

***The Younger Pitt.* By Michael Duffy.** Longman. 2000. xiv + 247pp. £14.99.

It is difficult now not to read recent work on the remarkable figure of William Pitt the Younger in the light of John Ehrman's comprehensive trilogy, and, indeed, it is difficult not to fear that such work will suffer by the comparison. Michael Duffy, however, has succeeded not only in producing a clearly different kind of book but also a fresh analysis of its subject and his career. Enviably lucidly written, *The Younger Pitt* is a contribution to Longman's 'Profiles in Power' series and, although professional historians will also profit from it, its size will make it more accessible to undergraduate students than the lengthy Ehrman volumes. The originality of Duffy's analysis of Pitt may partly be attributed to his thematic structuring of the study. Chronological sense is established by chapters at the beginning and end of the book on Pitt's early career and last years respectively, but the intervening chapters examine, over the whole course of his career, Pitt's relationship with the King, his management of the Cabinet, his style as prime minister, his command over the House of Commons, his attempts to control public opinion, and his role in foreign affairs. Such a structure allows Duffy to propose bold but considered re-interpretations of aspects of Pitt's life and career. For instance, in discussing the common belief that Pitt turned apostate in the 1790s, Duffy suggests that Pitt's early reformism has been exaggerated and that it was substantially weakened from 1787, when Britain reclaimed a dominant role in Europe, rather than after the outbreak of the French Revolution. No conclusion to the book is offered, presumably because each chapter is intended to summarize an aspect of Pitt's career, and since the last chapter ends with his death. None the less, it seems a little abrupt, and some comment on his posthumous reputation and reference to the proliferation of Pitt Clubs from 1806 might have been appropriate. Duffy presents an admirably vivid sense of the premier by persistently placing him in the foreground and by placing substantial reliance on the letters and memoirs of those who were close to him. Pitt's ability to seize the moment, his talents, industry and enthusiasm are all demonstrated; so too are his ineptitude in personal finance, alcoholism, over-optimism, procrastination, lack of method, and the good fortune that, as Duffy suggests, was perhaps as important as Pitt's talents in establishing and maintaining his grip on power.

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