

The Search for Major John Richardson's Unknown Writings

David R. Beasley

Volume 113, numéro 2, fall 2021

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081112ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081112ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (imprimé)

2371-4654 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Beasley, D. R. (2021). The Search for Major John Richardson's Unknown Writings. *Ontario History*, 113(2), 167-194. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081112ar>

Résumé de l'article

Dans cet article nous allons identifier trois oeuvres anonymes écrites par le romancier Major John Richardson dont la paternité fut assignée à d'autres. Une connaissance approfondie des activités de Richardson, de ses amitiés et de ses aspirations en rapport avec ses écrits sera instrumentale à notre réflexion, ainsi que la nécessité d'une analyse du style et du contenu des textes en comparaison avec des oeuvres connues de Richardson, l'homme largement reconnu comme le père de la littérature canadienne..

The Search for Major John Richardson's Unknown Writings

by David R. Beasley

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, authors of books kept their identity secret and in place of their names was the word “anonymous”. Authors in the military embraced this practice because any sign of scholarship and achievement in the *belles arts* was frowned upon and could hurt their careers. Major Richardson, the subject of this essay, remarked, “The name of author is not reputable now-a-days, and especially for a military man.... Moreover, among persons of family and fortune, an author is considered a mere drudge,—a sort of literary mountebank at so much per sheet....”¹ Consequently, many of Richardson’s works have been found through detective work, following hints by contemporary writers and finding clues in the texts that align with Richardson’s background, activities and personal views² or in periodicals of the time or in

Abstract

This article will identify three anonymous works written by novelist Major John Richardson whose authorship has been assigned to others. A detailed knowledge of Richardson’s activities, friendships, and aspirations as related to his writings will be one tool; another will be an analysis of the style and matter of the texts as they compare to works known to have been written by Richardson, a man widely recognized as the father of Canadian literature.

Résumé: Dans cet article nous allons identifier trois œuvres anonymes écrites par le romancier Major John Richardson dont la paternité fût assignée à d’autres. Une connaissance approfondie des activités de Richardson, de ses amitiés et de ses aspirations en rapport avec ses écrits sera instrumentale à notre réflexion, ainsi que la nécessité d’une analyse du style et du contenu des textes en comparaison avec des œuvres connues de Richardson, l’homme largement reconnu comme le père de la littérature canadienne..

¹ *The Canadian Don Quixote; the Life and Works of Major John Richardson, Canada’s First Novelist* (Simcoe, Davus Publishing, 2004) 305, n, 42.

² *Confessions of Julia Johnstone* (London, Benbow, 1825) referred to an incident that Richardson described in another work; *Frascati’s* (Simcoe, Davus, 2004) from Colburn’s account of payments; “A Canadian Campaign” from a short passage in an old periodical.

the case of the long-lost *Westbrook* in a letter.³

This article will identify three anonymous works written by Richardson whose authorship has been assigned to others. A detailed knowledge of Richardson's activities, friendships, and aspirations as related to his writings will be one tool; another will be an analysis of the style and matter of the texts as they compare to works known to have been written by Richardson.

Of the three books, the two anonymous novels, *The Roué* and *The Oxonians*, which were written by the same person, will be examined first. The tone of the language, which defines the author's attitude to his subject, the figures of speech particular to him or her, sensory details, rhythm, dialogue, emotion, and descriptive abilities should identify the author.

Major John Richardson, born in Newark, Upper Canada (now Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario) in 1796 and regarded in his day and by many today as "the first Canadian novelist," struggled to bring culture to a nascent pioneer socie-

ty. He is best known for *Wacousta or, The Prophecy: a Tale of the Canadas*, dramatizing Chief Pontiac's siege of Fort Detroit in 1763. When



John Richardson

a teen-ager, he fought in the War of 1812 as a Gentleman Volunteer, and was captured when the Americans overran the British under General Henry Procter and American Indians led by Chief Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames in 1814. Freed at the war's end, he sailed with British regiments to confront Napoleon, who was defeated at the Battle of

Waterloo before his convoy arrived. He lived in London, England until sent to the West Indies in 1817 from which he returned to London at the end of 1818 to civilian life and pursued a journalistic career. From 1820 to 1827 he lived in Paris and traveled throughout Europe. He fought as a Major with the British Auxiliary Force in the Carlist War in Spain and in 1838 was back in Canada to cover the Mackenzie Rebellion for the *Times* of London. His life was turbulent, contentious and tragic. He died in New York City in 1852. He wrote the works examined here when living in Paris.⁴

³ *Westbrook, the Outlaw* (Simcoe, Davus, 2004) from a letter by Richardson;

⁴ After years of diligent research, a biography, issued in the 1970s, resurrected his adventurous life and literary achievements. David Beasley, *The Canadian Don Quixote; the Life and Works of Major John Richardson, Canada's First Novelist*, 2nd ed. (Simcoe, ON: Davus, 2004).

The Two Novels

A trolling of online indices to old American newspapers led me unexpectedly to an advertisement for Richardson's *Wacousta*, revised edition, inserted in the *New-York Daily Tribune* for 21 February 1851 by its publisher Dewitt and Davenport. It quoted from a review in the *Morning Star*, a New York City newspaper, praising *Wacousta* for its "great spirit" and "vigorous descriptions," adding: "Major Richardson is, we believe, the author of *The Roué*, a novel which made a great sensation in London over twenty years ago. It was attributed to Ainsworth and Bulwer-Lytton,⁵ but we believe there is no doubt that Richardson was the author. *Wacousta* is not inferior in interest to *The Roué* while it is less open to moral objection." Whoever wrote these words must have known Richardson and been assured that Richardson wrote *The Roué*.⁶

Major Richardson was in New York City. Arriving from Montreal in the fall of 1849, he sold his new novel *The Monk Night of St John* to a publisher, who

shortly afterward began reprinting his earlier novels, beginning with *Wacousta*. Its drama version had played throughout the years in the city's theatres and toured to other cities. The serialization of his novel *Hardscrabble* in *Sartain's Union Magazine*, the circulation of which skyrocketed as a result, contributed to his reputation as one of the colourful figures in the New York scene. The *New York Tribune* called *The Monk Knight of St John*, "THE MASTERPIECE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY" which was at odds with pejorative reviews in some papers throughout the country calling it "poisonous trash."

The novelist George Thompson wrote of Richardson's victimization by "unscrupulous publishers":

Want, privation and disappointment finally conquered him; he grew thin, and haggard, and melancholy, and reserved, and discouraged the visits of his friends who used to love to assemble at his humble lodgings and avail themselves of his splendid conversational powers, or listen to his personal reminiscences and racy anecdotes of military life.⁷

It is unlikely, however, that he would

⁵ Bulwer-Lytton, the English novelist, immortalized by the prize given in his name for the worst-written novel of the year, is claimed to have authored *The Roué* and its sequel *The Oxonians* by those selling reprints of them online. Bulwer's best novel, *Pelham*, about dandies and their vices, appeared anonymously to acclaim in 1828. The reading public soon learnt that he was its author; henceforth his novels carried the words "by the author of *Pelham*" which would have appeared on the title-pages of the later volumes of *The Roué* and *The Oxonians*. Bulwer, therefore, is ruled out as their author. Suggesting Harrison Ainsworth as their author was a wild guess; Ainsworth's discursive style could not be more different.

⁶ Probably what prompted this reference to its true authorship was the prospective reissue of *The Roué* in a cheap edition as "a domestic romance published in London twenty-four years ago by Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer" and advertised throughout the United States. (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, 27 June 1851). Shortly afterwards *The Oxonians, or the Hazards of Women, a Domestic Romance*, sequel to *The Roué*, was published, attributed to Sir E.L. Bulwer, author of *The Roué, Paroni.*, etc. (*The Star of the North*, 6 November 1851).

⁷ *My Life, or the Adventures of George Thompson Being the Autobiography of an Author, Written by*

have revealed his authorship of *The Roué* to them.

The proprietors of the *Morning Star* in 1851 were listed as the Williams brothers, Edward P. and H.L. There seemed to be no connection between them and Richardson.

Who could have written the review?

The novel in question, *The Roué; or The Hazards of Women*, published anonymously by Henry Colburn in three volumes in London, England, beginning in the spring of 1828 was followed by “a sequel”, a three-volume novel, *The Oxonians; A Glance at Society*, published in 1830 anonymously by Colburn with the words “by the author of *The Roué*.”

John Richardson arrived in London from Paris in the fall of 1827. Henry Colburn issued anonymously Richardson’s novel *Ecarté; or the Salons of Paris*, in 1829. Written with a realism rare in its day, about the gambling casinos and the confidence tricksters which preyed on English visitors, it won acclaim and severe criticism. The editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, Thomas Campbell, whose poem “Gertrude of Wyoming,” about the massacres of settlers by Indians, was widely read on both continents, accepted Richardson’s “A Canadian

Campaign” for serialization in 1826 to 1827. Colburn, who also published the *New Monthly*, took Campbell’s advice on all literary matters so that Campbell’s recommendation of *Ecarté* assured its publication.

