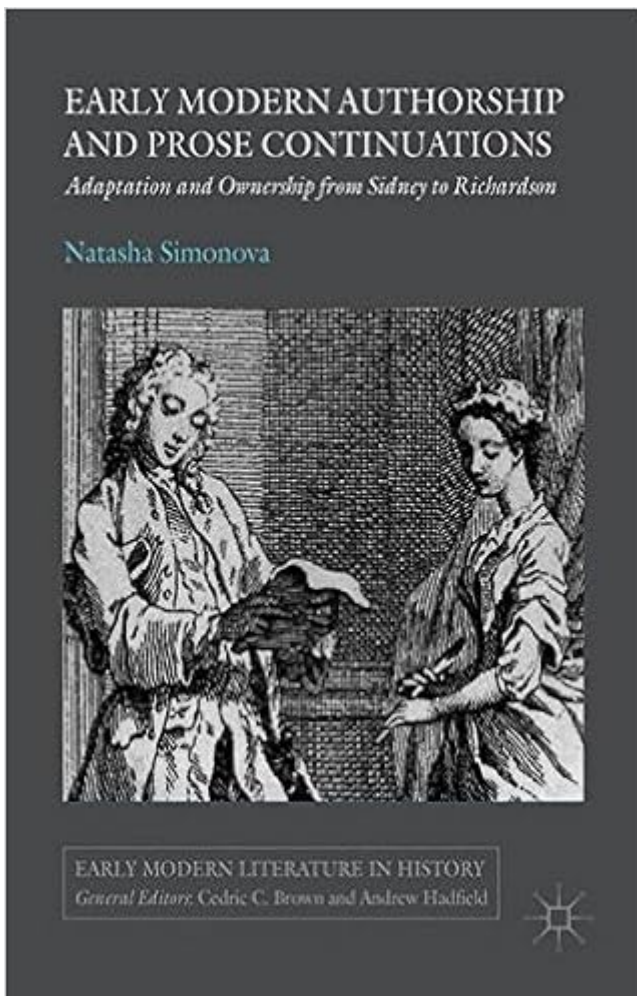


Natasha Simonova. *Early Modern Authorship and Prose Continuations: Adaptation and Ownership from Sidney to Richardson*



Natasha Simonova. [*Early Modern Authorship and Prose Continuations: Adaptation and Ownership from Sidney to Richardson*](#). Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. viii, 232p., ill. ISBN 9781137474124. Â£55 (hardback).

What does *Fifty Shades of Grey* have in common with Sidney's *Arcadia*? The question might at first seem absurd, but Natasha Simonova's new volume situates both texts within a long tradition of prose continuations, or what we today might call "fan fiction" – continuations of a narrative written by someone other than the story's original author. This study of prose continuations from the late sixteenth through the mid-eighteenth century provides an intelligent and nuanced intervention in the history of authorship. As Simonova points out, typically "continuations sit adjacent to without fully fitting into the history of debates about literary imitation, and are only rarely discussed as a discrete mode" (3). She expresses the hope that her work will enlarge and enrich the history of prose fiction and I, for one, believe she succeeds brilliantly.

The volume engages in a number of debates in early modern literary scholarship: the relationship between author and reader; manuscript and print culture; intellectual property rights; and tropes

(economic, moral and paternal) of the relationship between author and text. At its core, Simonova traces conceptions of literary property across a century and a half of literary history, focusing in particular on how the writers of continuations discuss the motivations for their work, how such continuations are marketed and received, and how the authors of the source texts (or their representatives) respond to them (234).

Each chapter serves as a case study of selected works. The examination begins with Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, its prose continuations, and the implications for the idea of the author in those continuations. Because the publication of the *Arcadia* was posthumous, the continuations were written in part as tributes to Sidney. At the time, copyright law referred to the labour put into the work; aesthetic concerns were hardly important. By the Restoration, however, competition had developed between the original authors "creative artistic geniuses" and those who wrote the prose continuations "hack labourers" and copyright protections increasingly developed an aesthetic tone. The last part of Simonova's study examines how Samuel Richardson attempted to take authorial control over *Clarissa* (by killing his protagonist) and *Pamela* as he denied the term "author" to the writers of the prose continuations. Richardson even went so far as to try to control the reception of his work among readers by speaking directly to them, much as Ben Jonson did with his poetry.

By necessity, Simonova examines paratextual materials such as advertisements and prefaces. She recognises the extent to which such materials engage in common tropes, but importantly goes on to explain the ways in which paratexts can tell us a great deal about how Early Modern writers and commentators perceived the act of literary continuation (24). A reader could wish more theoretical and practical justification for Simonova's reading practice here, but ultimately her scholarship and reading is convincing.

As to the question of fan fiction, Simonova shows how it began long before the internet. In fact, modern fan fiction might have more in common with manuscript culture than with print culture. For Simonova, the relationships between readers and writers in the early modern period and readers and writers over social media might be a difference more in degree than in kind.

Early Modern Authorship and Prose Continuations is an excellent piece of scholarship that will appeal to all SHARP members, especially those interested in the history of authorship, intellectual property, print culture and the history of the novel. It is well worth a space on any early modern scholar's shelf.

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