



Figure 1. Abraham Wolfgang Küffner, 'Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Denkmal', etching, 1795. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: [HAB A 12387] (CC BY-SA). Reproduced with permission.

Coleridge and the Lessing Monument in Wolfenbüttel

Maximiliaan van Woudenberg

ON HIS CIRCUITOUS RETURN TO ENGLAND from the University of Göttingen, Coleridge visited the ducal library in Wolfenbüttel on 29 June 1799.¹ Here he recorded two entries in his notebooks. The first details a painting of Hans Sachs seen inside the Wolfenbüttel library during a tour.² His second note, CN I 450, describes and transcribes the Lessing monument outside the library. The Lessing memorial in Wolfenbüttel has an interesting provenance and a convergence of circumstances inform Coleridge's notetaking on the monument in June 1799. This article contextualises Coleridge's interest in the monument, explains the symbolism of the 'Masks' and 'Alto Relievo' described in Coleridge's note, and corrects a few minor errors of fact in Coburn's editorial annotation.

During his tour of Germany in 1798–99, Coleridge's interest in Lessing intensified into his resolve to write a 'Life of Lessing—& interweaved with it a true state of German literature'.³ At the University of Göttingen Coleridge made 'very large collections for a Life of Lessing;—to which I was led by the miserably bald & unsatisfactory Biographies that have been hitherto given'.⁴ One of these 'miserably bald' biographies was by Johann Friedrich Schink. As evidenced by his notebooks, Coleridge read Schink at Ratzeburg sometime during October and December 1798.⁵ Published in *Pantheon der Deutschen* in 1795, the text of Schink's biography was preceded by an engraving of the Lessing monument drawn by A. W. Küffner (figure 1, opposite).⁶ Thus, in late 1798 in Ratzeburg, Coleridge was already visually familiar with the Lessing monument at Wolfenbüttel and the 'Alto Relievo of Lessing' gracing one of the four marble plates.

In addition to Küffner's engraving, Coleridge likely stumbled across other sources about the Lessing monument before his visit to Wolfenbüttel.⁷ It is possible Coleridge learned of the Wolfenbüttel Lessing monument upon his arrival in Hamburg from visits to the poet Friedrich Klopstock and his younger brother Viktor.⁸ Each appears to have contributed 2 *Thaler* to the public

¹ On 28 June 1799 Coleridge and his companions, Carlyon, Chester, and Greenough, travelled by carriage from Blankenburg arriving at Wolfenbüttel at 5pm. The party departed Wolfenbüttel on foot for Brunswick on 30 June 1799. Clement Carlyon, *Early Years and Late Reflections* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1836), 175–80. Maximiliaan van Woudenberg, *Coleridge and Cosmopolitan Intellectualism 1794–1804. The Legacy of Göttingen* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 256–57. Research for this article in part was conducted during a residential Fellowship at the Herzog August Bibliothek (HAB) in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. I am grateful to Land Niedersachsen, HAB, and HAB staff for all their help.

² CN I 449 (3.31). Maximiliaan van Woudenberg, 'Coleridge in Wolfenbüttel: The Double Portrait of Hans Sachs', *Modern Language Review* 119.3 (2024): 297–327.

³ Coleridge to Thomas Poole, 4 January 1799, CL I 455.

⁴ Coleridge to Josiah Wedgwood, 21 May 1799, CL I 518.

⁵ CN I 377 (3½.13). For Coleridge's reading of Schink's biography of Lessing see also van Woudenberg, *Cosmopolitan Intellectualism*, 148–49, 160–66, 177–79, 280.

⁶ I am grateful to the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, for permission to reproduce figures 1, 5, 6, and 7. For online image of figure 1 see: <http://portraits.hab.de/werk/11867/>.

⁷ See Appendix for the mediascape of publications on the Lessing Monument between 1789 and 1797.

⁸ Coleridge referred to Viktor as 'Young Klopstock'. He was around fifty-three in 1798. For Coleridge and the Klopstocks see CL I 441–443, CN I 337 (3.3), CN I 339 (3.5).

collection for the Lessing Memorial.⁹ Coleridge's admiration for Lessing was already pronounced at this time. During a visit to Viktor Klopstock Coleridge writes in his notebook: 'Saw a fine picture there of Lessing . . . His eyes apparently not unlike mine'.¹⁰ With his admiration for Lessing evident, the Klopstocks are likely sources informing Coleridge about the recently-erected Lessing memorial in Wolfenbüttel.

This link between the Klopstocks and the Wolfenbüttel monument is not the only one Coleridge may have encountered. Fischer informs that public discussion about inscriptions on the marble plates went around in circles until the Göttingen Professor and anglophile, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, intervened.¹¹ In his article, 'Yet Another Alleged Inscription for Lessing's Gravestone', Lichtenberg 'rejected the hitherto favourite proposal of Councilor Campe . . . as inept and therewith ended the tiresome discussion with one stroke'.¹² Although Lichtenberg died shortly after Coleridge's arrival in Göttingen, given his serious pursuit of Lessing it is likely that during his research he became aware of this public discussion. Perhaps someone even directed his attention to Lichtenberg's piece.¹³

