



## European Britannica

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## EUROPEAN BRITANNICA

Barclay, John, 1582-1621. *L'Argenide di Giovanni Barclaio*.  
 Venetia, Per Gio. Salis, ad instantia di Paolo Frambotti, M.DC.XXIX.  
 Acquired in 1999 on the David Crocker book fund (1984). \*99-316

JOHN BARCLAY, EVER KNOWN AS "AUTHOR OF THE ARGENIS," WAS BORN at Pont-à-Mousson in 1582, the only child of an expatriate Scottish law professor and his French wife. Although he would spend most of his life in various European cities, Barclay considered himself a Scotsman and a subject of James I. From 1605 until his death in 1621 he published, mostly pseudonymously, from Paris, London, Lyon, and Köln books now so rare that it is unlikely that any library will ever complete a set of them. Altogether his oeuvre defines what we call European Britannica.

British culture was never confined by the shores of the islands. Importation of scribes, books, paper, and the apparatus of printing was counterbalanced by the production and publication of British texts in Europe, by European translations of British texts, and by European books about Britain. For instance, Barclay was influenced—like Joyce and Eliot, both of them expatriates who published far from home—by the *Satyricon* of Petronius, so much so, in his case, that he published in Latin a complex four-part picaresque novel, partly satirizing the Jesuits, called *Euphormionis Lusinini Satyricon*. No one has found a copy of the putative first edition of the first part, London, 1603, but copies of the Paris editions, 1605 and 1607, of the first two parts are known, but not yet available at Harvard. In 1985, with the Joseph Halle Schaffner book fund we acquired the third part, Paris 1610; in 1986, with funds presented by Prudence and Daniel Steiner, the fourth part, London 1614; and in 1997, with the S. A. E. Morse book fund, the first French translation, Paris, 1626.

Even more influential, reprinted, and translated was Barclay's lengthy political romance, *Argenis*, admired for generations as a model of Latin prosody. Completed but a few days before his death, the book was seen through the press in Paris by a scholar-friend and correspondent, Peiresc. That first edition has long been on Harvard's shelves, along with the illustrated French translation (Paris, 1623), the English translation (London, 1625), the Spanish translation (Madrid, 1626), the German translation (Bresslaw, 1626), and the Polish translation (Warsaw, 1697). To these we have added this year the Italian translation (Venice, 1629) with the David Crocker (1984) book fund.

The penetration of foreign cultures by English texts is illustrated by a number of important translations acquired this year. The "big ones" are the histories: Hume's *Geschichte Grossbritannien* and *Geschichte von England*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1762-63, 1767-71); Goldsmith's unrecorded *Storia d'Inghilterra*, 2 vols. (London, 1787); and Gibbon's *Histoire de la décadence et de la chute de l'Empire Romain*, 18 vols. (Paris, 1788-95) and *Geschichte des Verfalls und Untergangs des Römischen Reichs*, 19 vols. (Leipzig, 1788-1806). Not all of the choices of the foreign publishers are predictable: Sir William Temple, *Memoires* and *Nouveaux memoires* (Hague, 1693, 1729); William Sherlock's *De l'immortalité de l'ame, et de la vie éternelle* (Amsterdam 1708); Steele's *Lustspiele* (Leipzig, 1767); Colin MacLaurin's guide to Newton's discoveries, *I sistemi de' filosofi* (Venice, 1762); Mrs. Piozzi's *Bemerkungen auf der Reise durch Frankreich, Italien und Deutschland*, 2 vols.

L'ARGENIDE  
 DI  
 GIOVANNI BARCLAIO  
 Tradotta  
 DA FRANCESCO PONA.  
 All'Illustrissimo, & Eccellentissimo Signor  
 DOMENICO MOLINO.



IN VENETIA, MDCXXIX:

Per Gio. Salis, Ad instantia di Paolo Frambotti.  
 Con Licenza de' Superiori, & Privilegio.

Title page of the Italian translation of Barclay's *Argenis* (Venice, 1629).

(Frankfurt und Mainz, 1790); or Olaudah Equiano, *Merkwürdige Lebensgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1792), with an engraved portrait of the celebrated former slave.

They may not be easy to get, but we should not be surprised to have acquired also this year two competing German translations of Swift's *Gulliver's travels* (Leipzig, 1728; Zürich, 1788); Richardson's *Pamela, ou, La vertu récompensée*, 2 vols. (London, 1742) and *Lettres angloises, ou histoire de Miss Clarisse Harlove* [!], 7 vols. (Londres, Lyon, 1752-62); and Ann Radcliffe's *Julia, ou, Les souterrains du Chateau de Mazzini*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1797). Some are so surprising that they invite investigation: what are the origins of the obscure verses chosen for *Poèmes anglais mis en vers français* (Nîmes, 1782) and why was only a part of James Beattie's *Essays on the nature of truth* (1776) chosen for translation as *Essai sur la poésie et sur la musique, considérées dans les affections de l'ame* (Paris, 1797-98)?

All in the year's work were acquired also reports on the Scots College in Paris (1695) and the Irish College in Rome (1772), L. A. Muratori's attack on Thomas Burnet (1738), a volume of French Jacobite tracts and pamphlets (1745), and *Vvat nieus boven nieus* by Wilm Fener Enghelsman (Rotterdam, 1609). When all are integrated into Harvard's great collection of British imprints, we will learn a lot more about the larger world in which John Barclay wrote and published and which scholars of British culture must chart and traverse.

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