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Editor's Choice Underappreciated Books

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Editor's Choice

Underapplauded Books

Janine Barchas (with the editorial collaboration of Gordon D. Fulton), *The Annotations in Lady Bradshaigh's Copy of Clarissa*, *ELS Monograph Series* no. 74. Victoria, British Columbia: University of Victoria, 1998. Pp. 144.

Reviewed by Kevin L. Cope

There are certain authors—Walt Whitman, William Blake, Sylvia Plath—on whom literary history has played an ironic joke: that of maintaining their renown and readership by assimilating every interpretation that anyone wants to apply to them. One wonders whether a daunted aesthete like Virginia Woolf or a profuse penwoman like Eliza Haywood would have accepted their ever-renewing fame had they known that perpetual applause would come at the cost of serving as poster-people for every good or bad cause that criticism and its practitioners could concoct. Chief among these victims of unanticipated acclaim is Samuel Richardson, whose voluminous heroines have drawn approval from as bizarre an assortment of anorexics, anemics, and intellectually undernourished interpreters as has ever assembled. True, the study of Richardson has profited from rigorous work by scholars such as Ben Kimpel,

T. C. Duncan Eaves, Florian Stuber, and David Hensley. Unfortunately, recent years have also seen a profusion of egoistic criticism intended to establish Pamela and Clarissa as icons of contemporary liberal social theory, or worse.

It is highly refreshing, then, to witness the publication of Janine Barchas's *The Annotations in Lady Bradshaigh's Copy of Clarissa*, an intimate study of the marginal jottings made by Richardson's most faithful (and most highly placed) reader-patroness. Barchas avoids what might be called "Richardson guru syndrome." Her task is not to record every utterance of Richardson-the-prophet, but rather to capture, with a high degree of precision, a matrix of responses by Richardson's most prominent reader. The centrality of Barchas's pursuit is captured by the witty title of her introduction, "Richardson on the Margins," a title that acknowledges the cult of marginalia that has possessed literary study (especially the study of Richardson and other allegedly "feminist" novelists) while it also suggests the centrality of Bradshaigh's mezzanine musings to the understanding of Richardson's style, conceptions, and ideology. Quipping that the layering of Richardson's own responses atop Lady Bradshaigh's annotations renders the book into "an almost Talmudic array of glosses upon glosses" (9), Barchas displays the interwoven integrity of Richardson's text with eighteenth-century life. By reading the margins she discovers the core, Augustan content of the book. "The Bradshaigh copy is thus a running conversation between a text, its author, and one reader" (11), a ruling that allows Barchas to zoom in on what Richardson's book specifically meant during a specific interval of time to its specifically first and possibly foremost reader(s). The Bradshaigh annotations offer "a lens through which to view the text's evolution into its 'mature' 1751 editions" (11). This courageous assertion about textual "evolution" subtly decides the question of the superiority of one *Clarissa* text to another by making them all of a (dialogical) piece. Much to the distress of those who make a living through endless comparisons of one text against the other, Barchas sees all the *Clarissa* texts as part of a continuum of revision and annotation, a continuum that can be scientifically studied, dated, and interpreted.

Barchas repeatedly affirms her nigh-on heroic resolve to set some limits to the re- and over-interpretation of Richardson's masterpiece. She repeatedly affirms that Richardson used his own annotations (in response to Lady Bradshaigh and others) to *foreclose* rather than to open up interpretation (see 12–13). Even better, Barchas's de-mythologized Richardson is capable of being *wrong*, for example by having a confused picture of upper-class life. Far from being a postmodern apostle of inclusivity, Richardson evidences an "intolerance for interpretive multiplicity at specific points in the text" (11). Always attentive to textual detail, Barchas explains that Richardson devised a technique in which marginal dots marked inserted passages (19–20). This dot system was "designed to foreclose interpretive multiplicity" (23). "The 1751 editions," moreover, "printed [Lady Bradshaigh's and others'] marginalia...[so as to] proleptically

coopt the margins of *Clarissa* to ward off undesired readings" (23). Richardson's preemptive typographical hermeneutics often leads to odd results. Barchas notes that the social-climbing Richardson sees proper spelling as a sign of status, whereas Lady Bradshaigh sees the right to vary spelling as a sign of aristocratic prerogative (26–27). One can only quietly smile when imagining what some contemporary critics would do were Lady Bradshaigh to write her name over their names and their book dedications in the way that she overwrote Richardson's (34)!

