

1985

Brief Notice

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl>

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(1985) "Brief Notice," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 20: Iss. 1.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol20/iss1/19>

This Brief Notice is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in Scottish Literature* by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.

Brief Notice



Velma Bourgeois Richmond. *Muriel Spark*. New York: Frederick Ungar. 1984. x + 197 pp.

Velma Richmond's recent publication contributes to a growing appreciation for one of Scotland's most underrated contemporary novelists, Muriel Spark. The book provides a general overview of all of Spark's published writing as of 1984 and includes a short chronology for easy reference as well as a bibliography of Spark's writings, of interviews with Spark, and of selected books and articles on her.

Richmond first gives a chapter-long biographical sketch in which she places Spark's writing in the context of her developing artistry and increasing recognition. In her discussion of the novels, Richmond begins with and gives most attention to *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, considered Spark's "most distinctive and effective work" (p. 16). Richmond summarizes the novel as "an exposition of the dangers and evil of a life that is concentrated solely in self" (p. 23). Then, with Spark's first novel, *The Comforters*, Richmond proceeds chronologically, sandwiching a chapter "Poems, Plays, and Stories" between a

discussion of *Memento Mori* and *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. She completes her study with *The Only Problem* and a brief conclusion.

Richmond's reading is based on her sympathetic but balanced treatment of the Catholic influence in Spark's work. She describes Muriel Spark's conversion as "the single most important fact in her life" in that it "provided the novelist with the structure she needed" (p. 7). Richmond goes on to quote Spark's declaration that the Catholic faith had provided a norm for her viewpoint in her novels. Some of the chapter headings also reflect Richmond's perspective—"The Pilgrim Way," "The Darkening Vision," and "Purgatorial Uneasiness," for examples. In Richmond's point of view, Spark's talent has "provided an antidote to spiritual dryness" in the twentieth century (p. 180).

Richmond's study, though useful as a general introduction to Muriel Spark's writings, does not supplant other critical works. Her ideas, unfortunately, often find earlier statement in the studies of Derek Stanford (1963), Peter Kemp (1974), and others; and Ruth Whitaker's *Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (1982) provides a more detailed examination of religious influence in Spark's writing. Additionally, of course, in a survey of seventeen novels as well as stories, poems, and plays in fewer than 200 pages, analysis of each work is limited.

LAUREL E. ENSMINGER

Adam Smith. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Ed. J.C. Bryce. Oxford: Clarendon Press [New York: Oxford University Press]. 1983. ix + 37 + 243 pp.

The story of John M. Lothian's discovery of the MS. volumes of Adam Smith's lectures given in 1762-3 at the University of Glasgow chronicles one of the important discoveries of the century. Smith had destroyed all his own notes so we had only referential accounts of the lectures, but with their first publication in 1963 a little-known facet of Smith's teaching became public. Now J.C. Bryce has re-edited the text as part of the Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith.

Bryce notes two comments on Smith's attitude to note-taking:

a student (John Millar) claims that Smith did not object to the practice, but the obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* says that he was "fearful lest [his lectures] . . . should be transcribed and published . . ." and Bryce suggests that the notes were written up after the lectures. This may account for the brevity of some lectures—(e.g. #10, 2 1/4 pages); if this is so the unknown student evidently found Smith's last lecture, mostly on Greek and Roman orators, of great interest because he produced sixteen pages of notes.

In Greece, Rome, England and Scotland poetry preceded memorable prose Smith said, and brought his lecture up to date by referring to Macpherson's Ossianic "poems." He may well have been introduced to these by Hugh Blair who was a staunch defender of Macpherson. While the majority of Smith's references are to classical writers, it is comforting to find that English writers and statesmen are balanced by the inclusion of a number of their Scottish counterparts.

In keeping with the character of the edition, the critical apparatus has been enlarged from Lothian's edition with the addition and expansion of footnotes. The volume also contains the text of Smith's *Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages* (1761). Only proper names are included in the Index; the Introduction is not indexed. This important volume lives up to the high standards of the entire edition.

ALEXANDER FRASER