byron's lifetime and through 1830 to anti-clerical Byronism in Tuscany (1829–50) and Southern romantic exuberance (1840–70). Picking up where Zuccato leaves off, Giovanni Iamartino's "Translation, Biography, Opera, Film, and Literary Criticism: Byron and Italy after 1870" considers the impact Byron's figure and works had after Italian unification, when "freedom's battle" was no longer the pressing concern it had been and Byron became less of a politico-cultural force, more narrowly literary in his appeal to Italian readers and artists. Like France and Italy, Spain is the subject for a pair of essays. Derek Flitter's "'The Immortal Byron' in Spain: Radical and Poet of the Sublime" describes how Byron's figuration as a transcendently ambitious and inevitably unsatisfied, melancholic nature poet suited Spanish Romantics but argues that his literary endurance in Spain exists in spite of, rather than because of, this early reception. Richard A. Cardwell's "El Lord Sublime': Byron's Legacy in Spain" ranges widely through nineteenth-century Spanish literature but centers especially on José de Espronceda, often called the "Spanish Byron," to show how Byron's iconoclasm, skepticism, and wide-ranging literary attacks on authority in diverse forms inspired progressive Spanish writers throughout the century—and beyond, to a twentieth-century Spain where Miguel de Unamuno was spiritual heir to Byron's cynical and pessimistic legacy. The Romance languages whose literatures are probably least familiar to the bulk of this collection's readers are featured in the volume's last two essays. Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa's "'Tempting Demon': The Portuguese Byron" presents a

contrarian national response. Portuguese readers of Byron's own century never forgave the poet they thought of as "the singer of Sintra" for *Childe Harold's* caustic comments on Portugal and its people, and he is still not a canonical or canon-shaping poet there. "The Byron Phenomenon in Romanian Culture" by Mihaela Anghelescu Irimia chronicles, with bravura touches of critical wit, Byron's figure and literary corpus "under Eastern eyes" and describes his influence on Wallachian and Moldavian Romanticism, a belated and domesticated variant on the century's grand theme.

Germanic responses begin the collection's second volume in Frank Erik Pointner and Achim Geisenhanslücke's "The Reception of Byron in the German-Speaking Lands." The authors begin with Hentschel's claim that "No other British writer except Shakespeare has seized so tenacious a hold on the German imagination" (2: 235) and proceed to trace Byron's reception in Germany and Austria, with particular attention to the period between 1815 and 1848 as well as to how the high Romantic poets Heine and Goethe, along with Nietzsche, Gottfried Benn, and other writers responded to Byron in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Emulated in Germany and Austria, Byron was cast as Other in the Netherlands, as "'A Splenetic Englishman': The Dutch Byron" by Theo D'haen reveals. Dutch literature stressing domestic realism, patriotic and historical subjects, and "parson-poetry" looked askance at a Byronic Romanticism figured as dark, exotic, and subversive. Martin Procházka's "Byron in Czech Culture," a standout in a fine field of essays, thoroughly but economically traces the waxing and waning of Byron's influence on Czech literature, where he has proved influential not just as the chief poet of European Romanticism but even more importantly as a "problematic representative of modern culture" (2: 304), a symbolic embodiment of many of the chief ideological, philosophical, and ethical dilemmas of his century's universalism and nationalism. Perplexities inherent in Byron's Romantic and post-Romantic influences also dominate Miroslawa Modrzewka's subtle study "Pilgrimage or Revolt?: The Dilemmas of Polish Byronism," with its account of Byron's diverse impacts on nineteenth-century Polish national politics and literary styles alike. Orsolya Rákai discusses the Hungarian literary consciousness's reception of Byron as near-emblematic embodiment of modern man in "'This Century Found Its Voice in Him': Some Aspects of the 'Byron Phenomenon' in Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Literary Criticism." Nina Diakonova and Vadim Vatsuro collaborate in "'No Great Mind and Generous Heart Could Avoid Byronism': Russia and Byron" to show how Byron's Russian influence has extended over two hundred years, with the poet winning "almost universal recognition and passionate adherence" (2: 331) in his own time and being studied, published, and translated as actively in the new millennium as in his own day. Vitana Kostadinova reflects on "Images of Byron in Bulgaria," where openness towards foreign cultures and literatures has been the keynote of the past two centuries but where the changing figure the poet cuts has proven very different as the Bulgarian Revival's (1762–1878) emphasis on the freedom-fighter gave way to interest in the existential poet of *Manfred* and *Cain* and the "revolutionary Romantic" reemerged with the socialist re-evaluation of national identity and literary heritage subsequent to 1944. The next three essays give us Byron's reception in Scandinavia: "'Look to the Baltic': Byron between Romanticism and Radicalism in Denmark" by Jorgen Erik Nielsen,