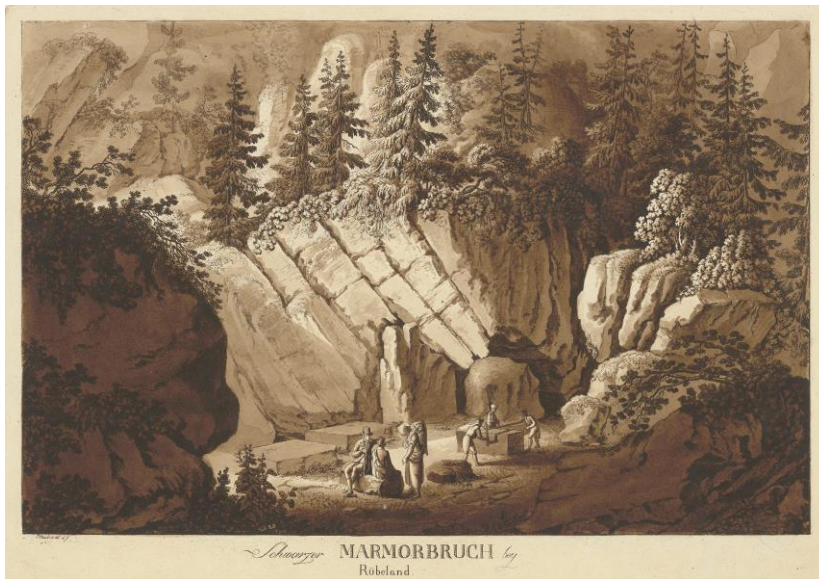


Figure 2. Christian Eberhard Eberlein, 'Schwarzer Marmorbruch bey Rübeland'¹⁴

⁹ Julius von Soden, 'An das Publikum, das Lessingische Denkmal betreffend', *Thalia und Melpomene* 1.1 (1797): 5 (1–10). 'Legationsrath Klopstock 2 [Thlr]', and 'Commerzien Rath Klopstock 2 [Thlr]'.

¹⁰ CN I 337 (3.3). Carlyon, *Early Years*, 177.

¹¹ Axel Fischer, 'Nachwort' ('Afterword'), in Gustav Friedrich Wilhelm Großmann, *Lessings Denkmal. Eine vaterländische Geschichte. Dem deutschen Publikum zur Urkunde vorgelegt. Mit Anmerkungen und einem Nachwort von Axel Fischer*, ed. Alex Fischer 3–27 (Hildesheim; New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1997), 24.

¹² Fischer, 'Nachwort', 24. All translations from German into English are my own.

¹³ Coleridge's research may also have led him to the notice of Lessing's death in the *Göttingisches Magazin*. 'Nachricht von Lessings Tod', *Göttingisches Magazin der Wissenschaften und Litteratur* 2.1 (1781): 146–52.

¹⁴ Christian Eberhard Eberlein, 'Schwarzer Marmorbruch bey Rübeland' ('Black Marble Quarry near Rübeland'),

Another possible connection is that that upon passing the marble mill near Rübeland on 14 May 1799 during his tour of the Harz Mountains,¹⁵ Coleridge may have learned that the marble for Lessing's monument was 'from the marble quarry of the principality of Blankenburg'.¹⁶ It was the Duke of Brunswick–Wolfenbüttel, Charles William Ferdinand, who 'had settled the considerable costs for the Blankenburg marble from the ducal coffers and who thereby made a decisive step forward to the financing of the monument'.¹⁷ Immediately upon his return from the Harz tour, Coleridge resolved to visit Wolfenbüttel on his return journey to England: 'as I pass thro' Brunswick, Wolfenbüttel . . . I may perhaps have opportunities of acquiring Information concerning Lessing which it were criminal in me to neglect'.¹⁸

Considering that Lessing served as ducal librarian in Wolfenbüttel from 1770 until his death in 1781, and in light of the considerable role of Wolfenbüttel in erecting the Lessing monument, I suggest that Coleridge's resolve is less hyperbole and more scholarly devotion. Coleridge's collection of materials on Lessing were vast. Southey explains that while 'Coleridge never began his *Life of Lessing*', he did make 'very ample collections for the introduction, which would have been a history of German literature,—*very ample*, for I have seen them; but concerning Lessing nothing was ever written'.¹⁹ As I've shown elsewhere, Coleridge was steadfast in collecting material on the famous author in Göttingen,²⁰ and his visit to Wolfenbüttel continues this diligence.

A brief provenance of the Lessing monument highlights how it was the subject of an ongoing public debate in Germany during the late 1780s and 1790s. Shocked to discover that there was no marker on Lessing's grave in Brunswick, actor and theatre director Gustav Großmann resolved to erect a monument of Lessing. In October 1788 Großmann began writing letters to theatres and drama communities throughout Germany to raise funds for such a public memorial.²¹ A few years later in 1791, with little success from his circulation letters, Großmann published *Lessing's Monument. A Patriotic History; presented to the German Public for Certification*.²² Frustrated further by lack of support in 1793, Großmann did not help his cause in publishing the personal correspondence of potential

engraving, in *Ansichten der Harzgebirge* (Göttingen, 1802). Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek (SUB) Göttingen: [GR 2 H GERMI, 245 (1)]. Reproduced with permission. I am grateful to the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek (SUB) Göttingen for permission to reproduce figure 2.

