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Leah Price. *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel from Richardson to George Eliot*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 232. \$70.00 cloth/\$26.99 paper.

Hefty new anthologies of romantic literature, expanded to enlarge the canon, land on one's desk with a resounding thump, so it is easy to forget that the anthology is a miniaturizing strategy, one of several that Leah Price takes up in her elegantly written and persuasively argued brief for the anthology as a distinct and influential genre. In three central chapters which focus on the novelistic practices of Samuel Richardson, Ann Radcliffe, and George Eliot, Price aligns the anthology with its disreputable cousins—the abridgment, the expurgated edition, the bowdlerization—in order to show how these little-studied forms exerted an influence on reading in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Anthologies and their ilk may not have altered how quickly the reader's eye scanned a page, but they fueled debates over the correct way to read, whether to linger over a salutary sentiment or to race along with the plot.

Price describes the ways in which *Clarissa* became anthologized and abridged, but also, and more originally, she reveals how anthologization and abridgment are built into the narration of that novel. Price notes that each of Richardson's novels takes an anthologist for its heroine, and that Richardson retrospectively defined the original edition of *Clarissa* as an abridgment by claiming to recuperate in later editions passages he had left out of the first. Curiously, the actual abridging of *Clarissa* coincided with the erasure of epistolarity. As Price points out, there is no essential connection between brevity and narrative distance, but the abridgments tended to substitute a retrospective impersonal narrator for Richardson's prolific letter-writers. The letter, Price writes, "came to stand at once for narrative inefficiency and historical retrogression—and, by extension, for the historicity of literary form" (50).

One of the many pleasures of Price's attention to the anthologizing impulse is how it provides her with a means of analyzing obsolete literary forms like the biographical compilations, popular in the nineteenth century, that combined letters and third-person narration. Price argues that the biography came to serve as a resting place for obsolete forms: "A superannuated narrative technique commemorates the dead" (52). When J. G. Lockhart abridged his 1838 *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* to create his 1848 *Narrative of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, he replaced fragments of Scott's own letters with editorial summaries. Ten years after the publication of the *Memoirs*, Lockhart imagined a reader who moved briskly through the biographical highlights of Scott's life rather than pausing over the "beauties" of Scott's own phrases. But even as the letter was being banished to the prehistory of literary composition, it was taking on a new literary role as marker of literary antiquity in late nineteenth-century novels.

Anthologies, also, came to take on a retrospective function, especially in the aftermath of

the 1774 defeat of perpetual copyright which enabled anthologists to compile "timeless gleanings from the backlist" (67). In Chapter Two, "Cultures of the Commonplace," Price suggests that anthologies created a common culture forged by the ubiquity of a few standard collections. When, for example, Jane Austen quoted Home's Douglas, she did so knowing that her audience would remember memorizing this passage as an anthology piece. As Price points out, the obsolescence of Home's play onstage made its surviving lines all the more recognizable as anthology pieces. Anthology editors acted as collectors. The literary passages they culled like cowry shells in museum cabinets—took on new lives removed from their original contexts. The practice of commonplace collecting informs Ann Radcliffe's inscription of verse fragments—"Vjerse vertebrates" Radcliffe's two novels, Price cleverly maintains (93). This practice also lends meaning to the promiscuous quoting that goes on in Susan Ferrier's novels. These quotations, Price suggests, refer not so much to particular canonical texts as to the collections that popularized them: "[I]n the process of recognizing commonplaces, [Ferrier's] readers learn [ed] to recognize themselves within a common culture" (104).

I question Price's inattention to actual commonplace books, private anthologies as opposed to the gift books, annuals, and elocution manuals she invokes in order to posit a common culture of anthology readers. An analysis of the more idiosyncratic, handwritten personal anthologies that still survive from the early nineteenth century, likely an unrepresentative sample given the vagaries of destruction, might only serve to support Price's view of a community of likeminded readers—as William St. Clair has noted, one finds a strong common predilection for a handful of Byron lyrics in the private commonplace books that remain. But it might also inspire closer attention to the oddity of juxtaposition, for example, the not uncommon pairing of Byronic effusion with religious platitude.

Price reminds us that the anthologist has always been the critic's double: "[E]xtracts underwrite the discipline of literary criticism as we know it" (2). Perhaps inspired by her subject matter, Price has a gift for the aphoristic turn of phrase, as when, in her third chapter's discussion of George Eliot's anthologizers, she notes that Eliot's "protests against sententiousness are undercut more subtly by their own sententious form" (132). Or when, in a discussion of present-day anthologies like William Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, Price refers to the "reinvention of tradition that has become traditional among anthologists" (71). My favorite parts of this study are those moments when Price pauses to reflect on academic criticism, its refusal, for instance, to acknowledge bored readers. In a similar vein, Radcliffe and Ferrier's novels, according to Price, challenge "the language of criticism to theorize ways of reading (easy, obvious, superficial) against which it defines itself" (104).

Will the rise of electronic databases spell the end of the anthology? Certainly not—as Price points out, "Anthologies more often respond to a surfeit of accessible texts than to their shortage" (77). We may in fact be poised on the brink of the next great age of the anthology, with electronic anthologists, like the compilers of the Arts and Letters Daily web site, serving as guides to future culture. Leah Price's *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* concentrates on the symbiotic interactions of the novel and the anthology in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but in its attention to the ways in which literary genres evolve, it provides a means of thinking about the ways in which new electronic literary forms (for instance, the blog) are adapted from older ones, and also about how older forms get retrospectively transformed when they are appropriated by new ones. Price gives us a new way to read George Eliot-as both a darling and distruster of anthologists-but she also prods us to think more generally about critics as anthologists at a moment when both new electronic texts and the accumulated body of criticism and theory threaten to overwhelm.

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