Is it possible that Richardson, who had plenty of time to write while living on half-pay in the Paris of the Restoration period, brought the manuscripts of *The Roué* and *The Oxonians* with *Ecarté* to find an English publisher?⁸

The description of the funeral procession of Louis XVIII in late September, 1824 in *Ecarté* places its writing after that event, possibly in 1827 as it was published in December 1829. If Richardson was the author of *The Roué* and *The Oxonians*, he would have written them earlier. *The Roué’s* introduction, the last section to be written, ends with a quotation from the diary of the Arctic explorer Captain Lyon which appeared in 1824.⁹ *The Oxonians* would have been written immediately afterwards. Since publishers wanted only stories that dealt with the upper classes, Richardson chose the milieu well but innovated the treatment. Richardson’s novels *Ecarté* and *Frascati’s* kept the milieu but set it in France. The success of James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, inspired Richardson to write *Wacousta* and set him on the

Himself (1954) in George Thompson, *Venus in Boston and Other Tales of Nineteenth-Century City Life*, eds. David S. Reynolds and Kimberley R. Gladman (Amherst & Boston; University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 339-40.

⁸ Events recorded in his novel *Frascati’s; or, Scenes in Paris*, took place in Paris in the summer and fall of 1827, just before he returned to London. *Frascati’s* appeared in 1830, which suggests that he wrote the novel sometime after *Ecarté* was accepted for publication and before its publication late in 1829.

⁹ The Introduction was dated “1825”.

path to writing about North America

In addition to relating the novels' subject matter to Richardson's background and other writings, I quote passages from *The Roué* and *The Oxonians* to demonstrate similarities in style and thought to passages from Richardson's *Ecarté* but primarily to establish the intentions common to them and extraneous connections which identify the idiosyncrasies linking them.

Similarities in Descriptions

Part from giving the reader an idea of the novels' story lines, passages illustrate his descriptive abilities. Richardson's writing style is vigorous, in long sentences with successive clauses extending the meaning of the first, and sharpness of observation revealing an active sensitivity, sometimes with ironic humour. The rhythm as if sailing on a sea with undulations as each successive clause extends the voyage is as natural to these novels as in all his work. Regard an example from Richardson's novel *Wacousta*:

His own surprise and disappointment may be easily conceived, when, in the form of the recumbent being who seemed to engross universal attention, he recognized, by the fair and streaming hair, and half exposed bosom, the unfortunate being whom, only two hours previously, he had spurned from his feet in the costume of her own sex, and reduced, by the violence of her grief, to almost infantine debility.¹⁰

His humour is caught in a sentence from his novel *Frascati's* describing a con man stealing out of a boarding house to avoid paying:

The side-pockets of his outer coat were, moreover, filled with other moveables, and projected from his hips like the paddles of a steamboat; and with all this sail hoisted, to use a nautical phrase, he was preparing to depart, when, unluckily, his enormous figure caught the vigilant eye of the portress, who naturally imagining so much clothing to be somewhat superfluous at such a broiling season of the year, now thought proper to lay an embargo on a vessel that to all appearance was leaving port without a license.¹¹

His style's forthrightness distinguishes it from the milder, circumspect style of authors conscious of staying within the moral strictures of that time. It has a formal sense that reflects his personality as a military man and it is direct in its realism as in the sentence beginning the action in *Wacousta*: "It was during the midnight watch, late in September, 1761, that the English garrison of Detroit, in North America, was thrown into the utmost consternation by the sudden and mysterious introduction of a stranger within its walls."

In the first quoted sentence from *Wacousta*, Richardson's use of words like "recumbent" and "infantine debility" and phrases "spurned from his feet" and "engross universal attention" raise his prose to the level of an educated reader while seizing attention by their inten-

¹⁰ John Richardson, *Wacousta* (Ottawa, Tecumseh, 1998), 117.

¹¹ John Richardson, *Frascati's* (Simcoe, ON, Davus, 2004), 161.

sity. The metaphors in the sentence from *Frascati's* such as "to lay an embargo," "leaving port," and similes "like the paddles of a steamboat" are apt and exhibit his descriptive ability and imagination.

The Roué depicts the molding of young ladies into cold, insensitive and purposively uneducated innocents ripe to be victimized by designing, unscrupulous rich men whose nature is also fashioned by their society. A sentence, chosen as an example of the style, from the first chapter of *The Roué* catches the reflections of a mother as she sees her daughter Agnes' excitement while waiting to attend the theatre. Its length gives it a rolling sensation similar to Richardson's writing. Words like "perpetual probation," and "subsequent blight," and the metaphor "the shrine of filial duty" are, like the ones quoted above, erudite and convey the emotions, in this case the resignation and sadness of the mother just as Richardson's figures of speech convey urgency in the mysterious situation in *Wacousta* and the comicality of the failure to escape in *Frascati's*.

Perhaps, too, her imagination traced, with that power which it has of collecting and remembering the events and condensing results of whole years into the space of a moment, the long series of coldness by which all these young feelings had been checked and deadened, from the period of her sacrificing her first love at the shrine of filial duty and affection, to that in which she was now sitting, herself the mother of a being possessed

of all those feelings, by the encouragement and the subsequent blight of which she had been condemned to a life of perpetual probation; and she almost wished that the heart of her darling Agnes was as cold as the world in which it was created to exist.¹²

Agnes falls in love with Augustus Clifton, "a poet of impulse rather than education." Her father dying unexpectedly, she, out of need, must marry into riches. Clifton, broken-hearted, gives her up to Mr. Fleming who marries Agnes for her family connections. "...his vanity was delighted to think that a little hour would see him the cousin by marriage to at least one-sixth of the coroneted heads of the kingdom."¹³

The last sentence of light sarcasm is a characteristic of Richardson's humour such as this line from *Ecarté*: "On a mind like Madame Dorjeville's, however, these impressions could not long remain."¹⁴

The designs of rich men to seduce beautiful women of social standing with the aid of unscrupulous females looking for revenge either for personal wrongs or out of jealousy carries to the next generation when Mrs. Agnes Fleming dies just before hosting a great fete and her true love, Clifton, returns from fifteen lucrative years in India as a Baron. Young Agnes, the most intelligent of her two daughters, becomes the object of desire for Sir Robert Leslie, a rich, sophisticated, well-educated, much admired corrupter of women returned from twenty

¹² *The Roué* (New York: Collins and Hannay, 1828), 11.

¹³ *The Roué*, v.1, 32.

¹⁴ *Ecarté*, 295.

years on the Continent.

His eye met those of the person he was speaking to with the full gaze of conscious honesty; and like that of many of his caste, it never had any peculiar expression when he was addressing even the woman he had determined to make his victim. Yet a close observer might, in the midst of this apparent openness, have discovered a sinister expression, almost imperceptible, and might perceive at intervals his gaze fixed upon some female form, as though he were measuring its fair proportions, and calculating upon the pleasures which its possession might be supposed to bestow.¹⁵

Richardson's *Ecarté* tells of French noblemen using young women of the demimonde to induce Englishmen to gamble away their fortunes in the casinos. The novel dramatizes hypocrisy, betrayal and despair in a world of callous indifference. The writing has the same close observation as in *The Roué*. For instance, compare Richardson's description of the Comte de Hillier, whom Clifford Delmaine, the protagonist of *Ecarté*, must duel:

This nobleman was now in his twenty-sixth year; his person would have been accounted good, had not the natural elegance of his figure been destroyed by an offensive carelessness of carriage, strikingly expressive of insolence and disdain. His features, also, were regular, and would have been considered handsome, had it not been for the contemptuous curl which not merely played around the lip, but contracted the muscles of his face, even unto distortion of the countenance, and the fiend-like expression of his

eyes, which were dull and glassy, and filled with malignant cunning. His rank and fortune had given him access to the first society in Paris; but such was the brutal ferocity of his nature, that more than one member of that society had found reason to curse the hour of his introduction, in lamenting the untimely fall of some dear friend or relative by his ruthless hand. Urged by a wanton thirst for notoriety, and priding himself on a dexterity in the use of weapons, which none of the young men around him could succeed in attaining, he often deliberately and without provocation, fastened insults on the inexperienced, which led to results almost ever fatal in their character to the latter.¹⁶

These characterizations are vivid and the styles are similar, that is, the long sentences using semicolons to further define the initial descriptive phrase or to counter it with a pejorative observation. The language in *The Roué* describing Leslie's lascivious gaze calculating the pleasures at possessing the woman's "fair proportions" stretched the bounds of propriety. The immediacy of the language in *Ecarté*, however, has a different aim, killing by duel, with the same concentrated emotion, and, probably meeting objection from gentlemen readers of the day. Both are examples of sensory details, effecting sensation. In the sense of violent conflict between characters, nascent emotions lead to tragedy. In the sensual sense, Richardson took such emotions to fuller expression with rape in *Wacousta*, serial rape in *Westbrook, the Outlaw* and insatiable erotic love in *The Monk Knight of St John*.

¹⁵ *The Roué*, 213.

¹⁶ *Ecarté*, 69.