¹⁵ Maximiliaan van Woudenberg, 'Revisiting the Harz Tour of Coleridge and the "Carlyon-Parry-Greenation" in May 1799', *Romanticism* 27.1 (April 2021): 20 (16–27).

¹⁶ Paul Zimmermann, 'Das älteste Lessingdenkmal in der Wolfenbüttler Bibliothek', *Braunschweigesches Magazin* 26 (1920) 67–68 (66–68).

¹⁷ Fischer, 'Nachwort', 22. For details about settling the sum of the debt see von Soden, 'Publikum', 3–4.

¹⁸ Coleridge to Thomas Poole, 19 May 1799, *CL I* 516.

¹⁹ Robert Southey to William Taylor, 9 March 1805, *Letters of Robert Southey. A Selection*, ed. Maurice H. Fitzgerald 97–100 (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), 98. Emphasis original.

²⁰ See van Woudenberg, *Cosmopolitan Intellectualism*. For the failure to write his 'Life of Lessing', see 208–12.

²¹ See, for example, Gustav Großmann, 'An die Deutschen Schaubühnen', *Journal von und für Deutschland* 6.10 (1789): 340–42.

²² Gustav Großmann, *Lessings Denkmal. Eine vaterländische Geschichte; dem deutschen Publikum zur Urkunde vorgelegt* (Hannover: W. Pockwitz, 1791).

donors. Part two of *Lessing's Monument*²³ detailed letters of outright rejection or lack of commitment to funding the monument. Shortly afterwards Großmann suffered financial hardship and ill health. It was the statesman, poet, and theatre enthusiast, Julius von Soden, who continued Großmann's initiative for a public monument to Lessing. Von Soden's succession was publicly announced in magazines in late 1794.²⁴

Großmann's efforts were not without success. He collected some significant funds for the monument, secured the support of the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel in the form of space, and as we have seen Blankenburg marble, and crucially, commissioned the sculptor and Professor of Fine Arts in Gotha, Friedrich Wilhelm Doell, to design the monument.²⁵ Doell outlined a detailed plan to Großmann in February 1793:²⁶

This idea represents an altar of friendship. . . . We can make this altar from Blankenburg marble, whereon 4 plates of Carrara marble²⁷ are affixed, fastened by 16 metal, in fire gilded, rosettes. On one plate we can hang the portrait of the deceased in bas relief, and on the opposite plate, two masks, a comic and a tragic, enfolded by a wreath, from which hang a dagger and a crooked shepherd's staff; then two plates remain for text.²⁸

With the incapacity of Großmann, the Imperial Count Julius von Soden²⁹ continued his efforts submitting an invoice in November 1794 to the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel for four white Carrara marble plates which 'bear the relief representations and inscriptions'³⁰ transcribed by Coleridge. Dated 30 March 1796, von Soden published an account of collections, costs, and the last step of transportation: 'the monument is finished and still stands in the *Residenz*'³¹ at Gotha. A sketch can be found in the second volume of the [*Pantheon der*

²³ Gustav Großmann, 'Lessings Denkmal. Eine vaterländische Geschichte; dem deutschen Publikum zur Urkunde vorgelegt, Zweyter Theil', *Dramaturgische Zeitschrift* I (1793): 87–133, 138–71, 178–228. The 1791 and 1793 texts were printed together with annotations and an afterword by Alex Fischer. See note 11 above.

²⁴ Julius [von] Soden, *Minerva. Ein Journal historischen und politischen Inhalts* (October 1794): 191–92. '[Da der schauspieldirector Hr. Großmann . . .]', *Intelligenzblatt der Neuen allgemeinen deutschen Bibliothek* 51 (1794): 479–80. According to Rau, upon stepping down in 1794 Großmann 'had to this point collected 540 Reichstaler and 18 Groschen'. Petra Rau, *Friedrich Wilhelm Doell (1750–1816). Leben und Werk* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega Verlag, 2003), 172.

²⁵ Zimmermann, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 67–68. For Doell's biography see: August Beck, 'Döll, Friedrich Wilhelm', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 5 (1877), 313. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119560100.html>

²⁶ Prior to Doell and following ideas of Dorothea Maria Campe, the artist Friedrich Georg Weitsch had made several designs now lost. Three of Weitsch's designs were described in *Journal des Luxus und Moden* and *Journal von und für Deutschland* in 1789 including the proposed inscription critiqued by Lichtenberg in 1793. 'Theater-Miscellaneen. A) Auszüge aus Briefen', *Journal des Luxus und Moden* 4 (November 1789): 482 (479–83). Großmann, 'Deutschen Schaubühnen', 342. Weitsch's designs were superseded by Doell. Rau, *Doell*, 170–71. See also Hans Butzmann, 'Lessings Denkmal in Wolfenbüttel. Ein Vorspiel zur Geschichte der Lessingverehrung', *Wolfenbüttler Hefte* 11 (1982): 21–23 (5–39). Wilhelm Stieda, 'Das Wolfenbüttler Denkmal für Gotthold Ephraim Lessing', *Neues Archiv für Sächsische Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 50 (1929): 194–97 (188–203). Zimmermann, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 67.

²⁷ Rau, *Doell*, 218. 'Italian marble quarried in Carrara. It is distinguished through its particular strength and its pure white colour'.

