

**Cian Duffy, *British Romanticism and Denmark*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. Pp. 246. £85. ISBN 9781474498227.**

Cian Duffy's *British Romanticism and Denmark* offers an expansive yet detailed exploration of cultural and literary exchanges between Denmark and Britain between the 1770s and 1820s. Discussing a wide range of sources, Duffy illuminates connections between fiction, poetry, travel writing, archeology, language, cultural events, and political crises, as the two countries' nation-building efforts sometimes clashed violently and sometimes exhibited a remarkable close bond. As Duffy repeatedly and convincingly shows, this bond was frequently invoked in references to a shared, Scandinavian past manifested in language as well as cultural customs and literary exchanges. At the same time, Britain's two bombardments of Copenhagen (first in 1801 and then again in 1807) resulted in deep political rifts which writers on both sides discussed and, to varying extent, sought to mend. Duffy untangles these under-researched connections in the book's five chapters, which are preceded by an excellent introduction and concluded with a thought-provoking Coda that complicates national and international cultural and linguistic alliances by pointing to the 'rival claims of national and international traditions' (185) in Europe at this time.

Chapter one, "One of the finest capitals in Europe': Some British Romantic Views of Copenhagen", focuses primarily on British travel writers' view of Copenhagen, whether real or imagined, along with British accounts of the two bombardments of the capital. Framed as a discussion of the "oriental other", Duffy shows how Denmark came to be represented as a cautionary tale of the effects of absolute monarchy. These attitudes changed over time, however, and towards the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century perceptions of a "common, Northern identity" came to dominate the discourse – that is, until England attacked Copenhagen, and it was Britain's turn to be portrayed as an Oriental "other" as a result of the latter having 'broken the bonds of cultural brotherhood and violated a 'Romantic' valorization of 'the North'', a sentiment that Duffy documents extensively in contemporary texts (60).

The second chapter, "The dwelling-place of a mighty people': Travelers beyond Copenhagen' takes a wider view of the intercultural exchanges between the two countries. The chapter discusses how state-sponsored inventories of prehistoric monuments, which have been linked to the rise of Romantic nationalism in the 1850s, were preceded by efforts to see these objects as evidence of a common, ancient northern culture that included Britain. The chapter also includes a fascinating discussion of British investment in a romanticized history of Helsingør, the setting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, alongside what appears to have been some thoroughly disappointing visits to the actual town. Last, the chapter considers the travel writing by the "cultural ambassador" Andreas Andersen Feldborg (65), to whom Duffy returns repeatedly throughout the book.

In "A mine yet to be explored': Romanticism and Anglo-Danish Literary Exchanges' Duffy nuances the idea that literary exchange between the two countries was a one-way affair, arguing instead that 'the discussion and circulation in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain of contemporary Danish literature [...] constituted a more significant axis of cultural exchange [...] than has yet been recognized in either Anglophone or Danish scholarship' (93). Feldborg makes an extensive appearance in the chapter, as he worked relentlessly to introduce fellow countrymen such as Knud Lyne Rahbek, Rasmus Rask, Oehlenschläger, and Peter Thun Foersom to a British audience. In his representation of the other side of this exchange, Duffy highlights Thomas De Quincey, and focuses in particular on literary networks, translations, and editorial efforts that made the introduction of contemporary Danish literature possible.

To some extent, much of what is discussed in the following chapter, "The brothers of

Englishmen’: British Reflections on the Danish National Character’ builds very organically on what has already been stated in the preceding chapters, and, indeed, the book’s greatest weakness is perhaps its somewhat repetitive consultations of primary sources. Similarly, “No trifling kingdom’: Anglo-Danish Politics beyond the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars’ repeats some of the ideas put forward in chapters 1 and 2; however, the captivating account of the ‘unfortunate’ British Queen Caroline Matilda makes the chapter an enlightening read, especially as Duffy places her experience of disappointed hope and isolation alongside Mary Wollstonecraft’s personal reflections in *Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*. An evolution of Romantic tastes is discernable in the way Caroline Matilda’s fate became increasingly sentimentalized, and tourists sought out Helsingør for its connection to this “Romantic heroine” rather than *Hamlet*. The chapter concludes with an overview of British writing about Danish overseas territories and comparisons between British and Danish attitudes to slavery, something that, this reviewer thinks, could have been given more space in this otherwise comprehensive volume on the cultural, political, and literary alliances and rivalries between Britain and Denmark.

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