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**‘The story of this retired
spot’: Dronninggård, John
Carr, and forgotten works by
William Hayley and Leigh
Hunt.**

‘The story of this retired spot’: Dronninggård, John Carr, and forgotten works by William Hayley and Leigh Hunt.

Cian Duffy, St. Mary’s University, Strawberry Hill

During his own lifetime, the barrister and traveller Sir John Carr (1772-1832) was probably best known as the author of *The Stranger in France, a Tour from Devonshire to Paris* (1803) and *The Stranger in Ireland, or a Tour in the Southern and Western Parts of that Country* (1806). In 1805, however, Carr also published his well-received *A Northern Summer; or Travels round The Baltic, through Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Prussia, and Part of Germany, in the Year 1804*, intending to introduce readers to a ‘ground which [...] has not very frequently been trodden by Englishmen’.¹ In Chapter IV, Carr describes his visit to the Dronninggård (Queen’s House) estate on the shore of Furesø, about twenty kilometres north of Copenhagen, which he describes as ‘the first [i.e. preeminent] private residence in Denmark’.² ‘The story of this retired spot deserves to be told’, Carr assures the reader.³ Carr’s account of it, which includes forgotten works by William Hayley and Leigh Hunt, is my subject here.

Dronninggård was built in 1661 and owned by Queen Sophie Amalie (1648-70). After her death, it fell into disrepair. At the time of Carr’s visit, in 1804, it was owned by the wealthy Copenhagen-based Dutch-merchant Frédéric de Coninck (1740-1811), who had purchased and restored it in 1781-2.⁴ De Coninck also commissioned his childhood friend, the

¹ Sir John Carr, *A Northern Summer* (London, 1805), p. xvii. Carr’s substantial output of travel-writing also includes: *A Tour Through Holland, along the Right and Left Banks of the Rhine, to the South of Germany* (1807); *Caledonian Sketches, or a Tour Through Scotland* (1808); and *Descriptive Travels in the Southern and Eastern Parts of Spain and the Balearic Isles* (1811). In his *DNB* entry on Carr, Leslie Stephen remarks that he was introduced to Byron in Cadiz in 1811 and later described by him, in an unused stanza of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, as ‘Green Erin’s knight and Europe’s wandering star’.

² Carr, *Northern Summer*, p. 65. Known today as Næsseslottet (‘the peninsula castle’), Dronninggård is now a conference centre: www.naesseslottet.dk.

³ Carr, *Northern Summer*, p. 65.

⁴ De Coninck later became the major importer to Europe of the celebrated South African dessert wine Klein Constantia, which became famous during the Romantic period, counting Napoleon Bonaparte amongst its many devotees.

Dutch cavalry officer Jean Frédéric Henry De Drevon (1734-97) to redesign part of the grounds in the newly popular English style, creating one of the earliest Romantic gardens in Denmark.⁵ De Drevon published a detailed account of his improvement work, featuring illustrations by the Danish painter Erik Pauelsen (1749-90), as *Description de Dronninggaard, Terre Située dans l'Isle de Zelande en Dannemark* (1786), dating the dedication at Copenhagen on 25 April.⁶

Carr's account of 'the romantic beauties of Dronninggaard' mentions first an 'elegant marble column' which he found 'at the end of a beautiful walk', bearing an inscription in Danish which Carr translates as 'This Monument is erected in gratitude to a mild and beneficent Government, under whose auspices I enjoy the blessings that surround me'.⁷ This 'elegant marble column' (still standing today) is described by De Drevon as a Doric column raised on a plinth and carved from white Norwegian marble.⁸ It was designed by the Westminster-born, Anglo-Danish neo-classical sculptor Carl Frederik Stanley (c. 1738-1813) and raised by De Coninck in 1784. The plinth in fact bears two inscriptions, on opposite sides, in Danish: 'Mine børn / og deres efterkommere / tilegnet / af / Fredk D Coninck / i / aaret 1784' ['My children and their descendants, dedicated by Frederick De Coninck in the year 1784']; and 'Til ære / for handelen og søfarten / som under en viis / og mild regerings / indflydelse og beskyttelse / gave mig ævne / at forskjønne dette sted / og forbedre dets / agres dyrkning' ['To commerce and seafaring which, under the influence and protection of a wise and mild government, gave me the ability to beautify this place and improve its arable cultivation']. The two remaining sides of the plinth feature bas reliefs depicting images related to seafaring and commerce.