In addition to issuing a clarion call to more careful scholarship and measured interpretation, Barchas supplements her transcription of the annotations with lively, original, and useful insights. She shows how ink color can identify which person is doing the annotating (57); how concerned the eighteenth-century readership was with the tiniest details, for example, the location of a key (59); how we would do well to look not only at Richardson's responses to Lady Bradshaigh, but at those passages where he underscores her remarks (90); how exclamation—for example, "what Infatuation!"—can intensify the irony in the presentation of *Clarissa*, *Lovelace*, and other lovers (94); how a female reader like Lady Bradshaigh could take a sharp, caustic, and critical tone in responding to *Clarissa*; and how Richardson could get fed up with Lady Bradshaigh's self-righteousness, as when he scoffs that the question of Christian behavior might be irrelevant because "very few Christians had *Clarissa* to deal with" (115). We even see the sentimental side of both Richardson and Lady Bradshaigh when Lady Bradshaigh cushions Richardson against criticisms about excess length by assuring her favorite author that she could easily have read seven volumes more (140).

Despite its modest format and understated appearance, Janine Barchas's study and transcription of the Bradshaigh annotations is one of the most important works on Richardson to come along in years. Literally as well as metaphorically punctilious, it acquaints us with the deep text and deep textuality of Richardson's work, showing us how it produced a real epistolary world like unto that portrayed in Richardson's novels. By revealing the appetite among eighteenth-century audience for detail, data, and even dots, the study redirects modern scholarship toward the archival scrupulosity and away from the speculative effusion. It opens up a world of charming as well as informative evidence about the implications, in later Augustan culture, of Richardson's exploratory epistolary fiction. Characterized by careful scholarship as well as a highly readable and often witty style, Barchas's study is a classic in the making, a work that is certain to attract acclaim.



William Pulteney, *A Proper Reply to a Late Scurrilous Libel; Intituled, Sedition and Defamation Display'd* (1731), ed. H. T. Dickinson, *British Ideas and Issues, 1660–1820*, ed. Alexander Pettit, no. 2. New York: AMS Press, 1998. Pp. 48.

Reviewed by Kevin L. Cope

One reason that “New Historicism” is now old and faded is that it contained precious little history. In devoting so much time and energy to the condemnation of this or that oppressive behavior by this or that western regime, this scholarly cult lost sight of the rich detail and abundant amusement found in the annals of human experience. It is all well and good to produce a huge bibliography of marginalized texts, but unless those texts are read carefully and passionately, with an eye toward their entertainment as well as their scholarly potential, such recovered documents will quickly lose their appeal. Through the publication of works such as William Pulteney’s *A Proper Reply to a Late Scurrilous Libel*, the AMS Press, “British Ideas and Issues” series editor Alexander Pettit, and volume editor H. T. Dickinson are plotting out a stimulating new approach to eighteenth-century studies. They absorb the best elements of New Historicism by reprinting the juiciest and most anecdotally rich items from the margins of eighteenth-century culture at the same time that they rely on traditional research methods to bring these otherwise obscure documents to life. They are thereby doing a great service to eighteenth-century studies by making what could be dismissed as out-of-the-way ephemera permanently and easily accessible to a general educated audience as well as to our community of scholars.

A fellow student in my undergraduate college once pleased his “western civilization” professor by declaring that “that Homer sure could spin a yarn,” a sentiment that could equally well apply to the editor of this pamphlet, H. T. Dickinson. Dickinson is clever enough to realize that the chief actors in the political drama surrounding *A Proper Reply* are probably unfamiliar to most readers. In response to the implicit challenges of obscurity, Dickinson transforms his introduction into an epic—or at least mock epic—tale of political adventure. In Dickinson’s introduction we read the story of William Pulteney, a charming and energetic youth of great political promise who had an amazing knack for inheriting fortune after fortune and for ingratiating himself with the royal family and other influential persons, even despite his sometimes rude behavior and hot temper. Disappointed in or at least impatient with the rate of his political advancement, Pulteney ends up intriguing for Whig favor,

covertly cementing connections with dissenting Tories, committing more betrayals and apostasies than anyone can count, and in general living the life of a composite zealot, rake, and secret agent. Dickinson is not afraid to go for an "R" rating (adult language, violence, albeit not too much sex) in the quest to spice up his story. Rather than the usual document in diplomatic history in which dignified men debate the grand issues of the day, Dickinson's study reports on some of the more glandular utterances of the hotheaded Pulteney, including his scatological boast that "as stout as our shitten monarch pretends to be, you will find we shall force him to truckle and make his great fat-arsed wife stink with fear before we have done with her" (xv). Anyone who doubts that there was another, lower side to British political rhetoric than that represented by Edmund Burke and Richard Sheridan need only review such gems in order to revise his or her opinion. Less puckishly, Dickinson shows us a passionate Pulteney who at one moment is searing with righteous indignation, the next moment is fighting a duel, the next moment is authoring fierce, Juvenalian satire against the effeminate, gay, and transvestite behavior of Lord Hervey, and then, in the next moment, in a dramatic turn worthy of an Almanzor or a Pierre or any other hero in a Restoration heroic drama, is suddenly overturning all his rebellious principles and accepting a post in the government ministries.