²⁸ Doell to Großmann, 11 February 1791, quoted in Rau, *Doell*, 172. Rau notes that the monument was completed in Spring 1795.

²⁹ For von Soden's biography see Gustav Groß, 'Soden, Julius Graf von' *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 34 (1892), 532–537. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118852027.html>

³⁰ Zimmermann, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 68.

³¹ i.e. capital of a principality.

Deutschen (figure 1)]. Next it will be transported to Wolfenbüttel and erected on the designated spot'.³² Von Soden's conclusion—'Happy am I! My contemporaries are saved from the scandal of ingratitude against their great compatriot! Lessing's Monument stands!'³³—testifies to the eight-year struggle to fund, design, complete, and place the monument, but also to the significance, as well as difficulty, of erecting a public monument by a nation of non-aristocrat admirers. Sadly, Großmann did not live to see it having died a few months earlier on 20 May 1796. Petra Rau aptly sums up the Lessing monument as showing 'how tedious and cumbersome some bourgeoise [*bürgerliche*] monument projects were and mirrors the controversial character of Lessing as symbol of the Enlightenment'.³⁴ Such contemporary debate and controversy surrounding Lessing in Germany during the 1790s casts Coleridge's 'Life of Lessing' project as a critically astute choice for an English audience, but also as a risky venture for the British book trade.

With the public debate and controversies of the Wolfenbüttel Lessing monument published throughout Germany, it is likely that these reached Coleridge in some form. For his projected 'Life of Lessing', Coleridge intended to 'read his works regularly' at Göttingen, 'according to the years in which they were written, & the controversies, religious & literary, which they occasioned'.³⁵ Contemporary controversies surrounding Lessing would certainly be of interest. Moreover, Coleridge's critical acuity that 'so large a work' as his 'Life of Lessing' encompassed a wide scope of 'a variety of information from sources so scattered, & so little known even in Germany',³⁶ render it doubtful that the public and contemporary provenance and controversy of the Lessing monument at Wolfenbüttel would have escaped his attention. It is likely that his plan to visit Wolfenbüttel, and subsequent note on the Lessing monument, are not random or coincidental, but a carefully structured outcome.

Coleridge's actual note CN I 450 transcribes the four marble plates on the pillar of Lessing's monument (figure 3; table 1). First, the writing of the note documents a pilgrimage of sorts. In light of his projected 'Life of Lessing', Coleridge pays his respect to the German author that he had devoted his German tour to write a life of. Second, his transcription of the two marble plates bearing inscriptions records how public admiration for Lessing gave rise to public tribute (figure 3, plates 1 and 3). Lessing is literally 'Darling of the Muses' in his poetic and dramatic works, and the darling 'of his friends', the monument being but one expression of this admiration. Although the inscriptions are gilded now, Coleridge would have read these in black.³⁷

³² von Soden, 'Publikum', 9.

³³ Ibid., 10. Further publications announcing the completion of the monument include Friedrich Albert Klebe, *Gotha und die umliegende Gegend*, 239–41 (Gotha: Ettinger 1796), 239.

³⁴ Rau, *Doell*, 170.

³⁵ Coleridge to Thomas Poole, 4 January 1799, *CL* I 455.

³⁶ Coleridge to Mrs. Coleridge, 23 April 1799, *CL* I 484.

³⁷ Rau, *Doell*, 173n735. 'The inscriptions are gilded today, but as Bettina Seyderhelm was able to prove they were previously blackened, Seyderhelm [*Studien zur Denkmalkunst des Frühklassizismus*, diss., (University of Göttingen, 1994)] . . . , 353n144'.



Figure 3. Maximiliaan van Woudenberg, 'The Four Marble Plates of Lessing's Monument in Wolfenbüttel'³⁸

Table 1: Parallel Text of Coleridge's Note and Coburn's Annotation and Translation

<i>Text in Coleridge's Notebooks</i>	<i>Note and Translation in Coburn</i>
Monument of a Lessing, as square Pillar/or Column I Weiser, Dichter Deutschlands Stolz einst der Musen und seiner Freunden [<i>Freunde</i>] Liebling opposite square Ihm Errichteten dieses Denckmahl einige Seiner Danckbaren Zeitgenossen 1795 on the left hand square of I Masks of Tragedy, & Comedy, the Dagger— On the Right hand an Alto Relievo of Lessing—	<i>Monument of a Lessing</i> Philosopher, Poet Germany's Pride Once Darling of the Muses And of his Friends <i>opposite square</i> [i.e. other face of square pillar] This monument Was erected to him By some of His grateful Contemporaries 1795

³⁸ Maximiliaan van Woudenberg, 'The Four Marble Plates of Lessing's Monument in Wolfenbüttel', photographs, 2021.



Figure 4. 'Denkmal auf Mozart im Engl. Garten zu Tiefurt bey Weimar'³⁹

³⁹ Figure 4. 'Denkmal auf Mozart im Engl. Garten zu Tiefurt bey Weimar' ('Monument to Mozart in the English Garden in Tiefurt near Weimar'), engraving, 1799. Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Jena: 8 C.A.B.III,108 :14.1799. Reproduced with permission. 'Mozarts Denkmal. (Hierzu gehört die 33ste Kupfertafel.)', *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* 14 (November 1799): 582–85. https://zs.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/jportal_jparticle_00087877. I am grateful to the Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Jena (ThULB Jena) for permission to reproduce figure 4.