“‘Lover of Freedom and Teacher of Nations’: Byron’s Reception in Norway” by Bjorn Tysdahl, and “‘Dissolve All Dissonance’: The Fortunes of Byron in Sweden” by Ingrid Elam. Byron devoted himself to the study of the Armenian language on the monastic island of San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon, and in “Byron and Armenia: A Case of Mirrored Affinities” Anahit Bekaryan shows how Armenian readers and writers, especially among the expatriate intelligentsia, have returned the compliment. Innes Merabishvili, author of “Liberty and Freedom and the Georgian Byron” shows how Byron’s penchant for opposing authority proved congenial to such anti-Tsarist revolutionaries as the Georgian Decembrists and emphasizes a point repeatedly made elsewhere in this collection: that if Byron’s literary talent produced his fame in his native land, his fame as an unselfish friend of liberty gained an audience for his writing in countries not yet enjoying British freedoms. Given that a key component of Byron’s continental fame derived from his death in the war between Greek revolutionaries and the Ottoman Empire, it seems fitting that the last pair of essays should address Byron’s reception in those two places. Each essay usefully complicates the notion of what Byron has meant in Greece and in Turkey—and why. “A ‘Very Life in . . . Despair in the Land of Honourable Death’: Byron and Greece” by Litsa Trayiannoudi points out that although Byron has, from 1824 on, been canonized among the national heroes of Greece, he is also something more. Her meticulous exposition reveals Byron as poetical, as well as political, exemplar—a literary model, in different ways, for both the classical purists of the Athenian Romantic school and for the Demotic proponents of a vernacular Greek literature. Massimiliano Demata’s “Byron, Turkey, and the Orient” claims that if Byron loved Greece, that does not mean he hated the Turks. Demata argues that oversimplified, ideologically pumped-up readings of Byron’s philhellenism, whether from Western or Eastern perspectives, have obstructed accurate appreciations of the poet’s cultural sensitivity toward the Turks and Islam alike and have, understandably, kept Byron from gaining a positive overall reception in the Near East. Closely attending to details of Byron’s writing and well informed by various critical arguments, Demata disavows sweeping generalizations and foregrounds the complexities of Byron as a particular (and particularly open-minded) Eastern traveler who found as much to admire as to deplore in the Ottoman Empire.

As would be expected in a study with this collection’s serious comparative focus, there’s a great deal of double-quoting, with passages appearing in both the original language and in English translation. Perhaps as a compensatory space-saving strategy, Byron’s works are referred to in the texts of individual essays by abbreviations (helpfully provided in list form at the start of each volume) rather than by name. Undeniably practical, this choice diminishes euphony in sentences where readers encounter *ESBR* in place of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, *Cn* for *Cain*, and so forth. Fortunately, the name Byron is not shortened to B, or even LB. Along with the two lists of abbreviations, introductions by the series editor and collection editor, and the customary apparatus of an index and contributors’ list, *Byron’s Reception in Europe* contains useful individual bibliographies for each of the twenty-three essays and a timeline put together by Richard Cardwell and Paul Barnaby that clearly and helpfully organizes the events of Byron’s life, his first editions, their first translations into various European

languages, and many of the major continental literary, musical, and artistic responses to Byron's life and work from 1807 until 2002.

PETER W. GRAHAM

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

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The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche

GEORGE S. WILLIAMSON

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xiv + 428 pp.

Unless one is content to treat myth as one more "topic" among so many others, which the book here under discussion often does, any meditation on myth amounts to an exploration of the permanently insecure borderlands of a modernity that has placed its trust and confidence in the *cogito's* reflexive skepticism, in epistemological gains as a function of "method," and in rationalism's managerial and totalizing outlook on all worlds past, present, and future. Weary of taking Modernity's theoretical attainments for granted—attainments that, billed as an overcoming of myth, had always seemed perilously self-legitimizing—the more insightful writers on myth and modernity (Ernst Cassirer, Arnold Gehlen, Claude Levi-Strauss, Hans Blumenberg) have tended to approach myth as the permanently irrecoverable condition of knowledge. Its radical anteriority vis-à-vis all acts of knowledge and culture—from the most primitive ritual to the most sophisticated and self-conscious productions of bourgeois aesthetics, historicism, and science—manifests itself in an antagonism and volatility that continually haunts all forms of knowledge. Schelling calls it "the incomprehensible ground of reality" or an "indivisible remainder."

