

## PETER GREEN (1924–2024)



### A TRIBUTE

by K. A. PAVELKO

I write this tribute of Peter Green as someone who knew him –and his wife Carin– for more than forty years. My late husband, Eugene N. Borza, was Peter’s colleague and friend even longer –from 1971 until Gene’s death in 2021.

There are numerous professional tributes to Peter Green in the obituaries written about him (in the *Times of London*, the *Telegraph*, and elsewhere) and a more comprehensive look at his eclectic life (as novelist, journalist, historian, translator, muse/model for others) can be found there.

I’m a journalist and student of history, and so my articles come from interviews and from written sources –and some of what I share here comes from a near fifty-year compendium of correspondence between Gene and Peter, kept faithfully by Gene.

It’s revealing that the first entry in the correspondence file is a note about Peter by none other than the classicist and historian Ernst Badian, a legendary curmudgeon but someone amazingly well connected across the globe to similarly enquiring minds. Badian told Gene: “Try to be kind to Peter Green: you may want to meet him in Athens. I hear he’s worth meeting.”

Indeed he was.

The correspondence, from Peter as well as from Gene, is full of detail about their articles, lectures, and books in progress. They called each other ‘*Borzaki mou*’ and ‘*Prasinaki mou*’ and put a great deal of effort into corresponding promptly and arranging visits –in Athens, in Austin, in Greenville, NC, and at AIA and AAH meetings.

Here’s a request Peter made of Gene while we lived in London in 1978-79: “Do give my greetings to my friends there, in particular to Betty Radice, the Penguin Classics editor, who is a great charmer, enormously intelligent and at 60-ish has a pair of the nicest legs in London. Tell her I’ve almost finished my Ovid introduction. She won’t believe you, but it’s true. Tell her also, that it’s rather long: that she will believe.”

Peter had a writer’s understandable ambivalence about editors. He told Gene: “Every time I have a go at this damned Macedonian paper, I think that’s going to be the end of it: every time you and your lynx-eyed myrmidons come up with something else—which is, of course, comforting.” In other exchanges he asserted the obvious, that everyone needs an editor and acknowledged that he was a talented editor himself.

Gene's appreciation for Peter's scholarly work was expressed in many publications –fellowship applications, introductions at professional meetings, commentaries at sessions, and in book reviews. In his review of 1990's *Alexander to Actium*, he wrote:

“This is masterwork, offering a unique and comprehensive view of the Hellenistic Age. Green, who is one of the best stylists in Classical Studies, has integrated a synthesis of recent specialist scholarship with a number of original insights into Hellenistic culture. The result is a major revisionist view regarding the Hellenization of the Mediterranean world.”

Gene and Peter had a shared life experience as well –a loving second marriage to a much younger woman. As Gene put it after Carin's too-early death in 2015:

“We have long felt a special relationship with Carin and you (aside from the friendly relationship between you and me) –you know, the younger woman having married her somewhat older professor in a union that benefitted all those concerned. Kathleen has always felt kinship with your Carin. And we have cherished the all-too-infrequent reunions that have brought us all together in one place to enjoy food, drink and one another's company.”

If there is one place central to Peter's life and work, it was Greece. In 1992, when domestic matters prevented him from returning to Greece, he wrote: “But oh God I miss Greece. I miss Athens, damn it. I must be the only person I know who does. It's the only city in the world –pollution, *nephos*, you name it– that I feel totally relaxed and happy living in.”

I, too, have paused at the corner of Panepistimiou and Voukourestiou streets with tears in my eyes (and not from the *nephos*!) at having returned to Athens. Peter was right about this, as he was right about so much.