Doell's preference for Roman motifs is clear, likely being familiar with the 'ancient Cippus' from his time in Rome.⁴⁰ Coleridge sparingly describes these classical motifs: the 'Masks of Tragedy, & Comedy, the Dagger' (figure 1, plate 4). Butzmann explains that Doell's preference for Roman motifs resulted in these 'antiquity symbols for comedy and tragedy exclude[ing] Lessing the critic and Lessing the Theologian, and [leaving] only the great German dramatist'.⁴¹ The antiquity mask of comedy faces a '“Greek” Profile' of tragedy with 'ringlets, as if treated with pomade. This is late-Roman fashion'.⁴² Interestingly, as Rau discerns, the masks designed for the Mozart monument a few years later in 1799 bear a resemblance to Doell's design, especially the 'hairstyle . . . of the bearded male mask . . . which also consists of radial locks over the brow' (see figure 4).⁴³

Regardless of the contemporary admiration of such motifs in Germany, Coleridge's terse 'the Dagger' suggests a disinterest—his note failing to record the symbolism of the masks, as Rau explains 'the attributes of tragedy and comedy are attached: a mirror, as well as a dagger and a shepherd's staff'.⁴⁴ Butzmann interprets the symbolism somewhat differently with the dagger a 'token of the noble passions of the higher [class]'; the hand mirror symbolizing that 'the theatre is a mirror of human morals', and; it is not a shepherd's staff, but a 'crooked cudgel' representing 'the common people, from whom the main heroes of the old comedy come, [and] canes itself'.⁴⁵ All are framed by 'laurel and palm branches, which is bound in a wreath. That is Doell's classical and ideal sign language'.⁴⁶ Coleridge's concise description does not provide any insight into his reception or interpretation of the monument's celebration of Lessing's genius.

In addition, the 'Alto Relievo of Lessing' (figure 3, plate 2) is not an accurate likeness. A contemporary review in November 1796 already complained that 'Lessing's face is completely unlike', particular worthy of lament because 'there are similar plaster heads of [Lessing's likeness available]'.⁴⁷ Lessing's profile blends contemporary (hairstyle) with classical style: 'it is a quite typical mixture from antiquity and contemporary fashion', typical of 'Doell's portrait busts since the end of the 1780s'.⁴⁸ According to Rae Doell 'obviously attempted to idealise Lessing's portrait by smoothing the facial features and thereby thrusts the individual traits behind. . . . [the] likeness of the portrait completely failed here'.⁴⁹ The anonymous reviewer also critiques the location, finding that 'the side portrayed as a sample' in Küffner's etching of the Lessing monument 'looks quite good between trees, but not so in *rerum natura* between nothing but high

⁴⁰ Rau, *Doell*, 174.

⁴¹ Butzmann, 'Lessings Denkmal', 26.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Rau, *Doell*, 174.

⁴⁴ Rau, *Doell*, 173.

⁴⁵ Butzmann, 'Lessings Denkmal', 27.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ 'Aus dem Briefe eines Reisenden. Wolfenbüttel im November 1796' ('From the Letters of a Traveller. Wolfenbüttel in November 1796'), *Neue Miscellaneen artistischen Inhalts für Künstler und Kunstliebhaber* 4 (1797): 514–16 (515).

⁴⁸ Rau, *Doell*, 173.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

buildings'.⁵⁰ For Coleridge, it is clear that his research of Lessing stimulated his interest in the monument. As his note only describes and transcribes, and his companions are also mute on the subject, Coleridge's thoughts remain unknown and one can only surmise on his interpretation of the monument's failure to celebrate Lessing's non-dramatic works and accomplishment, as well as the lack of fidelity of Lessing's likeness.

Lastly, a few minor revisions of Coburn's editorial annotations to Coleridge's note CN I 450:

The librarian of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel,⁵¹ kindly supplied the following information: 'The Lessing monument . . . was formerly in the garden of the Herzog August bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. When the library was rebuilt it was erected, unchanged in form, in the entrance hall of the library. The monument was designed by Fr. W. E. Doell (1750–1816) and was the first Lessing memorial in Germany'.

This supplied information is not entirely accurate. The Wolfenbüttel Lessing monument was not the 'first Lessing memorial in Germany'. Two private monuments already existed before 1795. Fischer clarifies that 'in the year of Lessing's death, 1781, a monument of Lessing by Johann David Langenmark was erected on the estate of Otto August von Grote' near Lüneberg.⁵² And 'ten years later', a 'Lessing commemorative stone' was 'unveiled in the castle garden of Prinz Karl of Fürstenberg'.⁵³ The Lessing monument in Wolfenbüttel, however, is distinct in being the first *public* memorial of Lessing in Germany: 'erected . . . by some of his grateful contemporaries' (figure 3, plate 1). Fischer differentiates between these 'two aristocratic and private Lessing monuments'⁵⁴ and the public monument initiated by the indefatigable effort of Großmann:

What made Großmann's undertaking so difficult, was most of all the fact, that this time the tribute would not only apply to a bourgeois [*Bürgerlichen*, i.e. Lessing], but also that the impetus also came from a bourgeois [i.e. Großmann], and an actor at that.⁵⁵

While the public funded a significant sum initiated by Großmann, as we have seen, the successful completion of this public monument also included the efforts of Duke Charles and Imperial Count von Soden.

