Monika Class, *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England, 1796-1817: Coleridge's Responses to German Philosophy*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. Pp. 245. £19 (pb). ISBN 9781472532398.

In this engaging and thoroughly researched study, Monika Class effectively and compellingly rephrases the once highly controversial debate about Samuel Taylor Coleridge's intellectually intimate and complex relationship with the thought of Immanuel Kant. The major scholarly contribution is Class's approach, which expands upon previous studies by considering 'Coleridge's reception of Kant from a position of English culture' (5). It is argued that Coleridge 'was a member of the radical and dissenting networks in which Kantian ideas had been circulating roughly since 1793' and that 'Coleridge's relation to Kant did not exist in a vacuum' (1). Alongside this rejection of individuality, Class declares that 'the investigation of Coleridge's relation to Kant should no longer involve 'originality' as a criterion for intellectual merit' as it is 'counterproductive': we should instead concentrate on 'the act of transmission as a form of intellectual interaction and part of sociability' (4). Class also succeeds in the thorough rehabilitation of an important figure that has been largely forgotten: Friedrich August Nitsch, who published his lectures on critical philosophy, *A General and Introductory View of Professor Kant concerning Man, the World and the Deity*, in 1796. Concentrating on intellectual intermediaries requires a very subtle approach to 'Kantian ideas': Class explores the instability produced by various interpretations and applications, and monopolises on the fact that this was something that Coleridge was guilty of, claiming that chapters are motivated by 'the desire to recapture the progressive dimension of Coleridge's engagement with Kant' (7). That engagement is contextualized by the shifting responses to Kantianism generally, by turns appreciative (because intellectually expedient) and adversarial (because foreign and unwelcome), and it is argued (in contrast to the 'widespread assumptions' of previous studies) that religion, politics and philosophy were intertwined to the point of being inseparable, rather that competitive to the point of requiring isolated consideration (7).

The book is effectively in two halves. The first four chapters explore Coleridge's preliminary interactions with Kantian ideas. The discussion opens with a chapter that discusses the first article in the English press (1787) and Karl Leonhard Reinhold's (1757-1823) role in disseminating the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Coleridge's moral-political engagement in Bristol in the mid 1790s is the subject of Chapter 2, which argues that Coleridge 'harboured strong doubts concerning the necessitarian doctrine' twenty years before he denounced it in the *Biographia Literaria* and that these doubts 'made him particularly responsive to the way that Nitsch marketed critical philosophy' (49). The third chapter concerns the Categorical Imperative, and proposes that Nitsch adapted the Kantian concept of the highest good to make it 'compatible with the then dominant necessitarian thought in the freethinking milieu of 1790s England' (89), and that the results can be seen in Coleridge's political lectures. Keeping with the political dimensions of Coleridge's Kantian reception, the next chapter contains a highly suggestive comparative reading of Coleridge's 'France: An Ode' and Kant's 1796 pamphlet *Perpetual Peace*, through which Class considers how Kant's concept of nature justified Coleridge's sympathy for the French Revolution (until 1802).

The second half of the book concentrates on Coleridge's more thorough incorporation of Kantian positions. The fifth chapter begins by teasing out the nuances of a letter from Coleridge to his benefactor Josiah Wedgwood explaining how much money has been spent on books, 'chiefly metaphysics', which Coleridge hoped to 'dedicate' the 'the prime of his life to' in 'silence' (121); Class focuses on that final detail, considering 'the drastic changes

in the public attitude towards Kantianism before, during and after Coleridge's trip to Germany' (121), especially the threats that Kantian thought was deemed to hold, and the consequent difficulties Coleridge faced in trying to publicly advocate critical philosophy. This is both enhanced and contrasted by Chapter 6, which discusses Coleridge's self-exposure as a Kantian in the *Biographia Literaria* with the now famous confession that 'the writings of the illustrious sage of Königsberg […] took possession of me as with a giant's hand' (142). (This was Coleridge's only public advertisement of Kantianism.) Of particular interest to this reader was Class's discussion of how, in that moment, Coleridge concealed his gradual introduction to Kantian thought and converted it into an apocryphal epiphany in an attempt to fashion himself as a philosopher of genius: an anointed one capable of deciphering complex truths (142). The final revelatory chapter explores the role of Nitsch's distortive interpretation of Kant (interestingly, he used the translation 'intuition' for 'Anschauungen' before Coleridge) and how this assisted and informed Coleridge's development of the all-important metaphysical distinction between the Reason and the Understanding, which Coleridge incorporated into his religious and political thought from 1806 onwards. This complex and sophisticated book exposes the malleable nature of Kant's positions as they were gradually imported into the country, and provides a subtle and lucid assessment of Coleridge's role in that process.

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