



Romantic Appropriations of History: The Legends of Joanna Baillie and Margaret Holford Hodson

Judith Bailey-Slagle

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Romantic Appropriations of History: The Legends of Joanna Baillie and Margaret Holford Hodson focuses on Joanna Baillie's *Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters* (1821) and on various historical tales, either written or translated, by one of her very close friends, Margaret Holford Hodson. While Baillie's plays have garnered significant critical attention over the past few years, little has been written about her poetry. Further, virtually no attention has been given to Hodson's works, yet critic Stephen Behrendt argues that her *Margaret of Anjou* is a "minor masterpiece that has not been accorded the attention it deserves."

Romantic Appropriations of History offers a look at how two early nineteenth-century women, each under her own "anxiety of influence," appropriated original tales to produce completely new texts of political and cultural significance. The book addresses appropriation and translation in various ways and provides an introduction to the lives and alliances of Joanna Baillie and Margaret Holford Hodson, both to each other and to two significant poets and friends who were proponents of this historical tradition in literature—Walter Scott and Robert Southey. Employing the language of fancy, Baillie and Hodson joined the pathos of historical situations and archetypical characters with their own cultural and ethical sensibilities at a time of literary, social, and political disorder. The atmosphere not only provided Baillie and Hodson with the therapeutic power of appropriating history, but it also established them as creative, political women with distinct voices in a patriarchal, yet dynamic, nineteenth-century world.

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