Ever since John Arbuthnot published *The History of John Bull* in 1712, the figure of John Bull has stereotypically personified the best and the worst traits of the British (or English) national character. The present work takes the eponymous juxtaposition as an incentive to study the variety of multi-faceted contacts between the two sides. Given the recent attempts at a re-definition of the relationship between Britain and the Continent – best visible in the turmoil over Britain’s EU membership – the results of the research will hopefully stimulate discussion about John Bull’s ever-changing presence within or without the Continent.

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