⁵⁰ 'Wolfenbüttel im November 1796', 515.

⁵¹ Erhart Kästner was *Direktor* (director, i.e. head librarian) of the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel from 1950–68. See Wolfgang Milde, 'Kästner, Erhart', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 10 (1974): 736–37. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118559192.html#ndbcontent>

⁵² Axel Fischer, 'Nachwort', 27. See also Zimmermann, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 66.

⁵³ Axel Fischer, 'Nachwort', 27. See also Zimmermann, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 66–67.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 'However, it is unclear if it was known to Großmann that two earlier aristocratic and private Lessing memorials had already been achieved'.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* For the benefit of the Lessing Monument Großmann organised a showing of *Minna von Barnhelm* to which the company donated part of their weekly stipend. See also Appendix A, entry 4.

A second correction concerns the information provided to Coburn about the original location of the Lessing monument ‘in the garden of the Herzog August bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel’. Earlier pre-Doell drafts for a monument by Weitsch imagined a ‘rotunda, a domed structure’ which Zimmermann notes ‘would certainly have found an appropriate place on the Finkenberg’,⁵⁶ an ‘old Fortress bastion, located south-west of the library’.⁵⁷ The Finkenberg had been decreed by the duke in August 1789.⁵⁸ However, when the Lessing monument arrived in July 1796 some confusion arose about its location because Doell’s more modest design was not suited for the Finkenberg.⁵⁹ On 18 July 1796 it was decreed to a more fitting location: ‘“that the Lessing’s monument henceforth be erected before the front of the library building at a distance of approximately 30 paces from the door of the arsenal [Zeughaus]”’.⁶⁰ This is the location where Coleridge saw the Lessing monument on 29 June 1799. Left of the famous *Bibliotheksrotunda* is the official residence of the Librarian, today aptly named *Lessinghaus* (figure 5). To the right of the library is the armory (*Zeughaus*). Following the decree, the location of the Lessing monument would have been in front of the Rotunda on the green, 30 paces from the armory.



Figure 5. Unknown, ‘Das Lessinghaus mit Bibliothek und Zeughaus’⁶¹

⁵⁶ Zimmermann, ‘älteste Lessingdenkmal’, 68.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 67.

⁵⁸ ‘Theater-Miscellaneen’, 479. ‘To allow in these lands for erecting a monument to Hofrath Lessing, herewith is granted the resolution: that such is gladly permitted, and that thereunto the ramparts in Wolfenbüttel behind the library, the so-called Finkenberg, should therefore be accorded’. See also ‘deutschen Schaubühnen’, 340.

⁵⁹ Zimmermann, ‘älteste Lessingdenkmal’, 68.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Figure 5. Unknown, ‘Das Lessinghaus mit Bibliothek und Zeughaus’, hand-coloured drawing, 1825. Herzog August



Figure 6. Otto Rasch, 'Bibliotheksrotunde mit Zeughaus'⁶²

The dimensional drawing by architect Otto Rasche (figure 6), made before the demolition of the Rotunda, provides a more accurate depiction of the green where the Lessing monument stood in front of the library flanked by the armory. These prints capture how Coleridge viewed this public memorial to Lessing in an open public space during the short six years the monument stood in front of the Wolfenbüttel library.⁶³ The monument, therefore, was moved into the library over eighty years before 'the library was rebuilt' in the 1880s as per Erhart Kästner quoted by Coburn. Already in November 1796, the location of the monument was seen as less than ideal, with the anonymous reviewer suggesting that the two empty alcoves adjacent to the main entrance for 'busts of Leibniz and Lessing . . . would have made a far better impact'.⁶⁴

The Lessing memorial was soon placed inside the Rotunda, not just to preserve it from the 'harmful effects of the weather on the marble', but also to protect it from the 'wantonness of passers-by', which included damage and graffiti,⁶⁵ and even theft of one of the gilded rosettes.⁶⁶ Inside the library,

Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: [HAB A 12387] (CC BY-SA). Reproduced with permission. For online image see: <http://diglib.hab.de?grafik=top-1a-11-1>.

⁶² Figure 6. Otto Rasch, 'Bibliotheksrotunde mit Zeughaus', lithograph, undated, ca. 1859–1887. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: [HAB A 12387] (CC BY-SA). Reproduced with permission. For online image see: <http://diglib.hab.de?grafik=top-1a-11>.

⁶³ Zimmermann cites the duke's order to the librarian Langer on 9 April 1802 to move the monument into the library, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 68. This occurred in July 1802.

⁶⁴ 'Wolfenbüttel im November 1796', 515. Leibniz was librarian at Wolfenbüttel from 1691 until his death in 1716. See figures 5 and 6 next to the central entrance.

⁶⁵ Zimmermann, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 68. 'Not to mention the damaging influences of the weather on the marble here it was also too exposed to the wantonness of passers-by'. Butzmann, 'Lessings Denkmal' 30. 'The artwork was maliciously damaged and besmeared, horns were painted on the comical mask. The perpetrators, under the spell [subservient to] "popular opinion", wanted to say with this, that the devil had been in play'.

