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reads
Schelling's Reception in Nineteenth-Century British Literature
(Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)
by Giles Whiteley

THIS INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE BOOK is a welcome study of the reception of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling in Britain during the nineteenth century. Anyone undertaking a study of the reception of an author's works over a century is confronted with numerous challenges. As William St Clair has made us aware, the impact of a text on a reader occurs at a time removed from the writing of the text, which can be days, weeks, or centuries, thus there is no chronological linearity in reading or the reception of an author and works.[2] How, then, to present patterns of reception that span diverse readers, disciplines, and both the Romantic and Victorian periods? In addition to these challenges, Whiteley's project must also consider the reception of Schelling's works in the original German and in English translation—both in language and context of its reception—a complication compounded by Schelling not publishing for long periods and the circulation of his lectures by British students. And then of course there is the question of transmission: Schelling's reception was mediated via the works of other scholars and writers, most notably Coleridge or Freud, the latter whom Whiteley cites as perhaps the first encounter with Schelling for 'many Anglophone readers' in Freud's 1919 essay on The 'Uncanny', which quotes Daniel Sanders quoting Schelling's *Philosophie der Mythologie* from 1842. Such layered reception also applies to Coleridge as perhaps the first and possibly only source filtering Schelling for many English readers in the United Kingdom and the United States. Clearly, the reception of Schelling in the scope proposed by Whiteley requires a careful balancing act to avoid confusion, obfuscation, or omission.

It seems to me that Whiteley pulls off this balancing act very well. The organisation of the book into eleven chapters concurrently covers the chronological contexts as well as discipline-specific receptions, providing the reader with significant details and patterns that in turn inform the reading of the later chapters in the volume. Whiteley opens by addressing the complex challenges of his study, suggesting in his first chapter that Freud's 'partial and edited quotation, taken out of context' embodies 'the model of the partial encounter' with Schelling that many readers experienced in the nineteenth century (1, 2). As such the aim of the book is to show both the reception of Schelling and also the reception of partial encounters of Schelling, heard throughout the nineteenth century as 'a kind of uncanny echo'. Thus, the book aims to present the complex narrative of Schelling reception in nineteenth-

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[2] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

century Britain by disentangling 'which Schelling' readers encountered (i.e. full or partial), how Schelling was read (i.e. which edition and language), and the importance of Schelling in nineteenth-century literature, as well as his influence on British thought against the backdrop of German idealism (12ff, 23). The next two chapters start by tracing the reception of Schelling during the Romantic period in Britain from 1794 to 1833. Chapter two examines the contemporary reception of Schelling by individual readers and periodical reviews in Britain from 1794 to 1819; Henry Crabb Robinson's studies and subsequent tutoring of Schelling to Madame De Staël in Jena in the early 1800s, and the role of De Staël's *De l'Allemagne* in regard to the reception of Schelling. Chapter three focuses on the reception of Schelling from 1817 to 1833, particularly in Scotland by William Hamilton—the 'central locus of Schelling's British reception in late 1820s and early 1830s'—and Thomas Carlyle, whose significance is acknowledged through an engaging reading of *Sartor Resartus* (63, 71ff).

Chapters four, five, and six shift to the reception of Schelling in the Victorian period. Starting with the plagiarism controversy of Coleridge's borrowings from Schelling, the positions taken by the Scottish critical tradition and the English defence of Coleridge provide Whiteley with the scope to examine the different views of Schelling in Britain from 1834 to the late nineteenth century. His analysis examines such significant figures as De Quincey, Julius Hare, James Ferrier, and James Hutchison Stirling, to name a few. In chapter five, Whiteley sketches the reception of Schelling by Arthur Penrhyn Stanley and Benjamin Jowett who travel to meet and hear the sage directly in Berlin in the 1840s. Stanley and Jowett play a key role in disseminating Schelling's thought in Britain.

The remaining chapters shift the focus to the reception of Schelling within particular disciplines. Chapter six functions as a transition chapter between the chronological and disciplinary foci of Schelling's reception by examining the literary reception of Schelling during the Victorian period. The longest chapter in the volume, it examines the reception of Schelling by the Cambridge Apostles; British students studying under Schelling at Munich (Richard Cleasby and Henry Reeve); translations of Schelling; and finally his reception among Victorian writers such as George Henry Lewes and Marian Evans (George Eliot), Arthur Hugh Clough, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, Alfred Domett, James Thomson, Roden Noel, George Gissing, and even Thomas Hardy. Subsequent chapters move from authors and poets to the disciplinary reception of Schelling in British theology (chapter seven), British science (chapter eight), and mythological and aesthetic literature (chapter ten).