The main objects of Carr's interest, however, he found 'in a spot of deep seclusion': 'the ruins of a hermitage, before which was the channel of a little brook, then dried up; and a little further, in a nook, an open grave and a tomb-stone'.⁹ Carr expands in detail on the

⁵ In his *Encyclopedia of Gardening* (third ed., 1825) J. C. Loudon mentions 'Dronninggaard as one of the best examples of the English style' in Denmark (p. 212).

⁶ Pauelsen also decorated a room in De Coninck's townhouse in Copenhagen.

⁷ Carr, *Northern Summer*, p. 65.

⁸ Jean Frédéric Henry De Drevon, *Description de Dronninggaard, Terre Située dans l'Isle de Zelande en Dannemark*, (Copenhagen, 1786), pp. 17-20. Both house and 'column' are depicted in plate twelve of De Drevon's *Description*.

⁹ Carr, *A Northern Summer*, p. 65.

explanation for this Gothic-sounding discovery in a passage which I also need to quote at some length here:

one who, weary of the pomp of courts and the tumult of camps, in the prime of life, covered with honours and with fortune, sought from [Dronninggård's] hospitable owner permission to raise a sequestered cell, in which he might pass the remainder of his days in all the austerities and privation of an anchorite. This singular man had long, previous to the revolution of Holland, distinguished himself at the head of his regiment, but in an unhappy moment the love of aggrandisement took possession of his heart, and marrying under its influence, misery followed: and here, in a little wood of tall firs, he raised this simple fabric: moss warmed it within, and the bark of the birch defended it without; a stream of rock water once ran in a bed of pebbles before the door, in which the young willow dipt its leaves; and at a little distance from a bed of wild roses the labernum gracefully rose and suspended her yellow flowers; he selected an adjoining spot for the depository of his remains [...] Every day he dug a small portion of his grave until he had finished it: he then composed his epitaph in French, and had it inscribed upon a stone [...] In this singular solitude he passed several years, when the plans of his life became suddenly reversed, by a letter of recal from his prince, which contained the most flattering expressions of regard. The wishes of his sovereign and his country were imperative, he flew to Holland, and at the head of his regiment fought and fell.¹⁰

The 'singular man', never identified by Carr, was in fact De Drevon himself, who had constructed the ruined hermitage as part of his Romantic improvement work on the grounds at Dronninggård and who had, of course, never lived in it. As Margrethe Floryan observes, De Drevon drew partly on 'his own life story and philosophy as a leitmotif' for this part of the

¹⁰ Carr, *Northern Summer*, pp. 66-7.

garden, but also upon Rousseau's tomb and cabin at Ermenonville.¹¹ De Drevon himself, in his *Description*, makes it clear that the whole area has been designed ('a place where art imitates nature to perfection') and the Danish traveller Andreas Andersen Feldborg also seemed in no doubt about the origins of the 'hermitage', recalling of Dronninggård in his *Tour in Zealand* that 'in the park we found a purling brook which we traced through a beautiful clump of trees into a valley, where an *artificial* hermitage stood, encompassed by a garden'.¹² Carr, however, was either unable or perhaps simply unwilling to distinguish between history and fantasy in his account of the hermitage. He makes no reference whatsoever to De Drevon or to the fact of the grounds having been, comparatively recently, improved in the English style. De Drevon, who was an equerry to William V of Orange ('his prince', presumably, in Carr's account) did in fact leave Dronninggård in 1786 - but not apparently to answer an urgent call to arms which led to his death, since he published his *Voyage en Suede* at The Hague in 1789 (although the journey it recalls took place in 1785-6) and did not die until 1797.¹³ The exact circumstances of his death I have not been able to determine. However, both the year of his death and his age at death (63) make it unlikely that he was killed in any action connected with the formation of the Batavian Republic (which is presumably what Carr intends by his reference to 'the revolution of Holland'), during which William V fled to England. But Carr might, of course, have been told otherwise during his visit.