A Similar Comic Sense

There is in *The Roué* a sense of the comic which would identify a writer of comic farces as its author:

...Henry Pomeroy was overcome; he flew to the sofa; he threw his arms round her; pressed her to his bosom; whispered a thousand vows of constancy and of affection; and would perhaps have proceeded in his promise to the extent of Miss Wheeler's wishes, when his love and her arts were astonished into silence by the sudden apparition of the countenance of Agnes, peeping over the back of the sofa.¹⁷

Richardson exhibits the same comic sense in *Ecarté* when describing passengers in the ferry crossing the English Channel in rough seas:

The list was here interrupted by a movement on the part of the gentleman, who, disengaging his arm with extreme violence, withdrew the necessary equilibrium from his companion. Falling in a singular position, this unfortunate personage now left exposed to view a pair of legs, which might have served as representatives of those of the knight of Windsor. At this moment, a sudden plunge of the vessel threw the tall gentleman off his legs, and immediately across the body of the lady, offering to the admiration of the delighted passengers, a more animated figure of a cross than had ever before been represented in a similar manner. Their arms, meanwhile, were far from proving unnecessary appendages, those of the lady being warmly employed in boxing the fallen culprit's ears; while those of the latter, more peaceably disposed, caught at every object within his reach, in order to extricate him from his situation.¹⁸

¹⁷ *The Roué*, 103.

¹⁸ *Ecarté*, 5-6.

Richardson's Declaration for Realism

The introduction to *The Roué* decries artifice which "annihilates the feeling which originally existed." "We would have women creatures of nature, as well as of education: we would have their hearts as well as their heads cultivated...." These sentiments may be found throughout Richardson's writings. From *Ecarté* through to *The Monk Knight of St John*, in which he exclaimed that "women were the slaves of men," he defended women caught in the chains of a society controlled by men.

Although fashioning his writing to the publishers' view that the lives of the upper classes had to be described, at least in part, to interest the readers of the day, Richardson's motive was artistic. He wanted to change the dominant themes of light fantasy in literature to realism. The savagery of his war experiences in addition to the prevailing thought in France after the excesses of the Revolution that influenced contemporary writers such as Balzac and Stendhal influenced him. He wrote in *Ecarté*:

Whoever has taken up these volumes with the expectation of meeting with a detail of more than ordinary incidents, or discovering more than ordinary perfection in the leading characters, will be disappointed. We pretend not to enter the lists of those who have the happy art of divesting their heroes and heroines, of all the weaknesses common to human nature, and clothing them in such bril-

liancy of wisdom and virtue as to render it a task of difficulty to determine whether they should belong to earth or heaven. The characters in our story are such as are to be met with every day, and we are inclined to hope that we should not be utterly unsuccessful in our attempt to render them natural, since many of the events are furnished by our own experience.¹⁹

A similar avowal is made in the "Introduction" to *The Oxonians*:

The philosophy of human nature is the history of the passions; a novel should be the history of the actions inspired by, and of the consequences resulting from them; and one of the grand criterions of a good novel is, when the generality of readers can exclaim, 'So should I have acted;' 'So should I have thought;' and 'So do I feel.' *The Oxonians* is written upon this principle; there are no immaculate heroes, no angelic heroines. It is a simple picture of every-day existence; and its *dramatis persona* are characters that may be recognized in any extensive circle of acquaintance in an every-day world. It is a history of those passions and follies that fill up and give their colour to the scenes of life with an attempt to give those passions and follies their true names, and to strip them of that false varnish, with which a youthful imagination and the sophistry of the times, are too apt to conceal their tendency and to gloss over their deformity.²⁰

These words set out an originality and realism unknown to the English reader and challenged the fantasy romances written by the likes of Letitia Landon and the critics who supported them in alliance with their publishers. Richardson's *Ecar-*

té warned its readers of the dangers of gambling by describing young Englishmen being fleeced in the Parisian casinos and, losing all, drowning themselves in the Seine River. Ministers referred to it in their sermons as showing the depths to which young Englishmen could be led when indulging in this reckless pastime. "His very faults" wrote Richardson as an epigraph to the novel, "shall afford amusement and under them he may, without the formality of a preceptor, communicate instruction."²¹

The introduction to *The Oxonians* reinforces this moral role of the novel:

The author is tempted into these preliminary observations by the fate of the "*Roué*," which was cried up by some critics as an important lesson to the libertine, and abused by others for its immoral tendency; while even those who praised it most, could not let the poor author escape without a pretty broad hint, that experience alone could have dictated its pages. An author's own opinion of his work can, of course, have very little influence; but his avowal of his meaning ought to have some weight: and if the author of the «*Roué*» has himself any knowledge of the intentions with which that work was written, they were decidedly such as would have helped that great cause, which a man who writes at all ought never to neglect even a humble endeavour to advance. An author can as little hope to reform a vice without an exposition of the scenes and circumstances connected with its indulgence, as a surgeon can expect to cure a wound from the disgusting appearance of which he may shrink with a sensation of false delicacy. If a *Roué* had

¹⁹ Richardson, Major John, *Ecarté; or the Salons of Paris* (Simcoe, Davus Publishing, 2004), 80.

²⁰ *The Oxonians, a glance at society* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830) v.1, x.

²¹ *Ecarté*, title page.

been depicted without his vices, he would no longer have been a Roué; and if his character had been palliated by any redeeming virtues, that could have excited an interest in his fate, the moral lesson would have been lost.²²

This defence of picturing the realities of society in *The Roué* serves also as a retort to the most prominent critic of that day who declared *Ecarté*, which appeared a year earlier, “unfit to be seen beyond the precincts of the stews” and its “libertine and licentious author... a contemptible talent.”²³ Such a damning review was rare. William Jerdan of the *Literary Gazette* wrote it to attack the editor of a competing journal whom he thought was its author. When, at a literary party, unaware that Richardson authored *Ecarté*, he asked Richardson to take wine with him, Richardson introduced himself as the author, which caused Jerdan to turn away in embarrassment. In the introduction to *The Oxonians* Richardson would have given no hint that he was *Ecarté*'s author by writing a stronger defence, yet the reviews of *The Roué* were universally full of praise and seemed not to call for rebuttal, although there may have been some minor criticism, which gives credence to the supposition that *Ecarté* was on his mind when he wrote the introduction to *The Oxonians*.

“*The Roué* is a novel of talent; gay in its gaiety, sprightly in its wit, touching in its pathos, highly wrought, elaborate,

and strongly coloured,” wrote *The Atlas* in a review covering four long columns.²⁴ “We should unreservedly praise the work for the acuteness, the talent, and the abilities, of which it is full. The character of Agnes, the heroine, is particularly depicted,” wrote Jerdan’s *Literary Gazette*.²⁵ Months after *Ecarté* appeared several papers carried a notice about *Ecarté*, possibly in response to Jordan’s criticism, similar to this in the *Sun* of 1 March 1831: “The work under this title must not be considered as a fiction. It was sketched in the midst of the dissipated scenes which form its subject. We are assured that imagination has not been called in aid; for every incident and scene was witnessed, and every character is from the life.” Reviews of *The Oxonians* emphasized a like faithfulness to real life: “This novel abounds in fun; full of the most laughable and whimsical situations, and cannot fail to amuse every class of readers, while the portraits drawn by the author are recognized by every one at all conversant with Life in London.” (*London Courier and Evening Gazette*); “... a work, at present in such high request, especially among our young Nobility, is rather a series of portraits whose originals are to be found every day in this busy metropolis precisely as the author has represented them. Who but must recognize the gay gallant Lothario, Lord A., and the turf-loving Lascelles?” (*Morning Post*); “... ex-

²² *The Oxonians*, vi.

²³ *The Canadian Don Quixote*, 68-69.

²⁴ *Atlas (The London)*, 6 April 1828.

²⁵ *Literary Gazette*, as cited in the books advertised in various newspapers.

hibiting a knowledge of life rarely to be found in the pages of fiction.” (*London Courier and Evening Gazette*).

A Satire of Society's Prominent Figures

Would Richardson be likely to choose characters from English high society and graduates of Oxford University as depicted in *The Roué* and *The Oxonians*? In *Ecarté*, the main protagonist graduates from Cambridge University and travels to the Continent with his uncle, a baronet. Richardson's youthful experiences gave him insights into the “idle rich.” As a nineteen-year old war veteran of the American wilderness in 1815, Richardson was welcomed as a novelty into English social life. As one of the hangers-on of the fabulously rich Pea-Green Hayne, he ran with the dandies of the day. At that time he challenged to a duel in Hyde Park a fellow officer whom, he thought, slandered the beauty and the accomplishments of the young actress Eliza Vestris and, thereby, the honour of her quondam lover, his friend Captain Henry Cole, whose son later founded the Victorian and Albert Museum. This incident indicates his closeness to theatre, actors and their patrons. His fast life reaching into the sporting pastimes in the provinces acquainted him with the gambling dens where he participated in games like *écarté*. Captain Boldero, as a parliamentarian defending Richardson's

reputation in the House of Commons in 1837, recalled knowing him well twenty-two years earlier,²⁶ which attests to the wide reach of Richardson's activities.