Whiteley's organisation in the first part of the book is especially fruitful here as the reader's understanding of the chronological reception and context of German idealism is now directed to how and 'which Schelling' is read by specific disciplines. And Schelling's reception was certainly not a coherent one. For example, theological circles tended to respond to Schelling in three ways: Schelling's pantheism and monism (Coleridge's middle period); Schelling's

positive philosophy, mostly based on hearing Schelling lecture (Hare, Maurice, Cairns); and a 'more polemic response' to Schelling's pantheism (Matineau, Liddon) (178). The legacies of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* are examined in chapter eight, which evaluates how both negative and positive reception shaped British science in the nineteenth century (208). Whiteley leads us through how *Naturphilosophie* was read by Coleridge and Humphry Davy, as well as the influence of Schelling on British biology through Joseph Henry Green and Richard Owen, concluding the chapter with a consideration of Schelling and agnosticism. Chapter nine shifts specifically to the institution of the British university as a site of reception and dissemination of Schelling. As Whiteley notes, British intellectualism has generally conflated 'the story of Schelling's reception with the story of the reception of Hegel' (237), yet a number of significant figures in British universities, most notably at Cambridge, London, Manchester, and Oxford were influenced by Schelling from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The last section in this chapter examines the influence of Schelling and the British Idealism movement (244–253), disentangling the 'forgotten story' of Schelling's influence in 'the histories of nineteenth-century British philosophy' as due in part to the 'the success of British idealism' (246). The penultimate chapter looks at Schelling's interest in myth and its expression in British mythological and aesthetic literature particularly through such figures as Coleridge, Max Müller, Walter Pater, and Bernard Bosanquet.

Whiteley concludes his interesting study by affirming the rich and significant narrative of 'Schelling's nineteenth-century British reception … than has hitherto been recognised' (299). The book certainly goes beyond just recognition and establishes the significance and extensive reception of Schelling in Britain, overturning the 'widely-assumed narrative of Schelling as an aberration in British thought, whether as a footnote to Kant, an immaterial pretender to Hegel, or simply a Romantic "mystic"' (20). Whiteley presents the narrative of the complexity of Schelling's thought in Britain in great detail through a careful disentangling of the layered reception that at times contributed to its obfuscation.

In covering the extensive ground of numerous readers and influences over a century, several links to Schelling are at times drawn a bit too enthusiastically. While Coleridge certainly did carry a letter of introduction from Alexander Geddes to Heinrich Paulus, who in 1798 was a professor at Jena, Coleridge did not visit Jena on his German tour as Whiteley claims (211). Nor is it likely that 'on the same trip … Coleridge met Steffens, one of Schelling's most important early followers' (211). A few sections would benefit from further development of the implications of Schelling's reception within the framework of reception theory and book history. For example, Whiteley writes that 'many British thinkers remained unwilling or unable to divorce the name of Schelling from the idea of pantheism' noting that this 'speaks once again' to 'which version of Schelling each individual faction was responding to and representing' (197). Yet the notion of which version of a foreign author and how the author is

received is not unique to Schelling. The case-history of Schelling could certainly provide further insights into the book trade (how texts were acquired, circulated, translated), networks of reception and transmission (non-disciplinary circles, manuscript notes, private libraries, misreadings or mistranslations), and reading strategies of context in the response and representation of an author's work. Having completed much groundwork and uncovered complex details, it is worthwhile, in some instances, I think, for Whiteley himself to frame his findings more fully beyond Schelling, rather than leaving it to other scholars to conclude the significance of his research against the backdrop of British reception of Anglo-German authors and texts, to suggest but one example here.

Yet these elements in no way detract from the success of this study in its aim as the first to present the significant narrative of Schelling's reception in Britain in the nineteenth century. The book is successful in this argument and in addition also fulfills a vital function as a resource for book historians and anyone interested in reception history through the detailed references to Schelling by authors, editions, and other print media. As such, the book marks a point of departure for further study of Anglo-German reception in the nineteenth century. For example, the networks that facilitated the importation of Schelling's books in England, the Anglo-German travellers that went directly to Schelling in Munich and Berlin, the book collections and libraries assembled by many figures—these are just some points of interest for future engagement that are sure to shed further light on how Schelling was circulating materially, and for juxtaposition with the British reception of other philosophers, authors, and Anglo-German exchanges. While beyond the scope of Whiteley's present study, the book stimulates such new exploration for scholars interested in reception history and the Anglo-German book trade.

With the history of the reception of Schelling in Britain directly intertwined with Coleridge, the book includes much engaging information for Coleridgeans beyond the central role of the plagiarism controversy. As Paul Hamilton noted in 2007, Schelling annotated '*his* borrowing of the word 'tautegorical',[3] so it is clear that Coleridge and Schelling engaged and contributed to each other's works, thoughts, and arguments. In borrowing 'Coleridge's idea of tautegory', Whiteley notes, 'Schelling absolves Coleridge of blame for the charges of plagiarism' (261). Such interesting sections on Schelling and Coleridge are numerous, and I've taken the liberty here to highlight a few more for fellow Coleridgeans: 'Uncanny Coincidences: Reading Coleridge Reading Schelling' in chapter one (2–12); 'Coincidences: Coleridge and Schelling' in chapter two (49–56); Coleridge as the subject of Schelling's discussions with Stanley and Jowett (132ff); 'The Anglo-Coleridgeans: Schelling and the Broad Church Movement' in chapter seven (178–83); and 'Mythology, Allegory, Tautography' in chapter ten (258–63).

I recommend this book as an interesting and resourceful study to all scholars interested in Schelling and reception history, as well as to Coleridgeans and readers of Anglo-German reception in the Romantic and Victorian period.

[3] Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge and German Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2007), 105.