

Maximiliaan van Woudenberg, *Coleridge and Cosmopolitan Intellectualism 1794–1804: The Legacy of Göttingen University*. London: Routledge, 2018. Pp. 340. £110. ISBN 9781472472380.

In 1799, with money from the annuity offered to him by the Wedgwood brothers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge left his wife and children in Somerset to embark on a ten-month trip to Göttingen in central Germany, to conduct research at its famous university. Maximiliaan van Woudenberg's study opens by asking itself 'what did Coleridge do in Göttingen?' (1). Moving past traditional responses to Coleridge's Göttingen period – that it wrecked his powers as a poet, or that Coleridge simply learnt to borrow (or steal) from German literature – van Woudenberg shows that the trip was thoughtfully planned, that Coleridge experienced innovative research methods and moved through illustrious circles, and that he worked within a singularly progressive research library. He argues for Coleridge as a cross-cultural visionary, who was part of a nascent dialogue between English and continental intellectual cultures.

Chapter 1 pits Göttingen against 'Oxbridge', showing that the former was making strides as a reform university whilst the English system was struggling to throw off scholasticism. Chapter 2 argues that Coleridge's decision to study at Göttingen (and not the more radical university at Jena) represents a desire to understand the particular 'historical-critical' method that dominated there. With Coleridge arrived in Germany, Chapter 3 focuses on what van Woudenberg calls the 'cosmopolitan intellectualism' of Göttingen – the networks of professors and intellectuals Coleridge moved within, and the structures of knowledge that came with them. Chapter 4 focuses on the reading habits of Coleridge (that famous 'library cormorant') in the university's research library, and carefully reconstructs the organizational principles that made it one of the best known libraries in Europe; primarily, this concerns the systematic organization of its *Realkatalog*, allowing scholars to easily make thematic connections between works. And Chapter 5 focuses on the substance of those research activities: Coleridge's planned *Life of Lessing*, which he worked on assiduously, but which was destined to remain unfinished.

Chapter 6 traces the immediate aftermath of Coleridge's German excursion. It is well known that the two projects that directly followed were, at the time, failures – an ambitious verse translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein* was critically derided, and the *Life of Lessing* never materialized. But what van Woudenberg shows is why they failed. Coleridge had been fortunate to travel when he did – after the completion of Göttingen's *Realkatalog*, but before the French occupation of Germany shut the doors to wandering Englishmen. However, he was entirely unlucky with the timing of his Germanic works: any public appetite for continental literature had ebbed amidst a conservative climate, and German plays and poems in particular were dismissed as 'Jacobinic'. Thus *Wallenstein* was panned, and Coleridge was forced to shelve the work on Lessing. This amounts, amongst other things, to a defence of *Wallenstein*, and, given that Coleridge spoke no German two years prior to composing it, van Woudenberg rightly describes it as 'a remarkable intellectual achievement' (206).

After this, Coleridge tucks his Göttingen experiences out of sight, but they quietly persist in his development of a 'coterie of Anglo-German enthusiasts' (215), including Crabb Robinson and, later, De Quincey. Less tangibly, the research methods he developed in Germany live on, according to van Woudenberg, in works such as the *Biographia Literaria*, and are traceable through Coleridge's notebooks. Van Woudenberg's conclusion focuses on Coleridge's 1817 prospectus to the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, and its promise of a 'scientific method' of organization, to the betterment of 'the whole system of Human Knowledge'. Here, the systematic arrangement of the *Realkatalog* meets with the metropolitanism of Göttingen, and we glimpse the legacy of 'Coleridge's second university career' (231). And yet, as is something of a motif in the story of Coleridge's German education,

the *Encyclopaedia* would never be written.

Coleridge and Cosmopolitan Intellectualism should be taken on its own terms, as a painstakingly historicized reconstruction of Coleridge's time in Göttingen. It is not a study of his poetry, nor is it especially interested in accounting for the possible influences of Göttingen on the later works. What it offers instead is a study of knowledge transmission: of access to ideas, institutional or social knowledge transfers, networks of information, cross-cultural exchanges. It will no doubt act as a resource for future readings of Coleridge's work, and such readings will be aided by seven appendices that supply a wealth of information, including Coleridge's library borrowings, and a chronology of his and Wordsworth's time on the continent. The book responds well to that opening question ('what did Coleridge do in Göttingen?'), answering in a manner consonant with the 'historical-critical' methodology it describes. This is a valuable book to anyone interested in Coleridge's transition from lyrical balladeer to an analytic thinker in the German tradition, and it forcefully revises the notion that, because the *Life of Lessing* failed, so too was the whole trip a failure.

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