January 1990

Review of *Heidelberg im säkularen Umbruch. Traditionsbewußtsein und Kulturpolitik um 1800*, edited by Friedrich Strack

Priscilla A. Hayden-Roy

*University of Nebraska - Lincoln*, phayden-roy1@unlnotes.unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/modlanggerman

Part of the *Modern Languages Commons*


http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/modlanggerman/12
This twelfth volume in the Klett-Cotta series on aspects of German Idealism maintains the high quality set by earlier volumes in this series. It consists of 23 articles that originally were presented at a colloquium held in Heidelberg in the fall of 1985 on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of Heidelberg University. The collection focuses on the period of transition at the University after 1803 when, in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, the Palatinate was divided and Heidelberg was incorporated into Baden. The city's new territorial prince, Karl Friedrich, decided to improve the University and, following the trend in many German
territories, completely reorganized and secularized
the University's fiscal and administrative structure
(as discussed by Eike Wolgast 35-60). The University
was able to attract leading German intellectuals
of the period, becoming the home of what is known
as Heidelberg Romanticism. It remains one of his-
tory's little paradoxes that the political situation
facilitating the rise of an institution that became
the haven of nationalistic sentiment was itself
created by French military and political interven-
tion.

The articles are divided into six sections: 1) his-
tory, politics, and law; 2) libraries, journals, and
publishing; 3) literary life (the longest section);
4) the fine arts; 5) religion and the history of
mythology; 6) philosophy and aesthetics. The inter-
disciplinary breadth of the collection admirably re-
constructs something of the variety of intellectual
concerns and positions within this Heidelberg en-
clave, as well as offering acute analyses of its varied
relationships to Enlightenment thought, to Goethe,
to the Early Romanticism of the Schlegels and
Novalis, and to German Idealism. These intellec-
tual connections help to locate Heidelberg Roman-
ticism within the broad transition—as Fr.
Meinecke defined it—from eighteenth-century
Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and progressivism
to the emergence of the idea of a German nation
state in the nineteenth century. Most of the articles
treat some aspect of this problem. For example,
Lothar Pikulik (“Die sogenannte Heidelberger Romantik”) discusses the continuities and discontinuities between Early and Heidelberg Romanticism. Early Romanticism still belongs “als Über-
spitzung, als Überreife und Herbst” (194) to the eighteenth century, he argues, while Heidelberg Romanticism rejects a view of historical progressiv-
ity in its turn to the past. But Pikulik also provides
eamples of persisting continuities to eighteenth-
century ideas, cases where the Heidelberg Roman-
tics were unable “über den eigenen Schatten zu
springen” (198). Gerhard von Hofe discusses in
his article how the concept of “Volk” became for
the Heidelberg Romantics the epitome of the “Kul-
turnation,” the focal point of a literary-political pro-
gram that was to serve to unify Germans within
a national state. Again this stands in contrast, for
example, to Herder’s notion of “Volk,” to which
the Heidelberger clearly were indebted, but which
was conceived within a universal-historical frame-
work typical of the eighteenth century (250-51).
Friedrich Strack comes to similar conclusions in
looking at the Heidelberg Romantics’ interest in
the Middle Ages. Significant continuities exist to
the earlier Romantics, which Strack delineates,
but the Heidelberger were the first to employ this
interest as a cultural-political tool (278). Strack’s
differentiated analysis also points out the varying
historical views among the Heidelberger them-
selves, which led to the diversity of opinion
concerning, for example, the “Wunderhorn” collect-
tion. Günter Niggisch’s article (“Geschichtsbewußt-
sein und Poesieverständnis bei den ‘Einsiedlern’
und den Brüdern Grimm”) also addresses this prob-
lem.

Besides the interest in German folk culture,
the Heidelberg Romantic circle also cultivated an
interest in German art, again finding here a poten-
tial tool for awakening nationalistic sentiment.
Several articles treat aspects of the Boisseree collect-
ion (especially Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert,
“Die Sammlung Boisseree in Heidelberg. An-
spruch und Wirkung”). Viktor Lange discusses
Goethe’s favorable view of the collection which, he
contests, did not constitute a turning point in
Goethe’s aesthetics (352). Although perceptible
doubts regarding his own Classical style emerged
in such works as Faust (343), he refused to accept
the turn to a nationally tinged Christian art
as promoted by the Nazarenes as a viable answer
to the cultural crisis in which he found himself
(353).

Late Enlightenment figures also are given some
attention in this volume, particularly Johann Hein-
rich Voß. Heribert Raab writes on the contentious
relationship between Voß and Görres; Günter
Häntzschel attempts to vindicate Voß in his article,
pointing out that the Romantics’ disparaging view
of him is what predominates in literary histories
(301-02).

Several other articles may be of particular inter-
est to this readership, though space limitations
permit only a mention of them. Gabriele Brandstet-
ter writes on the literary women of the Heidelberg
Romantic circle: Sophie Mereau, Karoline von
Günderrode, and Bettine Brentano. Otto Poggeler
discusses the history of the University journal founded
in 1808, the Jahrbücher der Literatur. Görres’s
“Mythengeschichte” is the subject of Peter Michels-
en’s article. Bernd-Rüdiger Kern discusses the
role of the Burschenschaft in Heidelberg, again as
a means of fostering nationalistic sentiment. Jean-
Louis Vieillard-Baron discusses Creuzer as an in-
terpreter of Plotinus. Hegel’s Heidelberg period
is the subject of Hans Friedrich Fulda’s article. A
collection on this topic would not be complete with-
out acknowledging the Romantic and politically charged symbol of the Heidelberg castle ruin, the subject of studies by Jens Christian Jensen, Volker Sellin, and Joachim Görcke.

All literary historians of this period will take delight in this highly informative collection, which serves to deepen and broaden one's understanding of the intellectual milieu of Heidelberg around 1800.

PRISCILLA HAYDEN-ROY

*University of Nebraska, Lincoln*