⁶⁶ Rau, *Doell*, 174.

Lessing's monument was relocated to the 'landing of the staircase' where it could still be seen from the street through the lattice door.⁶⁷ However, the 'space was so tight, that both of the theatre masks touched the backwall and remained invisible until the demolition of the old library building in 1887'.⁶⁸ Had Coleridge visited Wolfenbüttel a few years later he would not have been able to view the marble plate with the theatre masks, nor the public tribute of Lessing in a public space.



Figure 7. Unknown, 'Lessingdenkmal im Vestibül der Bibliotheca Augusta' (*left*); Maximiliaan van Woudenberg, 'Lessing Monument in the Entrance Hall of the Herzog August Bibliothek' (*right*)⁶⁹

With the completion of the current library building in 1886 the Lessing monument was placed in the centre of the vestibul (figure 7, *left*). It was moved a final time in the twentieth century from the centre to the side where it remains today (figure 7, *right*).

At first glance, Coleridge's note on the Lessing monument at Wolfenbüttel appears exclusively descriptive. Tracing Coleridge's reading of Lessing biographies and criticism, his visits with the Klopstocks and travels through the Harz mountains, his viewing of a print of Doell's Wolfenbüttel Lessing monument, and the public debate and efforts about erecting such a memorial

⁶⁷ Zimmermann, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 68. 'The monument now found its place on the first landing of the staircase so that it could still be seen from the street through the library's lattice door'. Butzmann, 'Lessings Denkmal', 30. 'Where on the first landing of the staircase it could only be seen through the lattice of the entrance'.

⁶⁸ Butzmann, 'Lessings Denkmal', 30. See also Zimmermann, 'älteste Lessingdenkmal', 68.

⁶⁹ Unknown, 'Lessingdenkmal im Vestibül der Bibliotheca Augusta', photograph, undated. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel: [HAB A 12387] (CC BY-SA). Reproduced with permission. For online image see: <http://diglib.hab.de/grafik=top-1b-05-2>. Maximiliaan van Woudenberg, 'Lessing Monument in the Entrance Hall of the Herzog August Bibliothek', photograph, 2021.

circulating in Germany, as well as the backdrop of his planned visit to Wolfenbüttel for the opportunity to collect material on Lessing, one is able to reconstruct the context of his note as evidence of a larger and steadfast purpose in pursuit of the famous German author. While on the surface note CN I 450 may initially appear bland, the constellation of Coleridge's reading and thinking contextualises the note as part of his ongoing research of a larger project. As Heather Jackson has observed, 'Coleridge's was a polymathic, synthesizing mind. He drives commentators to catalogues as they try to sum him up, for he read in several languages'.⁷⁰ Coleridge's notes are no exception and testify to his associationist mind, ever prone to musing. His individual notes are part of a synthesizing process of a larger concept, idea, or purpose, the associations of which may elude us until we attempt to reconstruct the processes and contexts of his 'polymathic, synthesizing mind'.



Appendix

The Wolfenbüttel Lessing Monument in Contemporary Media, 1789–1797

In addition to part one and two of Großmann's *Lessings Denkmal* (1791, 1793), and Küffner's etching to Schink's *Pantheon der Deutschen* (1795), no less than eighteen publications about the Lessing Wolfenbüttel monument appeared between 1789 and 1797. In the form of notices, advertisements, printed letters, and reviews of *Lessings Denkmal*, opinions, debate, and criticism concerning the Lessing monument circulated throughout Germany. While there is no evidence that Coleridge had read, or was even familiar with, any of the specific publications below, he may well have become acquainted with details about the monument second hand, or as it was circulating in the German mediascape.

1) Großmann, 'An die Deutschen Schaubühnen' ('To the German Theatres'), *Journal von und für Deutschland* 6.10 (1789): 340–42. Dated 1 October 1789, reports the resolution of the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel dated 28 August 1789 to erect a Lessing Monument on the so-called Finkenbergr in Wolfenbüttel. Describes the three proposed designs by Weitsch and inscriptions.

2) 'Theater-Miscellaneen. A) Auszüge aus Briefen' ('Theatre Miscellanea. Excerpts from Letters'), *Journal des Luxus und Moden* 4 (November 1789): 479–83. Excepting a few minor changes and/or omissions, a reprint of Großmann's piece 'An die Deutschen Schaubühnen'.

3) Bertuch, 'An Lessings Gönner und Freunde, sein Denkmal betreffend' ('To Lessing's Benefactors and Friends, concerning his Monument'), *Journal des Luxus und Moden* 5 (October 1790): 554–57. Further to the November 1789 issue, and dated 28 September 1790, announces that some theatres have held Lessing benefits while others have still not declared. Großmann has amended his plan beyond the theatre to also call for private-collections by Easter 1791.

4) Großmann, 'An die H. Herausgeber des Journals' ('To the Herr. Editor of the Journal [Letter dated Cassel 27 November 1790]'), *Journal des Luxus und Moden* 6 (January 1791): 21–22. Publication of a letter from Großmann dated 27 November 1790 reporting the benefit performance of Lessing's 'Minna von Barnhelm' for the monument the day before. Reports that the intake was 'fifteen Thaler twelve Groschen [in] Hessian currency' (21).