From an altogether different angle, Lukacs's "Theory of the Novel" gives equally concise expression to this dialectic between the production of forms and what they *contain*—in the double sense of possession and repression: "Every art form is defined by the metaphysical dissonance of life which it accepts and organizes as the basis of a totality complete in itself; the mood of the resulting world, and the atmosphere in which the persons and events thus created have their being, are determined by the danger which arises from this incompletely resolved dissonance and which therefore threatens the form." Myth is that radically anterior energy that disrupts the work of form, exposes its illusory coherence, and keeps in play a primal energy ("danger") that aesthetic and epistemological forms strive to contain. Likewise, in his magisterial *Work on Myth* (*Arbeit am Mythos*, 1979), Hans Blumenberg, remarks: "However late that may already be which we can grasp with the aid of names that have been handed down, it is a piece of mastery—of giving shape to and bringing into view—something that went before and that is beyond our reach. ... The historical power of myth is not founded in the origins of its contents, in the zone from which it draws its materials and

its stories, but rather in the fact that, in its procedure and its 'form,' it is *no longer* something else." Myth, in other words, remains a vital presence in every society to the extent that it longs to take possession of an origin—a desire impossible to realize yet implacably persistent. Yet the key here is not to posit myth as an absolute *de facto* origin or primordially but, rather, to understand that the very substance of myth inheres in any given culture's particular ways of longing for such an origin.

Ultimately, this "longing for myth," to quote the titular phrase of George Williamson's ambitious study of nineteenth-century German aesthetic and historical work on myth, constitutes much more than a simple attempt to take possession of an origin, such as was made by a German culture eager to consolidate itself as a nation. As Nietzsche's and Freud's oeuvre (e.g., *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Totem and Taboo*) insist time and again, all longing, including the longing for mythic origin, is not necessarily an attempt to possess origins in the mode and name of scientific (bourgeois) object-knowledge. Rather, it constitutes an earnest attempt at escaping the constricting and suffocating rationalism that affirms itself by its unrelenting methodological attempts at taking possession of myth. In what is a startling and logical echo of Schopenhauer, Blumenberg thus notes "that everything that man gained in the way of dominion over reality, through the experience of his history and finally through knowledge, could not remove the danger of sinking back—indeed, the longing to sink back—back to the level of his impotence, into archaic resignation, as it were."

Similarly, Williamson acknowledges "the persistent gap between mythical hope and prosaic reality" (2), though it the exact meaning of "mythical" in this phrase eludes us. Is "mythical" an attribute of the hope in question? Is myth the very essence of "hope," understood as a "longing" for some distant past? If we accept the hypothesis—which circumscribes most narrative projects from Novalis via Wagner, Nietzsche, to Mann and T. S. Eliot ("In my beginning is my end"), then what sense does it make to speak of a "longing for myth"—that is, a longing for something that is itself the very essence of longing, namely, a quest for oblivion, unaccountability, and the Circe-call of nothingness? Throughout Williamson's study, myth and religion stand in suprisingly close and, to this reviewer, questionable proximity; indeed, at times the two terms appear all but interchangeable. Identifying his "standpoint" as one defined by "recent theoretical discussions within the field of religious studies" (5) Williamson seems eager to distance himself from theories that treat myth as a unique species of narrative (e.g., a story of creation). Curiously, the voices to which he appeals (Bruce Lincoln, Ivan Strenski) seem to offer little more than a dismissal of myth as "an 'illusion'—an appearance conjured or 'construct' created by artists and intellectuals" (Strenski) or as "simply a category that has been used to 'fetishize or deride certain kinds of stories'" (Lincoln). Following these largely negative definitions of myth, Williamson specifies that, throughout his study, "the term 'mythology' will denote a system of sacred images, narratives, and rituals that reflects the values of a community or a nation" (6).

What allows and prompts Williamson to predicate his admirably erudite monograph on an understanding of myth as the chimerical objectification of ideological work is his conviction that in the far-flung preoccupation of nineteenth-century German culture with myth the latter term ultimately serves but as a fictional guise for

a post-Enlightenment and post-revolutionary surge of religious consciousness: “This study emphasizes the degree to which the *supposedly secular* [italics mine] realms of nineteenth-century art and scholarship were infused with the rhetoric, narratives, and assumptions of Christian theology. Indeed, I maintain in this study that the longing for myth is best understood, not as a secularization of traditional religion or as a form of ‘secular religion,’ but rather as a development *within* Christian ... culture, as it confronted the cultural and political challenges of European modernity” (4).