Would he wish to write about the hypocrisies and callousness of the insouciant upper classes? His disdain for high society is clearly expressed in his poem “Kensington Gardens in 1830” satirizing the bon ton who gather to show off their charms.²⁷

*Here mothers group to get their daughters
mated,
(A goodly brood from thirty to sixteen)
While wives of twenty, with their husband
sated,
Seek out wherewith to lay their rising spleen.*

As for the men:

*Some have the thrilling tone—the lisp mel-
lodious,
Others the loud coarse laugh which proves their
Spirit,
And so on to the end; the sly Asmodeus,
Who stole through house-tops like a thief or
ferret,
Could scarce have shown so much to Don
Cleofas
As they recount of easy dames and sofas.*

The Oxonians depicts retribution the libertine cannot escape.

Who is that pale-faced, haggard-looking man, half genteel, half shabby, but whose habiliments, worn as they are, cannot hide the air of the gentleman?” he might, perhaps, enquire. “That,” Asmodeus would reply, “is, once like yourself, possessed of wealth,

²⁶ *The Canadian Don Quixote*, 131.

²⁷ *Kensington Gardens in 1830; A Satirical Trifle by the Author of Ecarté* (London, Marsh and Miller, 1830).

youth, talents, and a princely fortune, squandered away at the shrine of vanity, bestowed upon false and ungrateful friends, or won by unprincipled sharpers; till, as his fortune diminished his friends dwindled away, and you see him now out upon a day rule from the King's Bench, to flit like a ghost about the scene of his former unworthy triumphs, and to extract a guinea from the unwilling hands among which the principal part of his own fortune has been distributed.²⁸

Asmodeus spies from the rooftops in Richardson's poem and in *The Oxonians* he is a knowing commentator. Asmodeus, a character in Lesage's *Diable Boiteux*, of playful malice, carries his companion Cleofas through the air and shows him the inside of houses where they see what is being done. Witty and engaging, Asmodeus cannot hide his fiendish nature. He represents in both these works a sense of malignity, hinting at betrayal, by disclosing the seediness of a society in which the author took part—not unusual for authors.²⁹

Richardson fashioned his poem after Lord Byron's terza rima. A description in *The Roué* would fit into his poem:

The London winter "commencing in July" as Lord Byron satirically observes, had now begun. The streets of St James rattled beneath the carriages of the wealthy and fashionable and the dust of Hyde Park flew in clouds beneath the horses of the élegants, who equestrianised and tiblurized and caberiolized, in the short intervals between a breakfast at two and a dinner at eight.³⁰

He idolized Byron and quoted him on occasion—for instance, the first sentence of his essay, "A Trip to Walpole Island and Port Sarnia in the Year 1848"—"On Monday, the 9th of October (as Byron has it "I like to be particular in dates") the small steamer Hastings arrived at Windsor from Amherstburg..."³¹ Verses from Byron's poems served as epigraph to *The Roué* and head the first chapter.

Another literary coincidence occurs in *The Oxonians*, when the author writes: "They seem to consider it as Young imagines mankind look upon death, when he says, 'All men think all men mortal but themselves.'"³² Richardson chose a line from a work of Edward Young, the English poet and playwright, author of *Complaint or Night Thoughts* as the epigraph

²⁸ *The Oxonians*, 225.

²⁹ It seems more than a coincidence, even a conscious association, that a review of Richardson's *Frascati's*, the last of the four novels to be published, should refer to Asmodeus: "Sun (London) 6 November 1830 This day was published, in 3 vols. FRASCATI'S, or SCENES in PARIS. Like a second 'Diable Boiteux,' the author of 'Frascati's' unroofs the homes of a busy capital, and shows us the secrets of every place of human resort. There is, however, a mansion more difficult to 'expose as in a mirror,' and it is this which the author makes us thoroughly acquainted with—the human breast—the mansion of the passions, which are here drawn in all their variety, from the repose of maiden virtue and loveliness, in the duties and affections of private life, to the agitations created by an indulgence in the worst vices of society. (*Court Journal*. Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street). Perhaps Richardson wrote for the *Court Journal*.

³⁰ *The Roué*, p.126.

³¹ *Major Richardson's Short Stories* (Penticton, B.C.; Theytus, 1985). "A Trip to Walpole Island and Port Sarnia, in the Year of 1848," 113.

³² *The Oxonians*, v.1, 74.

to *Wacousta*: "Vengeance is still alive...."

As noted above in the three novels preceding the publication of *Frascati's*, their satirizing of social figures was reported in the press as all in good humour³³ until this note appeared in the *Morning Post* on Saturday, 16 October 1830:

Frascati's—A singular circumstance, it is said, attended the production of this satirical Novel in Paris. A translation was, with great activity, prepared and printed, but so averse were the gambling Roues of that metropolis to the exposure in their native language of their iniquities, that a subscription was made for the purpose of buying up all the copies before publication.

A Worldly Education

References are made by Sir Leslie to literary and philosophical figures of the ancient and modern worlds in *The Roué* as does Lord Arlington, a wealthy dilettante and sybarite, in *The Oxoni-ans*. Richardson, coming from the backwoods of Canada, would seem to lack such knowledge. He, however, studied the classics in school,³⁴ learned during his war years from his fellow officers of the educated British class and from sophisticated English theatre and cafe society. Apart from studying at the Royal

Military College on his return from the West Indies, as we believe,³⁵ he associated with journalists, authors and musicians in London before settling in Paris at the age of 24 where he mingled with the intelligentsia. He spoke fluent French that admitted him to Paris society and the company of artists and intellectuals such that he called Paris "the intellectual capital of the world." (His co-author of *Frascati's* and his friend in Paris was the Irish philosopher, Justin Brennan, who wrote a book contrasting the philosophies of Aristotle and Francis Bacon). Having a quick and curious mind, he would have visited in his travels about Europe the sites and monuments that Lord Arlington comments upon. As someone who defended his honour with duels, Richardson knew well the protocol for duelling described in *The Roué*, *The Oxoni-ans*, and *Ecarté*.

In *The Roué* Sir Leslie has led Agnes' young husband, who worships him, to gamble away his wealth, as happens in *Ecarté* when the hero Delmaine is ruined at the gaming tables by the encouragement of his supposed friend De Forsac. Just as Leslie wants Agnes to lose faith in her husband so that she may become his prey, De Forsac has designs on Delmaine's fiancé and hopes to discredit him

³³ *Ecarté, or the Salons of Paris*. "We understand that several well-known characters about town are portrayed in the forthcoming novel of *Ecarté* which will be found as descriptive of those of our countrymen who are in the habit of frequenting the gay salons of Paris, as it is of our more lively neighbours. The author, who has seen much of French female society, is said to have depicted in strong colours the dangerous influence of their fascinations on young Englishmen." *London Evening Standard* Tuesday, March 1829.

³⁴ "I had been oftener flogged than the greatest dunce in it... given me such a disgust for Virgil, Horace and Euclid..." John Richardson, *Eight Years in Canada* (Yorkshire, S.R. Publishers, 1967), 97.

³⁵ See the second part of this essay dealing with *The Lucubrations of Humphrey Ravelin*.

in her eyes.

Richardson's writing becomes emotionally powerful when betrayal and duplicity are pictured. His sharp satire expresses his disgust at hypocrisy. The three dramatic novels are brought to a high pitch when the men's dishonesty causes the deaths of the women they deserted.

Leslie writes to his licentious friend Fred Villars his thoughts, passions and plans to seduce women which was an imaginative way of keeping up the suspense while exploring character and motive in depth. *The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*³⁶ printed Leslie's last letter as "the Death-bed scene of the hero" from this work of "an extraordinary character" in which "every page abounds with the energy of a masterly hand." The letters have an informal style: "Compare the raciness—the strength—the nerve of these old playwrights, Fred, with the namby-pamby poesy, crow quilled in a lady's album, and you have a just comparison between the passion with which this Agnes has inspired me and those which I have ever felt for other women."³⁷ A letter from one confidence trickster to another in *Frascati's* is in a similar familiar style but catches the character of a very different person: "I can think of nothing but the extraordinary talent of the gentleman to whom I had the pleasure of being introduced last evening. So completely have his charming numbers absorbed

every faculty of my mind, so deeply have they fixed themselves in my memory, that I cannot refrain from repeating them to everyone I meet."³⁸ In *Ecarté* Richardson uses the letter device a few times in French and English to convey the relationships between the characters.

Richardson's versatility is evident in his development of plot. He did not plan his novels by working out the plot that he would write but spun the action like a spider's web as he went along.³⁹ Agnes's husband suicides owing to his debt; Leslie grudgingly marries Agnes but is discovered to be married to a young singer and flees to the Continent where in a misunderstanding he is killed by Fred Villars in a duel.

The principle of *Ecarté* and *Frascati's* was to warn the young Englishman of the dangers on the continent. Richardson would observe innocent young Englishmen destroyed by tricksters at the gaming tables, duped by flattering con-men and tricked into a false marriage. *The Oxonians* criticizes Oxford graduates for being educated in the classics and thus unprepared to meet the dangers of the world.