In any case, as late as 1809 Carr rehearses his version of the hermit story in a footnote to his 'Lines written in a Hermitage, At Dronninggaard, Near Copenhagen', published in *Poems*, which repeats in substance and mostly verbatim the account quoted above from *A Northern Summer*.¹⁴ The five stanzas of Carr's 'Lines' follow:

Delicious gloom! asylum of repose!

Within your verdant shades, your tranquil bound,

¹¹ Margrethe Floryan, 'Eremittens virke, vink, og venner: Scener og stemninger i Dronninggaards 1700-tals have', in Wager, Smidt, & Floryan, *En Verden i Harmoni: To Parker i 1700-Tallet* (Denmark: GL Holtegaard, 1996), pp. 30-44 (33); my translation.

¹² De Drevon, *Description*, p. 23 ('ou l'art a parfaitement su imiter la nature'); Andreas Anderson Feldborg, *Tour in Zealand, in the Year 1802*, second ed. (London, 1805), p. 56; emphasis added. Only a few stones of the hermitage remain today.

¹³ An English translation of De Drevon's *Voyage* by William Radcliffe was published in 1790 as *A Journey Through Sweden [...] With Some Particulars Relating to the History of Denmark*.

¹⁴ John Carr, *Poems* (London, 1809), pp. 153-4n.

A wretched fugitive, oppress'd by woes,
 The balm of peace, that long had left him, found.

Ne'er does the trump of war disturb this grove;
 Throughout its deep recess the warbling bird
 Discourses sweetly of its happy love,
 Or distant sounds of rural joy are heard.

Life's checquer'd scene is softly pictured here;
 Here the proud moss-rose spreads its transient pride;
 Close by, the willow drops a dewy tear,
 And gaudy flow'rs the modest lily hide.

Alas! poor Hermit! happy had it been
 For thee, if in these shades thy days had past,
 If, well contented with the happy scene,
 Thou ne'er again had fac'd life's stormy blast!

And Pity oft shall shed the gen'rous tear
 O'er the sad moral which thy days disclose;
 There view how restless is our nature here,
 How strangely hostile to its own repose.

The question, then, is from where Carr drew the details of his account of the hermit of Dronninggård in *A Northern Summer* and 'Lines'. The answer would seem to be that he bases both entirely upon two poems in French by De Drevon, which he had incorporated into monuments raised during his improvement works on the estate. Through Carr's agency, these poems became the basis for translations by William Hayley and Leigh Hunt. Neither

translation seems to have been published other than by Carr and hence both are, now, essentially unknown.¹⁵

The first poem is introduced by Carr as the ‘epitaph’ of the ‘hermit’, which, Carr says, he had ‘inscribed upon a stone’.¹⁶ This ‘stone’ - described in detail by De Drevon, and illustrated in plate 15 of his *Description* - is in fact a tablet of white Norwegian marble, inclined against a crucifix, which is planted by an open grave.¹⁷ The ‘epitaph’, in French, reads:

D: O: M:

Icy reposera qui retiré du monde
 Veut à Dronninggaard dans une paix profonde
 Il connut de la cour le brillant si flatteur
 De l'état du guerrier l'ambition trop vaste,
 Des folles passions la séduisante erreur,
 Du luxe éblouissant et l'orgueil et le faste,
 Du tendre amour il gouta la douceur,
 Ce dieu lui promit tout, mais il trompa son cœur.
 La raison le fixant sous les loix d'hyménée
 Il crut appercevoir la route du bonheur.
 Cruelle illusion, fatale destinée,
 L'interet y sema le germe du malheur.
 La fidele amitié plus vraie et plus constante
 Lui tend dans ses chagrins une main bienfaisante.
 Aux bords de ce ruisseau, sous l'ombre de ces bois
 Elle eleve à son tour sa consolante voix,
 La paix renaît déjà dans son cœur plus tranquile
 Et le bonheur qu'il chercha tant de fois