Williamson’s thesis is at least partially correct. He is right, that is, to approach German nineteenth-century culture as, in the words of Anthony La Vopa, a “reformulation of the sacred within a desacralized discourse” (qtd. on 9). Clearly, the carelessly and widely used concept of secularization never meant a simple abandonment of religious or, rather, metaphysical concerns or their successful supersession by secular, rationalist models of knowledge. Williamson persuasively characterizes nineteenth-century German culture as one caught up in “a change in the structure of religious life [that] did not necessarily entail an abandonment of religious belief” (9). Even so, to make use, as Williamson sensibly does, of such Weberian categories as secularization, disenchantment, and desacralization is also to acknowledge that a major discursive and conceptual shift *has* occurred. Without an explicit analysis of the philosophical nature and theoretical implications of that shift, however, any introduction to a *historical* account of myth such as is being offered in this book will remain woefully incomplete. At the very least, one would have expected Williamson to take up what is arguably the most profound reflection on the concept of secularization, Hans Blumenberg’s *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*. Yet what we have, for better and for worse, is an unflinchingly empirical, historiographical project that treats the affinity of myth, religion, and history as a set of supposedly self-interpreting data and texts in no particular need of further analytic scrutiny or theoretical framing. Particular surprising, in this regard, is that (save for one passing mention on page 118), Williamson never takes up Hans Blumenberg’s obviously germane, influential 1979 monograph on myth (*Work on Myth*).

Characteristic of the nineteenth-century investment in devising a new mythology or reconstructing an ancient one is its axiomatic decision that one must go about this task in historical fashion. As a philologically grounded *récit*, nineteenth-century Historicism amounts less to a way of possessing myth than to covertly reenacting it in the respectable guise of post-Enlightenment, academic practice and its quasi-instinctive preference for narrative forms—be they dialectical, speculative, philological or otherwise historicist. As Nietzsche had put it, in a particularly vivid passage from *The Birth of Tragedy* that Williamson also quotes (albeit without heeding its full implications):

it is the lot of all myths to creep gradually into the confines of a supposedly historical reality, and to be treated by some later age as unique fact with claims to historical truth. ... This is how religions tend to die: the mythic premises of a religion are systematized, beneath the stern and intelligent eyes of an orthodox dogmatism, into a fixed sum of historical events; one begins nervously defending the veracity of myths, at the same time resisting their continued life and growth. The feeling for myth dies and is replaced by religious claims to foundations in history. (*Birth of Tragedy*, ch. 10)

A key question, thus, becomes whether the nineteenth-century's commitment to historicism and its preoccupation with myth are homologous or antithetical pursuits. Is myth, in the sense of Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's thesis, an object of longing because "the blight that lies dormant in the womb of theoretical [and historicist] culture is gradually beginning to frighten modern man, and he casts uneasily around ... for remedies to ward off the danger"? Or is myth the last frontier for historicist—and inherently optimistic—methods of dispelling that danger by means of a relentlessly accumulative, positivistic accountancy?

While never raising the question expressly about itself, Williamson's study clearly falls within the latter paradigm. Presented in a clear, generously researched expository style, its seven chapters offer a wealth of material on the aesthetic, philological, and political exploration of myth and, above all, religion from early Romanticism to the post-1871 era of the Wilhelmine Reich. In his discussion of the role of myth in German Romanticism ("Theophany and Revolution"), Williamson prefers a more panoramic outlook, well beyond the narrow precincts of Jena Romanticism (1796–1800) to which literary theory and criticism has often restricted itself. Yet while adopting a broader perspective has potential advantages, it is here being acquired at the expense of genuine analytic investment. In the case of Schelling, for example, Williamson offers "not an in-depth explication of idealist philosophy but rather a broader analysis that uses Schelling's early life and career to reconstruct the historical situation in which a discourse on myth rose to prominence" (25). By way of Winckelmann, Herder, Heyne, Eichhorn, Gabler, Moritz, we are thus taken to a brief synopsis of Schelling's early philosophy of nature, his presumptive authorship of the 1800 *Systemprogramm*, and his subsequent writings until roughly 1805. Here, as throughout much of the book, Williamson offers concise and efficiently contextualized introductory expositions of the prevailing debates, particularly that regarding the status of religious consciousness within an idealist, historico-systematic conception of the world. All this makes *The Longing for Myth* a helpful companion for more focused and theoretically ambitious readings of the principal writers in question (Schelling, the brothers Grimm, Creuzer, Strauss, Wagner, Nietzsche, et al.), particularly inasmuch as a scrupulously textual exegesis and theoretical analysis of these writers since the 1970s has often proven oblivious to the broader historical currents in which these authors lived and wrote.