"We condemn that system which considers a man sufficiently educated when it turns him out a mere classical scholar, without any thoughts whether he is to be a statesman, a lawyer, a divine, or a merchant; and which sends him into life with no other knowledge

³⁶ 26 April 1828.

³⁷ *The Roué*, (New York, Collins and Hanney, 1828), 163.

³⁸ *Frascati's*, 112.

³⁹ *The Canadian Don Quixote*, 237.

of the world he is to pass through, than what he may glean from the false representations of companions as gay as himself; but who, by having shown a bolder or more daring spirit, have from time to time broke through the scholastic bounds, dashed into dissipations of the moment, and brought down to their fellow-collegians, ideas of life gleaned from some demirep of fashion, some roué of the town, or, what is still worse, from some of those who are denominated in modern language, 'the fancy.' The morals inculcated by the ancients lose their effect from their coming in the shape of a task; and Seneca, Xenophon, and Cicero, are considered by the young student as bores rather than as philosophers. We could ourselves point out more than half a dozen Oxonians, now spending a wretched and reckless existence on the Continent, who may trace the ruin of their fortunes and prospects to the connections formed, and inclinations imbibed during these occasional trips; and some half dozen others, who, from having been launched at once from the learned ignorance of a college into the great world, whose inexperience has fallen a prey either to the villainy of others, or to the intemperance of their own passions. And this must always be the case while the present system continues; while, if a boy pursues the usual routine of Eton and Oxford, he learns nothing of actual life, or only that very worst part of it of which he can gain an insight only by stealth... the stirring spirit of the present age requires active knowledge as well as passive literature.⁴⁰

As for dialogue, in *The Roué*, *The Oxonians* and *Ecarté* the characters speak in the argot of their class easily. The richer class converses in French on occasion as if the author expects the English reader

to know the language. Richardson knew it from childhood. Since *Ecarté* is set in Paris, the reader could expect to encounter some French. *The Roué*, however, uses French to distinguish the sophistication of the well-traveled upper classes in conversing with their fellow English. Sir Leslie confesses in French to his friend Fred Villars as he dies.

Characters in *Ecarté* and *The Oxonians* have names in common. In *The Oxonians* Caroline Dormer is seduced by a young graduate of Oxford, who cannot marry her because she is of a lower rank. Frederick Dormer in *Ecarté*, a close friend of Clifford Delmaine, warns him about the habit-forming power of gambling at cards. A character in *The Oxonians* is named Dorville. In *Ecarté* Madame Dorjeville and her daughter Adeline are major characters.

In *The Oxonians* seduction and ruination are again themes, this time of the daughter of Caroline Dormer, who is brought up by an exploiting French couple. Called Agnese, she becomes a successful singer and is in danger of falling in love with the illegitimate son of the lecherous Lord Arlington, who plans to disgrace her to stop his son from marrying her. The string of discoveries by one character after another that he or she is really the father or mother of those whom they have plotted to destroy is characteristic of farcical comedy but is not farcical. The author wrote in *The Oxonians*:

And now having led on this digressing dis-

⁴⁰ *The Oxonians*, v.1, 79.

sertation till I dare say the whole of what the French call the 'beau sexe' are disgusted by being compared to an oyster, we will proceed with our history, if that can be called a history which must consist of detached scenes and of desultory observations on life as it really passes, without any of those violent incidents and extraordinary interests which are the greatest characteristics of pages of fiction.⁴¹

Richardson's *Frascati's* with the subtitle of *Scenes in Paris* embodies this description of detached scenes and ordinary observation. Of the two well-off Irishmen, dunned by a ring of confidence tricksters, one, Rambleton Morris, infatuated with his writing, relates the narrative in his diary. The chief rogue is Major Nimbleton, a confidence-trickster non-pareil and a literary figure as notable as Harold Skimpole and Mr. Micawber. Betrayal in love and the danger of gambling at cards play out under the surveillance of a police force alert to disturbance in the Restoration period. Different from the moral imperative of *Ecarté*, it sees the world with a satirical slant, which is echoed in *The Roué*:

Love is no longer the buoyant, pure, and generous passion, that has excited the hearts, which experienced it to the greatest actions to accomplish its gratification, but is a mere word generally used, only because it is found in the vocabulary of our language with a particular meaning attached to it, as certain law-terms are still in vogue, although the spirit which rendered them necessary has long since expired like those who by artificial

light put out that of the day; so have we, by borrowed forms and fashions, destroyed the sunlight of our own natural and best feelings.... In short, love, friendship, feeling of every kind, are all under the prescriptive rules of society.⁴²

Hypocrisy and predatory vices in society, as portrayed in *The Roué* and *The Oxonians*, appeared in Richardson's writings throughout his life. His last great novel, *The Monk Knight of St John*, recognized the treachery in society's attitude to love but cried out against it in one glorious triumph of sexual and spiritual love entwining the Monk Knight and the Baroness Ernestina in Auvergne of the twelfth century. He vented his pessimism in the anonymous pamphlet *Lola Montez*, the last of his publications: "That this world is made up of villainy, hypocrisy, and selfishness, none but the simple can doubt. The experience of each day proves it, and the further we advance in the path of what the world terms civilization, the more apparent does it become."⁴³

Would the two novels critical of English high society stand a better chance of publication if passed off as the works of a playwright who depicted that society?

A Competitor for Authorship

The authoritative British Library ascribed *The Roué* to Samuel Beazley, architect and playwright, and *The Oxonians* to "S. Beazley, the younger." The Library bracketed the author's name in both instances to indicate its attribution

⁴¹ *The Oxonians*, v.1, 90.

⁴² *The Roué*, 5.

⁴³ *Lola Montes* (New York, 1851), passim

to another source and not positive.

Samuel Beazley's background may give clues that establish him as their author. A restlessness drove him to be constantly on the move, dashing from one place to another and enjoying women's attentions wherever he went. He abandoned his first wife after a year of marriage to pursue an affair with an actress, who after ten years left him to marry a titled gentleman. To obtain a divorce his first wife had to cast Beazley as a sleazy adulterer. He obliged. The Court found that he "held... correspondence with lewd and wicked women."

Samuel Beazley also knew Vestris, who hired him to modernize the auditorium and stage of her Adelphi Theatre. Beazley was called "highly sociable, equally at ease among actors and dramatists in the Drury Lane green room as among fashionable society—good-tempered, clever, generous and eccentric."⁴⁴ Would he have encountered the young adventurer Lieutenant John Richardson? They had a friend in common—Theodore Hook, the playwright, journalist and novelist. In 1815 the Berner Street Hoax of 1810 was still talked about. That concerned Beazley's challenge to Theodore Hook to transform any house in London as the most talked-about address within a week. Hook sent out letters in the

name of the resident at 54 Berners Street requesting deliveries, visitors and assistance. Hundreds of persons—including tradesmen, doctors, lawyers, priests, the Governor of the Bank of England, the Duke of York, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Mayor of London—arrived at the address on 27 November. Years later Hook recommended to his publisher Richardson's novel *Jack Brag in Spain* as a follow-up to Hook's novel about Jack Brag, a social climber who reaches high command in the British Auxiliary Legion in Spain, to which Richardson had been attached.⁴⁵ Richardson's friendships with actors, their lovers and friends would have brought him into contact with Samuel Beazley. His friendship with Hook, dating back to his early days in journalism, made it likely that Beazley was an acquaintance.

Gorel Garlick's *The Theatre Designs and Plays of Samuel Beazley 1786-1851*⁴⁶ states that she thinks Beazley in *The Roué* was exploring the concept of adultery, as perceived among fashionable Regency society, as if it were justifying licentiousness. She links it to his second wife's reforming influence by its dedication "To One Whose Conduct and Influence are recommended as the best and surest Means for the Reformation of a Roué."⁴⁷ She describes *The Oxonians*

⁴⁴ Gorel Garlick, *To serve the purpose of the drama: the theatre designs and plays of Samuel Beazley, 1786-1851*. (London: Society for Theatre Research, 2003), passim.

⁴⁵ *Eight Years in Canada*, 8.

⁴⁶ Garlick, *To serve the purpose of the drama*, passim

⁴⁷ Beazley's second wife, looking to be rid of him after seven years, charged him with bigamy because he was still married to his first wife when she married him. She had eloped with him causing her rich guardian to disinherit her and now accepted his advice to be free to marry respectably.

as an “entirely condemnatory picture of an elderly libertine.”⁴⁸ According to her, Beazley dedicated it to the chairman of the Drury Lane proprietors’ committee, John Calcraft, who favoured Beazley in a quarrel with a senior architect.