Dickinson, then, takes what might otherwise be a dry, contextless lambaste of a forgotten political movement and turns it into a tale of derring-do, adventures, betrayals, royal courts, prisons, swashbuckling, and occasional humorous hypocrisy. We laugh and cry, gape and guffaw as Pulteney goes through political gyrations worthy of Antonio Banderas in *Zorro*. Whether we will see Sylvester Stallone starring in *Pulteney: The Movie* remains to be seen, but this pamphlet, under the editorship of a master historian and skillful storyteller like Professor Dickinson, is certain to continue the impressive precedent set by the early "British Ideas and Issues" pamphlets. It is sure to attract (and stimulate) a growing audience to the overlooked but ever-exciting world of Whig-Tory controversy.



University of Zagreb and Faculty, eds., *Nikola Škrlec Lomnički, 1729-1799*. Two volumes. Zagreb: University of Croatia Press, 1999. Pp. xvi + 468 (volume 1) and pp. xxxiv + 688 (volume 2).

Reviewed by Kevin L. Cope

Even the most socially conscious of scholars can easily get caught up in stereotypes. Such is the case with the progressivist, neo-Whig view of the English Enlightenment, in which, among other things, easy vernacular languages are said to have triumphed over the difficult macaronic Latinate vocabulary of "the schoolmen" and other exponents of academic entrenchment. Inadvertently if uncritically accepting that wry writers such as Samuel Butler, Abraham Cowley, and Joseph Glanvill unambiguously represented the fundamental, seminal Enlightenment values of nationalism, mercantilism, empiricism, and vernacularism, scholars have altogether forgotten about the status of Latin in the far-flung regions and peripheries of Europe as a liberating tool in the service of broad, even universal communication.

To rectify our views in these and many other matters relating to the neglected aspects of the European Enlightenment, the University of Zagreb, Croatia, has released a striking two-volume set of writings by and about Nikola Škrlec Lomnički, a high-ranking administrative figure and political philosopher in Croatia from 1767 to 1799. Lomnički, who might be described as the Croatian equivalent of England's John Locke, occupied a variety of governmental posts, including that of chief officer of Zagreb, while busily penning a series of dialogues and proposals on the nature of the modern, enlightened state. An exponent of constitutionalism and internationalism, Lomnički wrote exclusively in Latin, in anticipation of a wide European audience and in the hopes of integrating Croatia into a modernized continent that was freshly abounding in revolutionary regimes. Linguistically, Lomnički casts new light on the Enlightenment search for an international or universal or natural or primordial language. He joins with John Wilkins and other English theorists in the hope that regionalism and eventually old-style monarchy would fall before an Internet-like world capable of instantaneous, transparent, and universal communication. His only bit of bad luck was that he chose the wrong language, a language that for other reasons (including irrational anti-clericalism) fell into disrepute in nations far away from Lomnički's Croatian homeland.

Zagreb University has here reproduced a substantial selection of Lomnički's practical and theoretical writings in an alluring side-by-side transla-

tion—the left page in the original Latin, the right page in contemporary Croatian. The first of the two volumes is devoted to primary texts. The second volume supplements these texts with a set of scholarly papers that were prepared for the international Lomnički conference in Zagreb in 1999. Multiculturalist idealism aside, it is unfortunate, if understandable, that so excellent a topic will presently lie hidden for most readers behind papers written in a language that is known only to a few, a sad fact that Lomnički himself would have understood, as evidenced by his attempt to set up Latin as the scholarly lingua franca. Nevertheless, these essays cover a wide and impressive array of topics ranging from Lomnički's educational theories to his notions about courtly etiquette to his dialogues with major figures like Scaliger and on to his reflections on agrarianism. The second volume also includes an array of short letters and essays by Lomnički himself that evidently could not fit in the original volume.

Zagreb University is to be congratulated for producing a very handsome pair of volumes, both lavishly graced by a full-color cover image of Lomnički, looking very much the confident man of the Enlightenment, the robust legislator, and the pink-cheeked ideal of healthy neo-classical masculinity. The editors of these volumes are to be applauded for their ambitious attempt to bring eastern European and particularly Croatian studies into the scholarly limelight and to heighten scholarly awareness of eighteenth-century Balkan culture. It is to be hoped that this project will be extended into an English, French, or German translation of these or other forthcoming volumes so that this very significant achievement will become more widely—and deservedly—available.