In taking up Jacob Grimm's 1835 *Deutsche Mythologie*, again situated within a generously panoramic contextual field of minor writers (Görres, Adelung, Ruehs, Mone, et al.), Williamson notes how the entire period of the *Vormärz* appears to be stymied by the paucity of genuine, fully authenticated mythological materials: "There was and still is very little evidence describing the nature of Germanic myth and religion." Faced with only two principal texts, Tacitus's *Germania* and the Icelandic *Edda*, Grimm's efforts, while "truly monumental" also proved "selective and highly speculative" (99). As Williamson shows, much of the philological and mythographic debate during the *Vormärz* era was centered on the whether these source texts pointed to a pagan, Indo-Germanic or to a Judaeo-Christian tradition. While Grimm's anti-Catholic and, more subtly, anti-Christian perspective seeks to posit and trace a distinct and autonomous Germanic mythology, more autochthonous and native (*volksmäßig*) than the

“Romish forgeries” to which Heine avers with sly malice, we are not presented with any analysis or explanation for why mythological research took this route and why it proceeded in “highly speculative,” if not wholly invented, manner. To answer that question, one would arguably have to consider that myth is less a scholarly *object* of longing than the inscrutable and inexhaustible *source* feeding that very longing.

The conspicuous success and lasting appeal of Grimm’s mythological project ultimately attests to the constant, if forever shifting, efficacy of myth within post-Revolutionary modernity and its precariously anonymous and imagined nation-state communities. Friedrich Creuzer’s monumental *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (1819), took a nearly obverse and, as it turned out, highly controversial approach by assimilating pagan (esp. Persian) and Judaeo-Christian myths that unsettled not only Christian theologians of his time but also the philological establishment, which feared that Creuzer was about “to reassimilate their discipline into an intellectual framework dictated by Christian theology” (138). From here, Williamson’s study moves on to Strauss’s intensely divisive *Das Leben Jesu* (1835), a work that not only threw down the gauntlet for established religion but also marked a turn against mythographic practice overall; “Strauss viewed myth primarily as an illusion, which should be replaced by reason, history, and a generalized notion of human progress” (178). In according Strauss a rather prominent place in his study, Williamson further blurs the convoluted boundaries between myth, mythological inquiry, and religious history. The discussions of Wagner and Nietzsche, cursory and introductory in their design, ultimately suffer from an excess of competition—often more trenchantly argued and more skilled in configuring the ideological work of Wagner’s unique brand of mythmaking with his equally distinctive and complex aesthetic and compositional designs. One might think of Bryan Magee’s similarly accessible but more detailed readings of Feuerbach and Schopenhauer in his recent *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* or Carl Dahlhaus’s and John Deathridge’s splendid, compact introduction in *The Grove Wagner*. Yet interpolated between the Wagner and Nietzsche chapters is Williamson’s discussion of “Myth and Monotheism in the Unification Era,” a valuable chapter devoted to far less well-known writers and debates. While none of the figures explored here (Kuhn, Müller, Steinthal) were to attain the lasting, if also notorious, charisma of a Wagner or Nietzsche, their work on the linguistic underpinnings of mythological inquiry and on the heretofore ignored Jewish myths adds a valuable contextual layer to our understanding of the unification period.

Williamson’s book will reliably serve faculty and students, and indeed a broader public, looking for a competent and inclusive introduction to the evolution of religious and mythological debates from German Romanticism to 1880. What the book does not offer is a strong and overarching thesis. Its avowed concern—viz., to chart the “longing for myth” as “a development *within* Christian ... culture” and to draw attention to “underappreciated ... persistence of religious modes of thinking and perception within the allegedly secular institutions of art, literature, and scholarship”—judiciously follows a variety of often heated and easily confusing, concurrent debates and disputes as they unfold during in the wake of Romantic and post-Napoleonic culture. Another task, arguably one that could be met only by greater concentration, would be to frame

these debates as crucial forms of collective self-description differentially pursued as part of the overall German quest for national coherence and for a plausibly inclusive yet stable model of community.

THOMAS PFAU
Duke University
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