Richardson, however, could have written the dedication to *The Roué* in praise of his wife Jane Marsh who married him in 1825 and reformed his gambling and womanizing in the Parisian casinos—which seems more likely than Beazley’s impressionable young second wife who failed or may not have tried to reform him. As for the dedication to *The Oxonians*, when we look more closely at the man, John Calcraft, Richardson, apart from knowing him by his frequent attendance at the theatre and friendships with actors and theatrical notables, may have expressed his admiration for other achievements: “...these volumes are respectfully inscribed as a sincere tribute of gratitude for a series of private kindnesses and as an humble testimony of the author’s respect for his public conduct,” words that refer to events greater than chairing the Select Committee of the Drury-lane Company of Proprietors. John Calcraft was known for a distinguished parliamentary career as a Whig

and a reformer whose legislation greatly benefitted the poor. In 1828 the King made him, as a member of the Duke of Wellington’s Administration, Paymaster-General of His Majesty’s Land Forces, a role that would have brought him in contact with Richardson at the Horse Guards where Richardson worked from 1828 to the mid-thirties. Calcraft’s London establishment was in Hanover Square and his family attended St George’s, which was Richardson’s Church.⁴⁹

As caustic criticisms of English society, the novels in question were distinctly at odds with Beazley’s plays, which were “cleverly constructed to appeal to the mixture of upper-and middle class spectators that west-end theatre proprietors... were striving to attract...”⁵⁰ The plays were written to entertain, not to provoke, according to Ms. Garlick. “It could be argued,” she wrote, “that since most of Beazley’s dramatic works consisted of adaptations and/or translations of French or English plays they lack originality, but it requires considerable linguistic skills as well as sound knowledge of the stage to produce a successful adaptation from another language and theatrical tradition.”⁵¹ Lacking invention and originality could Beazley write

⁴⁸ Garlick, *To serve the purpose of the drama*, 92.

⁴⁹ Calcraft was the illegitimate son of the powerful army pay agent of the same name and an actress. He had affairs with actresses and might well have associated with the “adventurer” Richardson. He committed suicide in 1831 after fellow Whigs scorned him for his deciding vote for the Reform Bill. This “public conduct” of concern for the middle class would have won Richardson’s support expressed in the dedication of 1830 to uphold him against his critics. “His support to the Bill was never to be forgiven by the late Ministers,... there was no chance of his ever again being cordially acknowledged by his old friends.” *Reading Mercury* 19 Sept. 1831.

⁵⁰ Garlick, *To serve the purpose of the drama*, p.187.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

two long novels inspired by original thinking, characterizations and intricate plots? Beazley's restless character appears to lack the reflective, patient talent required to write long contemplative passages. Could an architect, whose designs for theatres, railway stations, monuments and palatial homes were in demand, find the time to write these novels? Especially when the designs were not only for London but throughout the provinces with the inevitable contentious meetings with other architects, theatre boards and builders? Apart from his marital problems and philandering, he wrote and produced over one-hundred stage comedies and operettas. Since he wrote no other prose, why in his middle age would he write two novels, whose sales were good, and stop? The critical acclaim should have prompted him to continue writing as a born novelist was certain to do. Why were they published only when a 'born novelist', John Richardson, arrived back in England?

In both *The Roué* and *The Oxonians* there is the declaration: "And now, having again placed our *dramatis personae* on the London stage, we must to it 'like French falconers,' and finish our book," which is likely to have come from a playwright such as Beazley. Richardson, however, did delight in such asides; he was an avid theatre-goer and wrote a comic farce for the stage.⁵²

The One Who Identified Richardson

With more digging in the Newspaper Archive, the reviewer who exposed Richardson as the author of *The Roué* was unearthed. The *New York Daily Tribune* announced on 1 February 1848 under the heading "Great Enterprise" that M.M. Noah and the Williams brothers were about to issue a new daily paper, *The Morning Star*. (See below, p. 194)

Richardson knew and admired Mordecai Manuel Noah, referring to him in his Kingston, Ontario newspaper, *The Canadian Loyalist and Spirit of 1812*, as Major Noah. Noah founded several New York newspapers and was active in politics. Richardson's singling out for praise of Mrs. Noah, presumably Noah's wife, when she starred in a play that spent some nights in Kingston, seems to cement the connection.⁵³ An interest common to them was the North American Indian. Noah would have read *Wacousta*, issued in London and pirated in the United States in 1832. Noah's book, *Discourse on the Evidence of the American Indians Being the Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel* appearing in 1837 would have caught Richardson's attention. He did not agree with Noah. Richardson claimed in an article that the Indian nations were indigenous to America and had not migrated by the Behring Strait as

⁵² If Richardson wanted the novels to appear to come from Beazley, he could have added that phrasing to give the publisher Colburn that impression.

⁵³ *The Canadian Don Quixote*, 195.

was the assumption common in his day.⁵⁴ Another connection was their mutual interest in the theatre. Noah wrote plays. His “national drama” “The Plains of the Chippewa” was playing at the Barnum Theatre in February 1851.⁵⁵ I surmise that the source for Noah’s information about Richardson’s authorship was the theatre and came by way of theatre gossip.⁵⁶

If Samuel Beasley, a garrulous fellow who enjoyed practical jokes, paid for the two novels’ publication, he would have boasted to his theatrical friends that he was responsible for them, as they would have greatly enhanced his reputation, but he kept silent even when Bulwer-Lytton and others were rumoured to be the author. As the author of many plays bearing his name, he would have no reason to conceal his authorship. Richardson’s old friends from the stage and musical theatre in London at the time were now in New York City. The great harpist Nicholas Bochsa, who toured with singer Anna Bishop, the British composer’s wife whom he stole, wrote music for and introduced one of Richardson’s songs with a full orchestra in a New York Concert Hall. Julie des Marguerittes from London and Paris who had opened an opera house for a time in Albany, New York,

and wrote plays was in Richardson’s circle of friends. Any one of this group including British actors who migrated to the states to find work could have informed Noah now that Richardson was in the news as a topic of conversation.

A Surprise Contribution to the Argument

The Keepsake for 1829 is the only other publication carrying a writing by “The Author of the *Roué*”. *Keepsakes* were annuals printing stories and poems by the best-known authors of the day and ran for a number of years. The 1829 edition had works by Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, Percy Shelley et al. The anonymous author of the *Roué* wrote in *The Keepsake* “An Attempt at a Tour” describing a tour of the Lake Country by carriage of a single gentlemen whose descriptions of his fellow passengers resemble Richardson’s comical characterizations of travelers on the ferry between Dover and Calais in *Ecarté*. An incident when he is forced to walk in the rain and bursts his boot in the mud is similar to Richardson’s recounting in his *Eight Years in Canada* of floundering through the pitch black night on a muddy road and losing his shoe on a carriage journey through New York State.

⁵⁴ “The North American Indians,” *Major John Richardson Short Stories* (Penticton, B.C., Theytus, 1985), 22.

⁵⁵ *New York Daily Tribune*, 12 February 1851.

⁵⁶ Mordecai Noah seemed no longer active in editing the *Morning Star*. A note in the *Daily Tribune* in October 1850 addressed him as the Editor of the *Sunday Times*. He could have contributed articles, however, to the *Morning Star*. Owing to his friendship with Richardson, he would have wanted to express his praise for *Wacousta*. He died on 22 May 1851, four months after the review appeared. Samuel Beasley died in October 1851, four months after Major Noah.

The style, a quotation of a stanza from a poem by Lord Byron as an epigraph and the essay's first words, "Having no wife to control me..." favours Richardson as the author. Samuel Beazley was married to his second wife while Richardson seemed to have forsaken the woman he married in 1825, at least by 1829, which allowed him to marry again in 1832.⁵⁷

Before his writing of the four novels, Richardson co-authored another anonymous work which we now reveal to the curious reader.

Preliminary Investigation

The Lucubrations of Humphrey Ravelin, Esq.

The book to be unmasked, *The Lucubrations of Humphrey Ravelin, Esq., late Major in the *** Regiment of Infantry* issued in London in 1823 by G & W.B. Whittaker had three authors. I shall show that George Procter, Captain at the Royal Military College, collected the articles by Captain Longmore, Lieutenant Richardson and himself, and in 1823 with the permission of Longmore in Quebec and Richardson in Paris issued them under the name G. Proctor, with the misleading identity of "novelist," which he was not.

The occasion leading to the discovery of John Richardson's authoring part of the book, *The Lucubrations*, arose over a dispute whether Richardson maligned his commanding officer, General Henry

Procter, for his conduct at the Battle of the Thames. Sandy Antal, author of *A Wampum Denied*, to bolster his defence of the General, who was found guilty in a court-martial for his conduct, referred to an article by Professor Klinck,⁵⁸ whose interest was in early Canadian writing, in which Klinck claimed that General Procter dictated much of the book to his nephew and son-in-law George

Procter. On investigation this proved to be false. The British Library lists the author as Humphrey Ravelin and the Contributor as G. Proctor (Novelist) in the 1823 and 1824 printings and G. Proctor as the author in a second 1823 printing and in a German translation issued from Cassel in 1825. The General had nothing to do with the book (he died in 1822) and G. Proctor was not his nephew and unlikely to be his son-in-law (although



⁵⁷ My research into this phase of Richardson's life is continuing with some recent discoveries.

⁵⁸ Carl F. Klinck, "Some Anonymous Literature on the War of 1812" *Ontario History*, 49:2 (1957), 49-62.

the General had four daughters and the G. (i.e. George) Proctor was married, no connection between the two Proctors has been found).⁵⁹ The writing and subject matter of some of the essays in *The Lucubrations* struck me as coming from Richardson. There were, however, two competitors for that honour—George Proctor and George Longmore.

