Eighteenth-Century Fiction

Volume 24 | Issue 1 Article 13

10-26-2011

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Recommended Citation
Dennis, Ian (2011) "Review of: Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*: Vol. 24: Iss. 1, Article 13.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vol24/iss1/13

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Review of: Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*

Abstract
Review of: Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*, reviewed by Ian Dennis

Keywords
Book review

This article is available in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vol24/iss1/13

l'individu « en voie de formation » (151). Si cette « assimilation» a ses limites, tant Prévost que Rousseau peignent des personnages « hors gabarits ». Mathieu Brunet retrouve la topique rousseauiste dans quatre romans de Lamartine émanant de son projet de créer un roman populaire comme outil de régénération sociale. Pour y parvenir, Lamartine, lui aussi, se construit, met le point d'égalité entre lui et un être représenté, et constate que cette « fabulation » s'inscrit en faux contre un langage transparent, susceptible d'exprimer la nature sans « la faire disparaître » (175). Jean-Christophe Abramovici dédie à Lafon qui, rappelle-t-il, a su unir rire et sérieux, son analyse du libertinage d'idées dans *Spectateur français* de Marivaux. Les idées sérieuses y sont véhiculées par une écriture « rapsodique » d'un auteur qui refuse une démarche systémique, où l'inspiration pour discourir « à propos de rien » vient d'une « occasion », où les observations se transmettent par « interruptions » et « dissonances », dans une « inflexion de la voix » et un « sourire » (188) de l'énonciateur-observateur.

Ces essais tissés autour des liens d'amitié et d'affinités méthodologiques, écrits par les éminents spécialistes des Lumières, sont un excellent témoignage de l'impact qu'Henri Lafon ne cesse d'exercer sur les études historique et théorique du roman. Ils montrent aussi que la démarche et la pensée de Lafon ouvrent toujours de nouvelles perspectives à l'analyse et à l'interprétation des textes particuliers.

Elisabeth Zawisza est professeur agrégé à l'Université Queen's. Ses travaux portent sur les aspects narratifs et rhétoriques du roman des Lumières, ainsi que sur le paratexte romanesque (préfaces et titres).

Mary A. Favret. *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. x+262pp. US$26.95. ISBN 978-0-691-14407-8.

Working "at the intersection of two academic fields: the study of wartime literature and the study of affect" (10), Mary A. Favret explores "how war becomes part of the barely registered substance of our everyday, ... how military conflict on a global scale looked and felt to a population whose armies and navies waged war for decades, but always at a distance" (9). For her, "the literature and art produced in Britain during its twenty-year conflict with France" is not just exemplary, but "established forms for how we continue to think and feel about war at a distance" (9). The challenge of the argument is in that "barely registered," in the reading of representations of wartime experience "inextricable from sitting at home on an evening, recalling absent friends, staring at a fire, gazing out a window" (9). How is the whole continuum of thought and feeling altered by distant

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military violence, and, above all, how is that changed continuum to be detected in literary and pictorial works that do not directly represent either war or the experience of war's immediate effects? This is not, for example, a book about expressions or depictions of grief over slain relatives or friends.

War at a distance is "fundamentally dislocating" first in "our sense of the movement (or stasis) of time" (49), and a subtly worked out chapter evokes various wartime temporalities and "the structures of feeling" (53) they support, playing variations indeed on the term "wartime" itself. Another considers weather, specifically "how a new weather science provided forms for mediating distant war" (120), and examines "the traces of warfare and grief evident in romantic poetry through metaphors of weather" (121). The "everyday," linked to trauma studies, reflects distant war in various ways, including the importation of the imperatives of "survival" (170) into the rhythms of daily domestic life and thought. The final full chapter (there are several shorter "interludes" and a "coda") is entitled "Viewing War at a Distance" and analyses a few wartime pictures, in particular three engravings of India by Thomas and William Daniells, whose "registration of distance especially evokes and shapes desolation" (198).

Favret's prose is full of paradox and nuance, and is frequently highly poetic itself. She is in pursuit of delicate, half- or more than half-occluded effects, to be teased out with wordplay and incongruous juxtaposition. There is little trace of cruder passions: little anger, pride, nationalism or patriotism, or jingoism, and only a few indignant protests. By the book's account, distant war is so deeply but unspecifically imbricated in every aspect of experience, temporalities are so dislocated, and wartime so pervasive and so interminable, that anything which might characterize "not-wartime" fades from view and we are confronted with a grim portrait of the experience of modernity itself as war.

The concepts are interesting, elegantly and at times provocatively developed. But while the readings of a range of sources from the period, some well-known and some obscure, are often suggestive, they are also sometimes quite strained, and only variably persuasive. A reference to "Keats's belated knight-at-arms" (76) suggests a willingness to deploy any handy congruence with the book's theme. The claim that "the untold war experience of Captain Wentworth haunts [*Persuasion*'s] account of its heroine's experience" (150) leads to the conclusion that "Austen has brought war home not only to everyday bodies, but also to the rhythms of everyday minds—including that of the reader" (171). Favret's readers must judge for themselves, of course, so ambitious an extension of the barely registered.