¹⁵ In *Frédéric de Coninck og Dronninggaard* (Holte: Historisk-Topografisk Selskab, 1987), Jens Friis-Hansen and Finn Slente note Carr's visit and quote from his account, but do not mention the translations (pp. 79-81). Neither does Margrethe Floryan in her brief notice of Carr's visit ('Eremittens virke, vink og venner', p. 36).

¹⁶ Carr, *Northern Summer*, p. 66.

¹⁷ De Drevon, *Description*, p. 25.

Ne l'abandonna point dans ce charmant azile.¹⁸

Carr does not include the original, French text of the 'epitaph' in *A Northern Summer*, 'but the reader I think will be pleased with it', he says, 'in the English dress which it has received from the distinguished pen of William Hayley, Esq.':

The Hermit's Epitaph

Here may he rest, who, shunning scenes of strife,
 Enjoy'd at Dronninggaard a Hermit's life;
 The faithless splendour of a court he knew,
 And all the ardour of the tented field,
 Soft Passion's idler charm, not less untrue,
 And all that listless luxury can yield.
 He tasted, tender Love! thy chaster sweet;
 Thy promis'd happiness prov'd mere deceit.
 To Hymen's hallow'd fane by Reason led,
 He deem'd the path he trod, the path of bliss;
 Oh! ever mourn'd mistake! from int'rest bred,
 Its dupe was plung'd in Misery's abyss.
 But Friendship offer'd him, benignant power,
 Her cheering hand, in trouble's darkest hour.
 Beside this shaded stream, her soothing voice
 Bade the disconsolate again rejoice:
 Peace in his heart revives, serenely sweet;
 The calm content so sought for as his choice,
 Quits him no more in this belov'd retreat.¹⁹

Hayley's faithful translation makes clear that this 'epitaph' contains much of the detail from which Carr drew his 'story' about the life and fate of the 'hermit' of Dronninggård, although

¹⁸ Quoted from De Drevon, *Description*, p. 25.

¹⁹ Quoted from Carr, *A Northern Summer*, p. 67.

the original poem can evidently be read as (at least) combining the conventional with the personal as part of De Drevon's incorporation of himself, as a kind of latter-day Rousseau, into his improvements to the estate. Since Carr nowhere mentions either De Drevon or his *Description*, he presumably transcribed the French original from the monument on the spot and, on his return to England, showed it to Hayley, whom Carr describes in his footnote to 'Lines Written in a Hermitage' as 'my respected and distinguished friend'.²⁰ It would certainly not have been the first literary collaboration between the two men: in his Preface to *The Stranger in France* (1803), Carr places Hayley, 'a name familiar and dear to every elegant and polished mind', foremost amongst those whose 'emendations, and [...] cherishing spirit of approval' played a key role in preparing the text for publication.²¹

A similar process must have led to the second translation of a Dronninggård text, with Carr transcribing a French original on the spot, and subsequently asking Leigh Hunt to make a translation. A letter from Hunt to Marianne Kent of 23 March 1807 records 'I have been here to breakfast with Sir John Carr' so the two men clearly were in contact then and probably had been for some time, since Leigh Hunt's *Juvenilia* (1801) lists 'Carr, John, esq, Totness, Devon' amongst its subscribers.²²

The source text in this case is a poem by De Drevon entitled 'Les Adieux de l'Hermitte de Dronning-Gaard'. It is engraved on a monument designed by the Danish neoclassical sculptor Johannes Wiedewelt (1731-1802), which also features emblems of De Drevon's regiment and of the Dronninggård estate.²³ Neither poem nor monument is mentioned in De Drevon's *Description* which raises the possibility that the latter, at least, dates from after that work was sent to press. The French text reads:

Les Adieux De L'Hermitte
De Dronning-Gaard

²⁰ Carr, *Poems*, p. 154n. Hayley's translation is also included in Carr's footnote. So far as I have been able to determine, it has not otherwise appeared in print.

