

Stuart Andrews, *Robert Southey: History, Politics, Religion*. New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Pp. xiv+250. £55. ISBN 9780230115132.

As an exploration of Southey's 'polemical prose' and its 'rhetorical richness' (x), Andrews' book tackles questions of a historiographic and ideological nature in relation to 'history, politics and religion' – indeed, more specifically religion in connection with politics and history. In particular, the volume centres on Southey's treatment of history, politics and religion in connection with Catholicism, starting from his earliest encounters with it in the Iberian peninsula. As Andrews usefully demonstrates, this initial experience of the Catholic faith as a foreign and exotic reality continued to resonate in Southey's lifelong polemical analysis of it as an alien body in Britain and a threat to the Constitution of the United Kingdom. It is in this perspective that the book investigates Southey's problematization of the 'divided allegiance' of the national Catholics (139) – simultaneously as subjects of the monarch and the Pope – which, for him, as for many other Anglican commentators, constituted a Janus-faced cultural-political condition posing a critical danger for the country. The second chapter explores Southey's Iberian sojourns and his experiences of Catholicism in Lisbon (in 1796 and 1802) and during his shorter stay in Madrid in 1795-6. In addition, Andrews lays emphasis on Dublin as another cardinal point in Southey's map of capitals of foreign Catholicism. Appropriately, Dublin is also the focus of Chapter 9, which deals with Southey's article on Ireland and Catholic Emancipation in the *Quarterly* for October 1828, a piece inspired by the unrest caused by the Clare by-election of July in the same year, when Daniel O'Connell was returned to Westminster but, as a Catholic, was not allowed to take his seat.

As emerges also from such writings as his article on the Inquisition published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1811, Southey's awareness of the tragic history of Continental Catholicism invariably fed his assessments of its presence in Britain and Ireland. In Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella's *Letters from England* (1808), for example, he anxiously depicted the destabilizing influence of Catholics in Britain by recording the overwhelming presence of French émigrés in Winchester. Years later, in *Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1826), he stated in no uncertain terms that his knowledge of the real threat of Catholicism in Britain and Ireland came from his experiences in the Iberian peninsula, where 'he had seen what the Roman Catholic religion is [...] in practice' (131). Andrews' detailed historical account – from the Catholic Relief Act of 1791 to the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 – makes it clear that Southey's investigations of the impact of Catholicism on foreign countries ('Italy and Spain, and Catholic Germany and France', 134) determined his participation in the theological and political debate about its presence in the United Kingdom. Particularly significant, in this respect, were his polemical interventions in the evolving Catholic-Anglican diatribe, which led him to engage with outstanding Catholic apologists and polemicists such as Charles Butler (Chapter 6) and John Milner (Chapter 7).

Entitled 'After the Act: Southey, Coleridge, and Anglican Englishness', Chapter 10 is the book's final section and, at first sight, seems to offer a familiar picture of the mature Southey as the flag-bearer of a blinkered and Establishmentarian patriotism. Andrews, however, interestingly turns his focus to the pivotal role of established religion in Southey's definition and promotion of an intellectually engaged and, above all, proactive conception of the national identity. The chapter accordingly charts the ways in which, between the late 1820s and early 1830s, the Lake poets developed independent but related visions of the Anglican Church as an 'embodiment of national identity' or 'Englishness made visible and corporate', as Andrews puts it (p. 195). In this context, his overview of Southey's formative

impact on the 'Young England' movement is especially valuable, as it enriches recent research in this area by William Speck and Virgil Nemoianu, and provides additional evidence of the relevance of Southey's intellectual and ideological legacy. Once again, as intended at the outset, Andrews emphasizes how the author's investment in 'Anglican Englishness' must be read in light of his international Catholic reflections and their multifarious perspectives. What Andrews terms 'the shadow of Ireland' (186) regularly looms large over Southey's elaboration and promotion of an idea of 'Anglican Englishness'.

If England and Protestantism were vital preoccupations (indeed, obsessions) for Southey, he repeatedly discussed them from a transnational viewpoint in which Catholicism and its fraught histories played a major role. This multiple perspective on the Catholic question as a nexus of history, politics and religion runs through Southey's polemical prose – from his periodical essays and reviews to his travel writings and socio-political commentary (as well as his translations, poetry and letters, though Andrews tends to sideline them). In all of these works and texts, Southey's Catholic obsession – one which comprised geographical and cultural themes, as well as political and historical concerns – emerged as one of the staples of his 'peculiar conservatism'(xii), which continued to stimulate and influence writers, intellectuals and politicians for the rest of the nineteenth century.

Diego Saglia
Università di Parma, Italy