George Proctor's *History of Italy from the Fall of the Western Empire to the Commencement of the French Revolution* appeared in 1825 from the same publisher, Whittaker, who issued *The Lucubrations of Humphrey Ravelin*. George Proctor, as a Lieutenant in the 5th Northumberland Regiment of Foot, had gone with his regiment to reinforce Quebec in the War of 1812 and took part in the failed attack on Lake Champlain. Demobilized onto half-pay in March 1817, he was hired as Adjutant in the Junior Department of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, in February 1818 and taught history.

Mary-Lu MacDonald, professor of Canadian literature, who discovered George Longmore as an early Canadian author, credits Longmore with authoring *The Lucubrations of Humphrey Ravelin*.⁶⁰ Longmore, born in Quebec, wrote poet-

ry and essays on his military experiences. He had interests in common with Proctor, who was his age and army rank.

How did the three officers come to know one another? Longmore graduated from the Royal Military College in 1809, became a Captain in the Royal Staff Corps, Quarter-Master-General's Department in 1811 and spent the Napoleonic War years with that Department in the Peninsular War. After the war ended he returned to England in 1815 and was stationed in Hythe, Kent on the coast. Avoiding demobilization, Longmore likely took leave from army duties to further his education in the Royal Military College, his alma mater, where Proctor was teaching.

Richardson would have known Longmore after Richardson's arrival in London from the West Indies late in 1818 to June 1819 before Longmore left with his regiment for Quebec. As Canadians and officers in the British Army and writing anonymously—Longmore about his experiences in the Napoleonic Wars and Richardson authoring political pamphlets⁶¹—their encountering one another is likely. Richardson, eager for formal education, could have at this time

⁵⁹ The discussion between Sandy Antal and David Beasley, who defended Richardson from Antal's charge, may be found on the Davus publishing website (www.davuspublishing.com) under David's blog in the Major John Richardson Newsletter.

⁶⁰ Mary-Lu MacDonald, "George Longmore: a New Literary Ancestor," *Dalhousie Review* 59:2 (1979), 265-85.

⁶¹ The Pamphlet Wars of the time between Tories and Whigs when publishers hired writers to attack one side or the other did involve Richardson one can assume from Angella Thirkell's assertion in *The Fortunes of Harriette* that either John Mitford or Captain Richardson wrote *The Confessions of Julia Johnstone* from the Tory viewpoint. From internal evidence it is clear that Richardson wrote it. He would not have been chosen for such a task if he were not known for writing political screeds nor would Thirkell have guessed he wrote it unless he had a reputation in the field. *The Canadian Don Quixote*, 303, n.15.

attended the Royal Military College, which, as a British officer, was open to him. His admiration for Charles Mills' historical works, expressed in his novel *The Monk Knight of St John: a Tale of the Crusades*, links him to Proctor. George Proctor's will bequeathed money to the children of "our dear lamented friend Charles Mills."⁶² Proctor dedicated *The Lucubrations* to Charles Mills. Proctor would have introduced Richardson to Mills' writings and influenced him in his life-long love of chivalry and the Knights Templar.

Richardson knew Proctor before he met Longmore. After release from imprisonment in Kentucky, Richardson moved with his regiment to Quebec in May 1815 to await transfer to Europe. His younger brother, Robert, serving in Army Headquarters at Quebec, could have introduced him to George Proctor, whose intellectual interests attracted the Richardsons. Proctor, whose regiment was stationed in Quebec City, accompanied John Richardson in the convoy of ships that left Quebec on 8 June 1815 for Ostend to fight Napoleon's army at Waterloo.

Mary-Lu MacDonald, mentioned above, unearthed an interesting note from the *Montreal Morning Courier* of 13 December 1839 by an editorialist

remarking on the scarcity of Canadian writers: "A gentleman, named Longmore, some years hence, published some poetry." Longmore published poems in Quebec including his long poem "Tecumthé" which rivaled Richardson's poem "Tecumseh." Richardson edited the *Montreal Courier* from 1846 to the fall of 1849, which suggests that when he was in Montreal from the first week of November 1839 before leaving for the West in February 1840, he worked for the paper which printed his article mentioning Longmore, and, by the way, himself as native-born. He was known for lamenting the lack of Canadian authors and was not averse to self-promotion. This identification is significant because Longmore kept his identity secret and used pseudonyms that MacDonald had to decode, they being military terms for fortifications. Most likely it was he who thought of the book's title. A ravelin is a triangular fortification located in front of the inner works of a fortress. Ravelins from the sixteenth century could be seen in the Netherlands where Longmore served at one time. Only a journalist who knew Longmore well could have known him as a poet and that appears to have been Richardson.

The emphasis on "native-born" authors implies that such writers had a

⁶² George Proctor's will (The Public Record Office in London, Eng.) demonstrates the closeness of his family to the Mills family. "Paper writings" testified to be in Proctor's handwriting by John Pickering and George Clarke of the Royal Military College were annexed to the will. Although these officers' testimony pertain to the authenticity of the will, it may also refer to manuscripts in Proctor's writing that eventually appeared in print, such as his book on the Ottoman Empire. These manuscripts were left to either Charles Mills' wife or sister and were published after Proctor's death on his way to India in 1843. Proctor used the pseudonym George Perceval for his *History of Italy* issued in 1825.

special significance in interpreting Canadian life. John Willis of Quebec was also singled out as a native-born poet. In the early 1830s several periodicals carried mostly Canadian content but they failed and were succeeded by periodicals of largely British content. In 1838 the *Literary Garland* of Montreal, influenced by Richardson's appearance on the scene from England, printed Canadian content written by Canadians. Literary societies formed in the larger cities and sponsored lectures on scientific, literary and historical subjects.⁶³

Professor Carl Klinck surmised that Richardson's note in his poem "Tecumseh," printed in London in 1828, claiming he had written it in Paris in 1823, indicated a competition with the author of "Tecumthe" [i.e. Longmore].⁶⁴ Possibly Richardson's poem in manuscript had not found a printer in 1823, but was known to Longmore whose "Tecumthe," appeared in Quebec City in December 1824, and again in *Tales of Chivalry and Romance* in England in 1826. Why would Longmore write a long poem about Tecumseh, a personage he could not have known and a part of the country he had not seen? He must have listened to Richardson describe his 1812 war experiences and his friendship with Tecumseh?

Klinck asserted that an article "Campaign in the Canadas" defends General Henry Procter's actions in the Battle of

the Thames and that it was written by George Procter [sic].⁶⁵ The article appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, July 1822. It is a review of three books, two giving an account and sketches of the 1812 War, and a third, *Letters of Veritas*, anonymous but known to have been written by the Honourable John Richardson, a Montreal trader. "With the assistance of these works," the article begins, "and that of other sources of information, on which our readers may confidently rely, we shall proceed to offer a sketch of the war in the Canada's from its commencement to the termination of hostilities." The defence of General Procter is really an attack on General Prevost, the commander-in-chief, stationed in Quebec and blames Procter's mistakes and retreat on Prevost because "the commander-in-chief should alone have been responsible." These sentiments came solely from *Letters to Veritas* and reflect an animus of the Honourable gentleman for Prevost for some perceived wrong. As for the "other sources of information" they pertain to the war on the western front and were written, I believe, by John Richardson at the request of the article's author. Richardson was the only writer available who had experienced the war in the Detroit area. He was living in Paris but communication between England and France was easy. The article, which was reprinted in George Longmore's *Tales of Chivalry*,

⁶³ Mary-Lu MacDonald, *Literature and Society in the Canadas 1817 - 1850* (Lewiston/Queenston, Edwin Mellen, 1992), 57.

⁶⁴ Klinck, "Some Anonymous Literature," 49-62

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

must have been by Longmore who assured his readers that they could “confidently rely” on “the other sources,” that is Richardson, whose help he employed.

George Proctor, Sandy Antal suggested, wrote the article on *The North American Indians*⁶⁶ using information given him by the General. When I read the article, I guessed from the vigorous writing and his knowledge of the frontier that Richardson was the author:

The heroic and desperate spirit which animated them against their American oppressors; their mysterious and appalling mode of warfare; the native talents, the wild energy and eloquence, and the touching fate of the extraordinary man who started up as a leader among them; all these were points of new and uncommon excitement for the imagination, and gave to the nature of the service on which our troops were engaged with them, something original, and strange, and totally distinct from the ordinary operations of warfare. Opportunities were thus afforded for gaining an insight into the Indian character under some of its most striking forms; where it was thrown into fearful action, and wrought to the utmost intensity of enthusiasm and frenzy.⁶⁷

The Book Itself

The first essay in *The Lucubrations of Humphrey Ravelin* casts Humphrey Ravelin as a veteran of thirty-seven years

retired in a bucolic setting and avoiding the romantic impositions of a young Miss Bridget which caused him “sufferings... not as bad as a French prison from 1794 or Walcheren fever and ague.” Longmore may have known a French prison when warring with Napoleon’s army, though not in 1794, and could have suffered from Walcheren fever. Walcheren is a Dutch Island that Britain invaded in late July 1809 when George Longmore was in the Royal Staff Corps as a military engineer. The British expedition was a failure owing to fever which killed over 4,000 soldiers.