²¹ John Carr, *The Stranger in France* (London, 1803), p. iii.

²² Quoted from the facsimile available at the University of Iowa Digital Libraries Leigh Hunt Collection <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/leighhunt/id/3403/rec/1> (accessed 12 January 2015); Leigh Hunt, *Juvenilia*, second edition (London, 1801), p. xvi.

²³ Originally located beside the 'hermitage', the monument has now been relocated near the entrance to the forest (see Friiss-Hansen and Slente, p. 53).

Entraîne sans retour dans la fracas du monde
 L'hermite a donc perdu cette paix si profonde
 Cette tranquillité, ces doux amusements
 Ce travail ce repos, ces plaisirs innocents
 Dont Dronninggaard toujours abonde
 Et qu'il trouva si consolants
 Mais s'il dut consacrer le reste de sa vie
 A servir de nouveau son prince et sa patrie
 S'il doit connoître encore au declin de ses jours
 Le tourbillon des camps et l'intrigue des cours
 Cette retraite si chérie
 Tient a son coeur pour toujours.
 O Dronning-gaard, endroit trop enchanteur
 Tu vis renaître mon bonheur
 Chez toi de l'amitié constante
 La voix si consolante
 Me fit oublier mes malheurs
 Sur tous mes jours que tu semas de fleurs,
 Tes forêts, tes jardins, tes champs et tes bocages,
 De ton immense lac les superbes rivages
 Plus d'une fois ont calmé mes douleurs,
 Et dans ton charmant hermitage
 J'ai vu tarir la source de mes pleurs
 Mais puis qu'enfin il faut que il te quitte:
 Conserve moi toujours le nom de ton hermite
 Et lorsqu' un jour l'impitoyable mort
 De sa faux meurtrière aura fini mon sort
 Je veux qu'à ton génie on offre une hecatombe
 Et que l'on grave sur ma tombe

D'y lit l'ami de Dronning-gaard.²⁴

In *A Northern Summer*, Carr introduces the 'translation' of this text, which he attributes to 'the poetic and elegant mind of Leigh Hunt, Esq', as follows:

The night preceding his departure [i.e. the departure of the 'hermit' to answer the 'letter of recal from his prince'], he composed a farewell to the enchanting scenery in whose bosom he had found repose, which as an affectionate remembrance of the unfortunate hermit, is inscribed upon a tablet of marble, raised in a little grove not far from the hermitage.²⁵

Hunt's text, however, is less a 'translation' of De Drevon's 'Les Adieux' than a Romantic extempore based upon it, and which must have drawn also on Carr's recollections of the estate as well as on aspects of Hunt's own life. Some twelve lines longer than De Drevon's original, it has not, insofar as I have been able to determine, yet been included in any edition of Hunt's work and is here printed again for the first time in over two hundred years.²⁶

Farewell of the Hermit of Dronninggaard

Vain would life's pilgrim, lingering on his way,
 Snatch the short respite of a summer's day;
 Pale Sorrow, bending o'er his sad repose,
 Still finds a tear in ev'ry shelt'ring rose:
 5 Still breaks his dream, and leads th'unwilling slave
 To weep, and wander to a distant grave.
 E'en he, whose steps since life's ungenial morn
 Have found no path unfretted with rude thorn,

²⁴ Quoted from Friis-Hansen and Slente, p. 54.

²⁵ Carr, *Northern Summer*, pp. 67-8.

²⁶ It is not contained, certainly, in the two volumes of 'poetical works' included in Robert Morrison and Michael Eberle Sinatra (eds.), *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, 6 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003).