1791: Publication of Großmann's *Lessings Denkmal*, part one

5) Großmann, 'Fernere Nachricht von Lessings Denkmale' ('Further News of Lessing's Monument'), *Journal des Luxus und Moden* 6 (May 1791): 281–85. Announces that in January Großmann published his *Lessings Denkmal*.

6) Abt Vogl[en?], 'Auszug eines Briefes an den Hrn. Schauspiel-Direktor Großmann' ('Excerpt from a Letter to the Herr Theatre-Director Großmann'), *Journal des Luxus und Moden* 6 (August 1791): 421–22. Abt writes from Stockholm on 1 Juli 1791 about his admiration of Lessing.

⁷⁰ Heather J. Jackson, 'Introduction', in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The Major Works*, ed. H. J. Jackson ix–xiv (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), ix.

7) 'Geschichte der vom Schauspieldirector Großmann unternommenen Stiftung eines Lessingschen Denkmahls' ('History of the Undertaken Foundation by Theatre-Director Großmann for a Lessing Monument'), *Journal von und für Deutschland* 8.2 (1791): 173–76. Recounts and summarises Großmann's plans and efforts for a Lessing Monument naming those who were contacted and/or involved, as well as referencing some of the publications above.

8) 'Rezension. Lessings Denkmal. Eine vaterländische Geschichte; dem deutschen Publikum zur Urkunde vorgelegt von Großmann' (Review of *Lessings Denkmal. A Patriotic History; Presented to the German Public as a Charter by Großmann*), *Braunschweigisches Journal* 1 (1791): 496. One-page review.

9) 'Lessings Denkmal. Eine vaterländische Geschichte, dem deutschen Publikum zur Urkunde vorgelegt, von Großmann' ('Review of Lessings's *Denkmal* . . .'), *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 110.2 (1792): 593–95. Summarises some of the responses and rejections Großmann encountered.

10) 'Wie kann man das Andenken großer Männer verewigen' ('How to immortalise the Remembrance of a Great Man'), *Schleswigsches ehemals Braunschweigisches Journal* 3 (November 1792): 257–67. A piece on 'This new notion: to build a memorial as remembrance to a great man, [through] which his spirit immediately comes down to posterity' (258).

1793: Publication of Großmann's *Lessings Denkmal*, part two

11) Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, 'Noch eine angebliche Aufschrift, auf Lessings Grabmal' ('Yet Another Alleged Inscription for Lessing's Gravestone'), *Neues Hannöversches Magazin* 9 (1 February 1793): 129–34. Responding to entry 10 above, Lichtenberg's witty critique personifies the stone and epitaph and traces Lessing's original about the poet Ewald von Kleist.

12) Julius [von] Soden, *Minerva. Ein Journal historischen und politischen Inhalts* (October 1794): 191–92. Announcement dated September 1794 that Großmann is prevented from continuing his efforts for a memorial and wishes the author to complete the monument.

13) *Intelligenzblatt der Neuen allgemeinen deutschen Bibliothek* 51 (1794): 479–80. Excepting a few minor changes and/or omissions a reprinting of first paragraph of entry 12.

1795: Publication of Schink's biography on Lessing with Küffner's etching of the monument

14) 'Vermischte Nachrichten' ('Miscellaneous News'), *Minerva. Ein Journal historischen und politischen Inhalts* (March 1795): 572–73. Conveys the collection amounts [only current/recent sum as earlier collections already sent].

15) Lange, 'Ueber Lessings Denkmal, von (Prof. Lange.)' ('About Lessings's Monument, from (Prof. Lange.)'), *Der Genius der Zeit: Ein Journal* 7.4 (April 1796): 519–24. Piece by a self-proclaimed friend of Lessing, advancing the obligation of a monument for Lessing.

16) Friedrich Albert Klebe, *Gotha und die umliegende Gegend* 239–41 (Gotha: Ettinger 1796). A description of Lessing's monument noting that 'it now appears that Herrn Imperial Count von Soden . . . has not succeeded to bring the costs together . . .' (240).

17) Julius von Soden, 'An das Publikum, das Lessingische Denkmal betreffend' ('To the public, concerning Lessings Monument'), *Thalia und Melpomene* 1.1 (1797): 1–10. Dated 30 March 1796, von Soden provides a full account of collected contributions, costs, payments (i.e. to Doell), obtaining Blankenburg marble, names of subscribers/donors, and thanks. Next the monument will be transported to, and erected in, Wolfenbüttel.

18) 'Aus dem Briefe eines Reisenden. Wolfenbüttel im November 1796' ('From the Letters of a Traveller. Wolfenbüttel in November 1796'), *Neue Miscellaneen artistischen Inhalts für Künstler und Kunstliebhaber* 4 (1797): 514–16. Reports on seeing the monument in Wolfenbüttel. Finds the location 'not quite appropriate', Lessing's face 'completely unlike', the masks a 'very silly effect', and one should judge for oneself about the inscriptions (514, 515).

19) Possible nineteenth notice cited in Wilhelm Stieda, 'Das Wolfenbüttler Denkmal für Gotthold Ephraim Lessing', *Neues Archiv für Sächsische Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 50 (1929): (188–203). Stieda states that 'Campe had already inserted an ad in the third issue of the *Deutschen Merkur* of 1795', (200). I have not been able to trace this advertisement to date.