

S. A. J. Bradley, ed., *N. F. S. Grundtvig – A Life Recalled. An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts*, trans. S. A. J. Bradley, Aarhus University Press: Aarhus, 2008; 600 pp.; 9788772889696, €66.95 (hbk)

N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) was one of the most important Danish intellectuals of his time: educator, theologian, historian, poet and politician. This book offers a fine introduction to his life and times.

'The writings of Grundtvig, whether in prose or verse, have never been attractive to me. They are so exclusively national as to be scarcely intelligible to a foreigner; they lie, if I may say so, outside the European tradition.' So was the verdict of Edmund Gosse in his *Two Visits to Denmark 1872–4* (London 1919). In contrast to his contemporary adversary, Søren Kierkegaard, Grundtvig never won international fame. Only among some historians is he known for being one of the first scholars to take a serious philological interest in the Beowulf manuscript, a spin-off from his passion for Norse mythology and saga literature.

What first of all makes Grundtvig interesting to people outside Denmark is that he is a wonderful specimen of that European breed of nationalists so common in his time. He shaped a conglomerate *Weltanschauung* of man's relation to nature, God, world history and the nation based upon the German idealist philosophy of history and British political liberalism. Grundtvig's complexity is illustrated by the fact that, at one stage of his life, he was an ardent spokesman for both absolutist rule and the abolition of slavery.

Bradley's book contains 132 contemporary texts – letters, excerpts from diaries, memoirs, articles and books – together with extensive commentaries. It offers a first-hand portrait suitable also for English speakers encountering Danish intellectual history for the first time. (Another approach has just recently been made possible thanks to Jon Stewart's *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark* [Copenhagen 2007].) An annotated index totalling 250 pages actually constitutes more of an encyclopaedia of Danish cultural history in the 19th century and is highly useful. The book is the first volume of what is to be a series of translations into English of texts by Grundtvig.

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Matthew Brown, ed., *Informal Empire in Latin America: Culture, Commerce and Capital*, The Bulletin of Latin American Research Book Series, Blackwell: Oxford, 2008; 296 pp.; 9781405179324, £19.99 (pbk)

Ronald Robinson and Jack Gallagher's landmark 1953 essay, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', introduced the term 'informal empire' to explain the phenomenon of British preponderant influence in territories that were not under direct, legal dominion or control. As Matthew Brown shows in his nuanced, stimulating introduction to *Informal Empire in Latin America*, research into 'informal empire' is now as much about cultural encounters as it is about the political effects of deepening commercial links and burgeoning capital investment. It is not a moribund concept, but rather one that can facilitate an interdisciplinary and comparative study of British interactions with Latin America in the period 1830–1940.

Brown has brought together a distinguished group of historians, many of whom were participants in the battles over the applicability of 'informal empire' to Latin America