From all he lov'd must turn his looks away,
 10 Far, far from thee, fair Dronningaard, must stray,
 Must leave the Eden of his fancy's dreams,
 Its twilight groves and long-resounding streams;
 Streams, where the tears of fond regret have ran,
 And back return to sorrow and to man!
 15 O yet once more, ye groves, your sighs repeat,
 And bid farewell to these reluctant feet:
 Once more arise, thou soft, thou soothing wave,
 In weeping murmurs, ere I seek my grave,
 Ere yet a thousand social ills I share,
 20 Consuming war, and more consuming care,
 Pleasures that ill conceal their future pains,
 Virtue in want, blest Liberty in chains,
 Vice, proud and powerful as the winter's wind,
 And all the dire deliriums of mankind.

25 Yet e'en this heart may hail its rest to come:
 Sorrow, thy reign is ended in the tomb!
 There close the eyes, that wept their fires away;
 There drop the hands that clasp'd to mourn and pray;
 There sleeps the restlessness of aching hearts;
 30 There Love, the tyrant, buries all his darts!
 O grant me, heav'n, thus sweetly to repose!
 'Tis thus my soul shall triumph o'er its woes;
 Spring from the world, nor drop one painful tear
 On all it leaves, on all it treasures here;
 35 Save once, perhaps, when pensive moonlight gleams
 O'er Dronningaard's meek shades and murmuring streams,
 The sacred grief, to dear remembrance true,

O'er her soft flow'rs may shed its gentlest dew,
 May once in sounds, that soothe the suffring mind,
 40 Breathe its lorn murmurs through the solemn wind;
 Lament, sweet spot, thy charms must wither'd be,
 And linger e'en from heav'n to sigh for thee!²⁷

Hunt's 'translation', in the heroic couplets he often favoured, departs from the aa/bb/ab etc. pattern of De Drevon's original, and many of the elements introduced by Hunt seem to have a more obvious relevance to his situation in 1804-5 than to De Drevon's in 1786, although Hunt must have completed the poem well prior to the death of his mother in November 1805, which affected him so profoundly. The references to 'Consuming war [...] / Virtue in want, blest Liberty in chains, / Vice, proud and powerful as the winter's wind, / And all the dire deliriums of mankind' in ll. 20-4, for example, all sound like Hunt and can certainly be read as a gloss on the international and domestic political situation in 1804-5, which provided such fuel for Hunt's brother John in his newly-established *The News*. Might 'pleasures that ill conceal their future pains' even be a reference to the excesses of the Prince Regent, whom Hunt would later attack in print at such great personal cost (l. 21)? So, too, the lament for the vagaries of love in ll. 25-30 could be read in relation to the tribulations of Hunt's on/off relationship with the unwell Marianne.

Hunt's lines were well received by reviewers of *A Northern Summer*. No less a publication than *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, for example, soon to be no fan of Hunt, repeats Carr's account of 'a singular kind of hermit, a Dutch officer', and quotes in full his 'elegant farewell to the surrounding scenery, which has been as elegantly translated by Mr. Leigh Hunt' - though it went on to note that 'In line 14 [for 13], the perfect tense of the verb to run is substituted for the participle: an error but too common in modern poetry, though greatly transgressing all the bounds of poetical licence!'²⁸ *The Monthly Mirror* offered, for its part, a 'lament we have not room for an elegant poetical translation of the *Hermit's Farewell to Dronninggaard*, from the pen of Leigh Hunt Esq., a friend of the tourist'.²⁹ And as for that

²⁷ Quoted from Carr, *Northern Summer*, pp. 68-9.

²⁸ *The Anti-Jacobin Review* 22 (1806), pp. 53-4.

²⁹ *The Monthly Mirror* (July, 1805), p. 190.

'tourist' himself, he takes his own leave of Dronninggård in *A Northern Summer* affirming that: 'the dispatch with which nature pushes on her vegetation in these cold climates is amazing: this delightful spot, which was now in full foliage, presented nothing but naked branches a fortnight before. I quitted Dronninggaard with almost as much regret as did the devoted eremite'.³⁰

³⁰ Carr, *Northern Summer*, p. 69.