



Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi: A Taste for Eccentricity

Marianna Dezio

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Scholars and readers who are interested in eighteenth-century British literature are surely familiar with Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi in the light she came to be known in her lifetime and after: first, as the 'formidable hostess' of Streatham House, South London, and then as an outcast from respectable eighteenth-century society after she had married the Italian piano teacher of her daughter. As a writer, her importance has long been that of a footnote to Samuel Johnson and as a consequence, she has been part of the official British literary canon only as a character. This volume introduces Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi as a whole, trying to link her fascinating and subversive biography to her development as a writer, emphasizing the innovative issues of her works, her style and her social and personal beliefs. Piozzi's biography is an interesting example of the dynamic scene of the late eighteenth century, where she was both conservative and subversive: she was an eccentric, and although her decision to marry the Italian singer and composer Gabriele Piozzi disgraced her, it was through this act of subversion that Hester Thrale Piozzi could finally make her own entrance into the world as a public writer. Once she had transgressed the social codes of so-called 'feminine' behaviour, she was also ready to move into the public sphere, publish her works and make money out of them, pioneering several traditional literary genres through her passionate search for professional independence in the literary canon of the eighteenth century.

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