

Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 224. £38. ISBN 0 52178208 2.

Leah Price's *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* is brilliant, bold, engaging, imaginative-and occasionally eccentric. The book is a study of the relations between novels and various sorts of anthologies and abridgements that came to market prominence at nearly the same time in the eighteenth century and continued to be influential throughout the nineteenth. Price offers a strong reading of the co-dependency of the parallel forms. Instead of anthologies and abridgements acting as parasites, latching onto the rough beast 'Of the emergent novel, the history of the novel is inseparable from the history of the anthology. The analysis is put so forcefully, and it relies on such a small number of works, that some readers will not be able to resist searching for counterexamples that might bolster more traditional arguments about the development of the novel. Although such readers might not be completely convinced by Price's argument, the book's sharp writing and active engagement with literary and non-literary texts alike will have a more lasting impact than more ponderously exhaustive volumes.

This relatively short book (the full notes, bibliography, and index begin on page 157) consists of three chapters: 'Richardson's Economics of Scale', 'Cultures of the Commonplace', and 'George Eliot and the Production of Consumers'. The first of these examines Samuel Richardson's efforts to abridge and anthologize his prodigiously long works. At this point in the eighteenth century, Price argues, abridgments and anthologies of beauty were considered vulgar. The polite reader would, as Samuel Johnson famously recommended, read Richardson for the 'sentiment' rather than to become engrossed in the story. At the same time, of course, this idea of reading for particular moral beauties leads back to anthologizing, particularly in Richardson's own *Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments*, which he included with *Letters and Passages Restored* in 1751. Price looks as well at the numerous abridgements of Richardson's novels, suggesting again that the vulgar third-person summaries substituted for the tedious narrative conveyed in the novels' epistolary form become reincorporated into the very notion of novelistic narrative. (By the end of the chapter on George Eliot, the reader can predict the moments in which Price will turn the poor authors' self-defenses back upon their actual practices. All of the writers Price examines seem to do the very thing they warn against.

The second chapter, "Cultures of the Commonplace" juxtaposes the anthologizing of Vicesimus Knox, whose *Elegant Extracts* ruled the day, with the abridgement/censorship of Shakespeare's plays by the Lambs' and Thomas Bowdler's work on Shakespeare and the composition and reception of Ann Radcliffe's novels. As Price points out, Radcliffe's books puzzled reviewers with their mixture of prose and verse and their incessant debunking of their own supernatural elements. The novels can be read as anthologies of verse-which figure as gems among the potentially vulgar narrative: 'Verse points outward from the gothic novel, breaking and braking the narrative with a kind of centrifugal force' (p. 94). Here Price is able to develop the tension between reading for the plot and extracting sentiments from a complex form that motivated much of the chapter on Richardson, and that is integral to the next chapter on Eliot.

'George Eliot and the Production of Consumers' uses the volumes of 'beauties' of Eliot edited by 'a sycophantic young Scotsman named Alexander Main' to demonstrate a

fundamental internal contradiction of the novel as it attains the status of high art in the Victorian literary marketplace. Eliot despised the *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse Selected from the Works of George Eliot*, complaining that the method of extracting sayings from their context in a complex narrative results in vulgar simplification. At the same time, Eliot's style, and the artistic ambition of the high Victorian novel work towards the sententiousness that Main's collections mass produce. Price touches on the aspects of gender and class that her analysis points to, but never in a heavy-handed way that interferes with her energetic engagement with the literary texts that lie at the centre of each of the chapters.

*The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* has no time for the pompous pronouncements of traditional idolizing scholarship, and some critics might be as offended as the Richardsonian reviewer of her manuscript whom Price mocks in the first chapter. And it is true that Price places too much emphasis on the explanatory power of the anthology, claiming, for example, that reviewers borrowed the form of the anthology when including long extracts in their evaluations. Readers of eighteenth-century reviews will know that evaluation only gradually became central to reviews, and that it is just as likely that anthologies (in the modern sense) took their method from reviews. Other readers may have other quibbles, but most will find *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* delightful and thought-provoking.

George Justice, Marquette University