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Abstract

Appearing as a title in the Penn State Series in the History of the Book, Into Print is a collection of twelve essays demonstrating a debt to Robert Darnton’s ground-breaking scholarship on the social history of ideas (Walton, vii; Pasta, 82). Divided into five thematic parts (“Making News,” “Print, Paper, Markets, and States,” “Police and Opinion,” “Enlightenment in Revolution,” and “Enlightenment Universalism and Cultural Difference”), it includes contributions from scholars, primarily historians, who studied under Darnton. Editor Charles Walton points out in his superb preface that, while topics covered are diverse, each essay exhibits Darnton’s influence by “analyzing the dynamic . . .

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The essays collected by Charles Walton in Into Print paint a more complicated picture. By focusing on print culture—the production, circulation, and reception of Enlightenment thought—they show how the Enlightenment was shaped through practice and reshaped over time. The contributors of the main essays in this volume, all former doctoral students of Darnton, offer them as a tribute to him and as an expression of thanks for the inspiration and guidance, the measure and wisdom, he has offered us. These essays expand upon an approach to the study of the Enlightenment pioneered four decades ago: the social
history of ideas. In 1971, Robert Darnton conjured from the archives, in brilliantly vivid prose, the portrait of a peculiar and compelling type of eighteenth-century Frenchman: the "Grub Street hack" turned radical revolutionary.¹ In some ways, the hack actually seemed more of a nineteenth-century character, for he closely resembled the heroes of more than one canonical nineteenth-century novel, particularly Balzac's Illusions perdues.