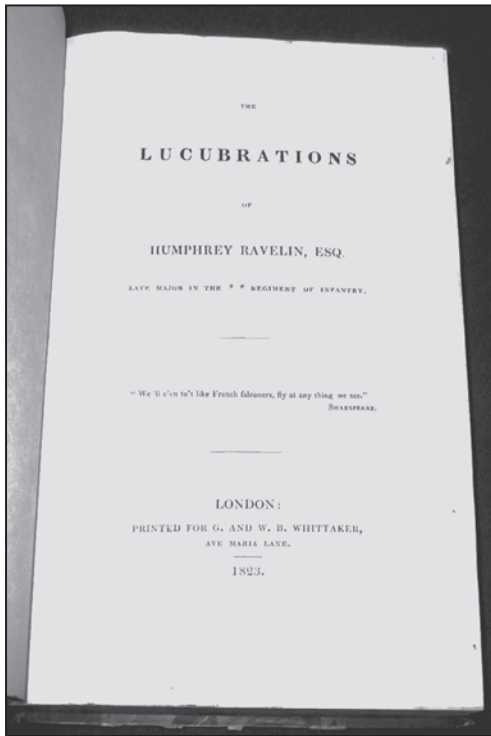
The story, “Emily Milburne”, describes the survivors of a regiment returning from the Scheldt River in the Netherlands and settling in an English village where Ravelin and another officer, enfeebled by the Walcheren fever, are nursed back to health by a young lady. Years later Ravelin learns that his fellow officer seduced the girl and deserted her. She died and her father went mad. Longmore would have been in the Netherlands campaign. He seems to have experienced the fever, whether as a survivor or a witness.⁶⁸

The essay “The Day of Badajos” gives Ravelin the opportunity to reminisce with his servant Havresack about nine years earlier when they were on picquet before the old Spanish castle and of their

⁶⁶ *Quarterly Review*, v.31, April 1824. “The North American Indians.”

⁶⁷ Richardson explained that he wrote “A Canadian Campaign” to demonstrate the contribution that the Indian nations made to the British cause in the War of 1812.

⁶⁸ A footnote on 97 refers to *Travels of Theodore Ducas*, vol II, 96. Theodore Ducas was a pseudonym for Charles Mills (re: Brit Lib Cat.) George Proctor seems to have introduced Longmore as well as Richardson to Mill’s work on the Crusades. Longmore wrote *Matilda or, The Crusades*, a historical drama in five acts.



friends killed in the battle. Longmore was in that battle. He uses his experience to give the old Ravelin more credence as a character. The author's complaints of military life for its dissipation and idleness and the insolence of power could have come from Longmore, who, after several years of active fighting in the Peninsular War, was idling as a staff officer on the west coast of Kent.

"The Disbanding" should be by Richardson because the 2nd battalion of his Regiment in Portsmouth in 1815 was momentous for the officers' burning

of the regimental colours in anger, which resounded throughout the army. He mentioned its overwhelming effect on him and his fellow officers. When faced with a sentence as "He knows nothing of Busaco, Sabugal, and Fuentes d'Honer, of the breach of Rodingo, the escalade of the Castle of Badajos, and the well fought day of Salamanca, where our two battalions were in the field and charged together," one must credit it to Longmore, who would have known of the incident.

"The West Indies" must be by Richardson as the incidents such as the harsh treatment of the soldier, the virulence of disease, the "utter disregard of temperance and decency" are described in his "Recollections of the West Indies."⁶⁹ He concludes "the West Indies are the grave at once of the physical and moral qualities of our army."⁷⁰

"The Anglo-East Indians" is by sentiment and style awarded to Richardson, angered by the senseless beating of native servants by this "hodgepodge of Hindoostanee and English" "... if this excite the honest indignation of every uncorrupted heart, what feeling shall we reserve for the more monstrous fact, that such brutality was not confined to our own sex, but that the women—English women, reader—of education and rank, could be found to share in the guilt of habitual tyranny."⁷¹ Richardson did not go to India but the writer was in Cheltenham, a Richardson

⁶⁹ "Recollections of the West Indies," In Major John Richardson's *A Canadian Campaign* (Simcoe, ON, Davus, 2011).

⁷⁰ *The Lucubrations*, 137.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

haunt in his young days, to observe “the mannerism of studied refinement, the indescribable air of conscious importance and the confidence of his pretensions, all proclaim, as plainly as though he should speak it, that the man has condescended to revisit his country, with a thorough contempt for such of its barbarous inhabitants as have not been civilized by a voyage to Bengal.”⁷²

“A Welcome Visitor” dealing with Irishmen and featuring Ravelin’s servant Havresack, who has roles in most of Longmore’s essays, including “Military Life” set in the Pyrenees and “Unforeseen Pleasures” are all written in Longmore’s informal style.

“Templeton.” A rich spendthrift, Frederick Templeton, falls into debt. His wife loves him despite his faults. They are rescued by a lawyer friend of her family and giving up their fashionable lifestyle retreat to a cottage in the country where Frederick makes an income by writing articles. The writing style is Richardson’s but the tameness of the story is unlike him, unless this is an early effort when he stays within the moral strictures of acceptable writing. The name Frederick he gives to characters in *Ecarté* and *Wacousta*, as well as preferring it for himself.

“Modern Extravagance” must be by George Proctor. The awkward phrasing in this article and others by him and the light subject matter in some of them characterize his contributions. For instance:

“But we have been for years pressing forward while in the career of extravagance, and arriving to overstep the limits of our condition, until every order of person has learnt to regard with contempt what were once deemed the comforts that properly belonged to their station.” Essays as “Literary Promotion” mentioning Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Greek and Roman classics and efforts at writing reflect Proctor’s interests as does the essay “Title-pages,” which refers to contemporary writers such as William Hazlitt, Wordsworth, Charles Mill’s *History of the Crusades* and the painters Rembrandt and Claude.

“Indian Warfare” reflects Richardson’s style, sensibilities and interests as well as he being the one to have experienced such warfare. “Of the Indian people generally,” he writes,

as our allies in the late war in America, those dwelling in Lower Canada were entirely useless; the Six Nations higher up, in the country lying between Lakes Huron and Ontario, were of some service; but to the tribes at the Head of Lake Erie, on the western shores of Huron, and from thence towards the Mississippi, is the preservation of Upper Canada, in the first year of the war, mainly to be attributed.⁷³

“Charity” is about the presumption of charitable women. “The poor are positively oppressed with benevolence, and, as the field becomes narrower for its exercise, the ladies are all quarrelling to which of them this and that peasant’s family be-

⁷² *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 326-27. He overlooks the contributions of the Quebec Caghawagas in Niagara—Stoney Creek region.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.
WACOUSTA OR THE PROPHECY; an Indian tale. By Major Richardson, author of "Ecarte, Hardscrabble," &c. Revised edition. DEWITT & DAVENPORT, Tribune Buildings.
 This is a capital Indian story, by a writer who, in the department of exciting fiction, has few living rivals. Major Richardson is, we believe, the author of "The Roue," a novel which made a great sensation in London some twenty years ago. It was attributed both to Ainsworth and Bulwer; but we believe there is no doubt that Richardson was the author. "Wacousta" is not inferior in interest to "The Roue," while it is less open to moral objection.
 BRAITHWAITE'S RETROSPECT OF PRACTICAL

longs." Ravelin's servant Havresack is on hand to attribute it to Longmore.

"The Art of Rising" attributes an officer's lack of promotion to his failure to understand what is necessary in subservience and flattery to rise through the ranks. Humorous advice on using the wiles for advancement and a quote from Lord Byron favours Richardson's authorship. In later years he developed this sarcastic humour in castigating the politics and nepotism required to advance in the British Auxiliary Legion. Longmore depended on his rise in the army on Sir Benjamin D'Urban, Colonel of The Royal Staff Corps and Quartermaster General of the Army, whose niece he married, thus his

From The Morning Star, New York, Tuesday 18 February 1851. In February 1849, The New York Herald expressed the viewpoint of the competing major newspapers: "The Morning Star, Sun and one or two other small fry journals..."

authorship would have meant self-mockery.

Conclusive Remarks

The cloak of anonymity fell away from Richardson when he became embroiled in the petty quarrels when serving in the British Auxiliary Legion in Spain in the 1830s. One of the officers revealed that Richardson wrote *Ecarté* to embarrass him. It caused him to retort that he was proud of it. He admitted writing the *Journal of the Movements of the British Legion* (1837) when it was used as a political club in a parliamentary battle between the parties. At this time the second edition of *Wacousta* was issued. Its world-wide acclaim made it easy to acknowledge. Moreover, many authors were abandoning anonymity as they realized that name recognition brought them readers and profit as exemplified by the fame of Charles Dickens.

Apart from unearthing Richardson's early writings of which there may be more to come, the discoveries in this paper contribute to the intriguing story of Canadian literature.