Several passages of William Cowper's *The Task* are returned to over and over. In *The Task* book 4, Favret plausibly focuses on the arrival of the post-boy with the newspaper, as the poet speaks of "the sound

of war" which "has lost its terrors ere it reaches me" (3). While she then acknowledges Cowper's appreciation of the comforts of his "quiet zone," she hears in biblical references to the wings of the dove "the faint echo of Passover and blood sacrifice" (4). And, "later celebrating the pleasures of the hearth, the poet suddenly imagines that he sees in his mirror Goliath, the great enemy warrior, 'tow'ring crest and all.' In response to these strange invasions, the poet's unthinking 'soul' gazes into the dwindling fire on the hearth where he sees 'houses, tow'rs / Trees, churches, and strange visages' amidst 'the red cinders.' The vision fades, not quite suggesting the ravages of war" (4).

If Cowper does not quite suggest the ravages of war, that is, Favret does. This is certainly a magical stretch of poetry, however, and susceptible to many constructions. And if a biblical warrior pops up in the imagery, or stream of consciousness, what is a critic to do? Here, though, is the full passage about Goliath:

> Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
> With lights by clear reflection multiplied
> From many a mirrour, in which he of Gath
> Goliah, might have seen his giant bulk
> Whole without stooping, tow'ring crest and all,
> My pleasures too begin.
> (*The Poems of William Cowper: Volume II: 1782–1785*, ed. John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995], book 4, lines 267–72)

Cowper is making one of his frequent comparisons between arid city life and blissful rural retreat and imagining the over-sized mirrors of London drawing-rooms, not gazing into his own. Goliath is there for his excessive size, not his enmity, and the register of the passage is playful, happy, even self-satisfied. Admittedly, Favret's sally occurs in an impressionist "Prelude" with other, more obviously relevant if more recent fireside poems. But the warlike Goliath is brought back several times, because "a world hangs in nearly every line of [book 4], a world of barely discerned consequences and violence" including, again, "a fleeting image of the enemy warrior Goliath in the mirrors" (23) of Cowper's own parlour. Later still, "even as he welcomes evening's 'season of peace,' Cowper glances in the mirrors of the parlor, where he 'might have seen' the warrior Goliath 'tow'ring crest and all'" (68). But it was Goliath who was doing the seeing in the original! The possibly misunderstood man of Gath makes his last appearance in a discussion of the "stranger" forecast by the film on the grate, "whose approach is anticipated and feared" and is "associated with Omai, the victim of imperial expansion [and] combines the figure of the feared enemy, Goliath, with that of the anticipated herald of British militarism, the post-boy" (72). Cowper, though, only mentions Goliath once, and not

while talking about the film on the grate. It must be said that there is a kind of "mission creep" in much of Favret's argumentation from specific texts, especially the chronologically earlier ones, in which stronger and more certain claims are made for wispy readings with each recollection of them. This is not the only or most unsettling example. Overall, this is a book which theorizes in fascinating and sometimes brilliant ways, but leaves at least the present reviewer distinctly uneasy about its Romantic-era textual evidences.

Ian Dennis is a Professor at the University of Ottawa and the author of *Nationalism and Desire in Early Historical Fiction* (1997) and *Lord Byron and the History of Desire* (2009).

Stephen H. Gregg. *Defoe's Writings and Manliness: Contrary Men*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2009. x+198pp. US$99.95. ISBN 978-0-7546-5605-0.

One way to characterize the sharply increased body of scholarship on eighteenth-century maleness in the past decade is as a spectrum running from masculinity explained as a socially and morally based condition related to class, profession, and public behaviour (the excellent work of Philip Carter comes to mind) to masculinity perceived as an interiorized sexual identity or the emergence of new psychological stereotypes (consider aspects of the fine work by Thomas A. King or George Haggerty). Stephen H. Gregg's book is firmly in the former camp, an unsurprising positioning given Daniel Defoe's limited interest in male sexuality, and Gregg's study accomplishes a great deal. In showing the varieties of manliness that Defoe engages in his writings, Gregg has broadened our understanding of both Defoe and the intricacies of eighteenth-century maleness in some provocative and persuasive ways.

This well-written study is shrewd in its assessments, theoretically sophisticated, and wide-ranging in its use of literary and cultural evidence. Gregg presents a Defoe whose "abiding interest was in *failures* of manliness ... What he works out in so many of his writings was how men could resist this slide into a failure so often termed effeminacy" (1). His starting point is the now accepted argument that eighteenth-century manliness or masculinity was not a uniform or static quality but rather a variable condition. In Gregg's words, "manliness is shaped by the intermittent tensions and fitful syntheses between a variety of contrary forces in Defoe's writings: between for example, commerce and civic humanism; Christian and Classical virtue; patriarchy and companionate marriage; gentility and gentlemanliness; or between private friendship and public spirit" (14). The idea of contrariness is also at the centre of the book's conclusions: "Defoe had