



1993

Review Essay: Riche, Baarnabe. *Farewell to Military Profession*

Nancy A. Gutierrez
Arizona State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra>

 Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [History Commons](#), [Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Renaissance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gutierrez, Nancy A. (1993) "Review Essay: Riche, Baarnabe. *Farewell to Military Profession*," *Quidditas*: Vol. 14 , Article 33.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra/vol14/iss1/33>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quidditas by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Riche, Barnabe. *Farewell to Military Profession*. Publications of the Barnabe Riche Society no 1. Ed Donald Beecher. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies. Vol 91. Binghamton, N.Y. 1992. 336 pp, bib. \$28.00 / \$12.00.

This first publication of the Barnabe Riche Society, a series devoted to early English prose fiction, provides the first modern edition of a collection of novellas important in the literary history of prose fiction and, as the editor argues, of significant merit itself. Donald Beecher uses as his copy text the first edition of 1581, surviving in a single copy in the Bodleian Library, reaffirming the consensus of previous scholars that, with the exceptions of several minor changes to the fourth edition of 1606, this edition has the most authorial integrity. However, Beecher does not include a list of variants, sending scholars to Thomas Mabry Cranfill's facsimile edition of 1959 for variants differentiating the first five editions.

The value of this edition is the novellas themselves, for, with the exception of 'Apolonius and Silla', the second story in the collection, which was lucky enough to serve as a major source for Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, these stories have remained relatively inaccessible to a large reading public. Anthologies of early prose fiction generally overlook Riche; other than Collier's 1846 edition and Cranfill's facsimile edition, until now only microfilm copies of the *Farewell* were available.

Equally valuable is Beecher's extended introduction to the author and his work. While Beecher relies on Cranfill and Bruce's biography of Riche for the account of his life, he breaks new ground in his discussion of Riche's artistry — especially his use of sources, his treatment of the novella, and his relationship with his audience. This analysis is needed, since recent overviews of Renaissance fiction — Paul Salzman's *English Prose Fiction 1558–1700*, David Margolies's *Novel and Society in Elizabethan England*, and Arthur F. Kinney's *Humanist Poetics* — virtually ignore Riche's work.

One probable reason for the critical neglect of the *Farewell* is the perception that Riche merely plagiarized his stories from various translators of the Italian originals. Beecher counters this assessment by showing, in significant detail, how Riche *forged* his sources (Riche's own word), as a blacksmith does, 'by beating [his] parts together', creating original works of art 'through a program of allusion and inter-referentiality' (p 470). Beecher's close examination of Riche's creative process provides insight into that conundrum of the humanist regimen, the practice of imitation.

Riche's use of the novella is likewise original, not derivative, Beecher argues. The novella is primarily a 'a brief and witty tale of social intrigue' (p 34). Riche marries the novella and the conventions of romance, so that 'each story [is] a laboratory in which values are tested according to the mediations of wit or fortune, and arbitrated by the order of closure' (p 42). As the stories invariably turn on the issue of desire as a socially destabilizing force, the result is social comedy in which mythic structures interface with realistic issues and satiric comment.

Beecher uses the discussions of imitation and genre as a foundation to address the issue of Riche's relationship with his 'gentlewomen readers'. Given the erotic content of the tales as well as Riche's explicit stance as a storyteller eager to please the ladies, the relationship between male author and female readers may be reconfigured as that of suitor and mistress. Male readers, not formally addressed as an

audience, are of necessity placed on the outside of the process and become readers watching readers. This genderization of the act of reading thus become 'part of the rhetorical design', an extension of the cross-values in the stories themselves (p 60).

Beecher's edition of Riche's *Farewell to Military Profession* is a significant contribution to Renaissance studies, providing a text heretofore virtually inaccessible as well as a provocative and intelligent excursus into that text.

Nancy A. Gutierrez
Arizona State University

Sebald, Hans. *Der Hexenjunge. Fallstudie eines Inquisitionsprozesses*. Diagonal-Verlag, Marburg 1992. 115 pp.

Over the last decades the study of witchcraft has been of major concern for historians, theologians, and cultural anthropologists alike. Particularly Carlo Ginzburg's various analyses of inquisition reports have led the way towards a more comprehensive understanding of fundamental concepts involved in witchcraft. In *Der Hexenjunge*, Hans Sebald approaches the question in a similar manner by investigating a document from 1629, located in the Cornell University Library (Witchcraft Documents from Bamberg), containing the confessions of a nine-year-old boy about his alleged association with demons and witches. He was accused by the inquisitional authorities in Bamberg, Germany, where during his reign archbishop Johann Georg II pursued an extraordinarily brutal and inhumane witch-hunt.

Sebald paraphrases the confessions from its seventeenth-century German into modern German, although a simple transliteration would have been preferable and would have satisfied both the lay audience and the scholarly community. The author provides access to the manuscript and offers an interpretation of the boy's possible motives in coming up with some of his statements. Many of the boy's claims fit stereotypical images prevalent at his time, such as having been baptized by the devil, having travelled through the air on a fork to the witches' sabbath, or having enjoyed sexual contacts under the protection of the devil. Others, such as his report that on one of the rides his friend fell off into water and was transformed into a mouse, are unique. Apparently the boy reflected the general perceptions of witches prevalent in his society. Some claims, however, turn out to be simple crimes committed by the accused and other members of a gang to which he belonged.

For Sebald, the key to a proper understanding of the fanciful statements rests in the typical mythomania often found among prepubertarian children. Taking into account the boy's long imprisonment before his process, his obvious fear of torture, and his total submission under the authorities, the fabulous nature of his confession might be easily explained. But the adult inquisitors shared the same prejudices and superstitions and thus promoted, through their behavior, the boy's perception of the alleged events. In the last chapter, Sebald, analyzing on a different level, notices that various memories from the boy's childhood, as well as his experiences in the gang of young boys before he was apprehended, might have formed