

Book Reviews

Backscheider, Paula R. *Women in Wartime: Theatrical Representations in the Long Eighteenth Century*.

JOHNS HOPKINS, 2022. PP. XIII + 437. \$37.00 (PAPER).

Paula R. Backscheider's *Women in Wartime: Theatrical Representations in the Long Eighteenth Century* is a remarkable survey of over one hundred years of theater history on the backdrop of one of "the most intense periods of British Wars" with the goal of highlighting the roles women played in building national consensus and models of patriotism. Examining the period from the 1670s to 1815, the author employs feminist, performance studies, and popular culture methods to draw a compelling history of wartime women's dramatic characters by exploring a significant number of previously neglected plays—from tragedies to comedies to short theatrical forms (pantomimes, farces, interludes, entr'actes, masques). This is, indeed, a book that "drills deep into inadequately explored territories and provides a new kind of evidence," one that highlights both the evolution of female characters in period drama and the actresses' role in uniting the nation behind the war.

In the first chapter, Backscheider focuses on several women characters in three 1677 tragedies: Nathaniel Lee's *Rival Queens*, John Banks's *Rival Kings*, and Samuel Pordage's *Siege of Babylon*. Retelling the story of Alexander the Great's fall, these plays present characters like Statira and Parisatis, both Alexander's captives, and Roxana, Alexander's queen, as paragons of domestic patriotism and ultimate judges of masculinity. Their stories make an implied comparison to Charles II's adultery, reflecting the theater's political involvement in national affairs and its growing use of female characters as influencers of public opinion and commentators on current events. In the second chapter, the author looks at early examples of wartime women characters within the context of the Third Dutch War, the First Indian War, and the Nine Years' War. It analyzes William Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* (1676), Thomas

Shadwell's *The Woman-Captain* (1679), and Susannah Centlivre's *The Beau's Duel* (1702), which employ characters like Fidelity (a wartime navy woman), Mrs. Gripe (a woman-captain), and Clarinda (a domestic patriot marrying a military man), respectively, to propose alternative models of military masculinity. Backscheider argues that gender fluidity is common to the long eighteenth century's history of wartime women and relates it to the increased popularity of breeches parts. The author also explores the playwrights' use of "intertheatricality"—the practice of "drawing upon established theatrical lines of action and strategies"—as a means of redefining national identity and reinforcing notions of liberty, power, and autonomy.

In chapter 3, Backscheider looks at George Farquar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and Charles Shadwell's *The Fair Quaker of Deal* (1710) and *The Humours of the Navy* (1713), all plays set during the War of Spanish Succession, as examples of performances that highlight the militarization of the nation and the way working women were embedded in the male camp society. Farquar's Silvia (disguised as the would-be volunteer Jack Willful) and Shadwell's Belvedera (disguised as officer Hickumbuz), among many other types of female characters (including maids, barmaids, and prostitutes), start a long-lasting "tradition of female volunteers modelling better male behavior." Moreover, by "setting the women characters within the contexts of the special homosocial military unit," these plays provide, as the author insightfully observes, "an outsider perspective, something like the journalistic strategy of fictionalizing the experience of a visitor from a distant culture," thus offering a gendered social commentary of the events at hand.

The fourth chapter covers an array of plays inspired by the War of Jenkins's Ear, the War of the Austrian Succession, the Seven Years' War, and the Second Jacobite Rebellion. These plays include Henry Carey's interlude *Nancy; or the Parting Lovers* (1739) and its several iterations up to 1743, Edward Phillip's farce *Britons, Strike Home: or, The Sailor's Rehearsal* (1739), David Mallet and James Thomson's *Alfred: A Masque* (1740), the anonymous *Harlequin Incendiary: or, Colombine Cameron* (1746), Charles Shadwell's *Humours of the Army* (1746), Isaac Bickerstaff's *Thomas and Sally: or, The Sailor's Return* (1760) and *The Recruiting Sargeant* (1770), James Hoey's *The Female Officer, or the Humours of the Army* (1763), George Colman the Elder's *The Deuce Is in Him* (1763), and Richard Sheridan's *The Critic* (1779) and *Glorious First of June* (1794). Backscheider underscores here the role played by actresses like Kitty Clive and Margaret ("Peg") Woffington in developing "new theatrical directions and national roles for wartime women," as well as their contribution to "the

invention of the gendered, patriot woman” at a time of intense military conflict. Among the many innovations these plays bring are the use of patriotic songs (such as “Britons, Strike Home,” “Rule Britannia,” and “Heart of Oak”), the employment of women in propagandistic and recruiting roles, the use of intertextuality to reinforce themes of patriotism, duty, and bravery, and the use of sentimentality (women’s unwillingness to be left behind, representations of domestic life worth defending and returning to, the dire consequences of war and women’s role in the reintegration efforts, etc.) to move the audiences.

Chapter 5 focuses on the years leading up to and including the War of American Independence. The author discusses invasion plays, such as Sheridan’s afterpiece *The Camp* (1778), Frederick Pilon’s *The Invasion* (1778), and Edward Neville’s *Plymouth in an Uproar* (1779), to name just a few, which introduce new roles for women that highlight the realities of war with more psychological depth. These plays explore women’s unique experiences in a time of crisis, their homosocial bonds, and their contributions to the war effort. Finally, the sixth chapter focuses on the threat of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, which accelerated the recruitment of additional fighting men. Themes like gendered patriotism, masculine wartime behavior, and national identity are recycled in plays such as Frederick Pilon’s *He Would Be a Soldier* (1786), *Inkle and Yarico* (1787), John O’Keefe’s *World in a Village* (1793), and Elizabeth Inchbald’s *Every One Has His Fault* (1793) and *Wives as They Were, Maids as They Are* (1797), among many other performances discussed here, all of which adapt the romantic comedy formula to new, wartime purposes. While focusing mainly on middle- and gentry-class female characters’ contribution to creating a professional officer class and their real-life experiences once married with military men, this chapter also touches upon the issue of racialization on the London stage, with actresses like Margaret Martyr successfully playing blackface parts, such as Wowski and Mungo.

Two aspects of this book stood out for this reader. The first is the author’s commendable effort of cultural recovery: even the incomplete list of plays mentioned above gestures toward the immense archival labor that Backscheider engaged in. In doing so, she joins other similar attempts at recuperating lesser-known plays of the period, such as John Robbins’s *Displacing Female Bodies on the Eighteenth-Century Stage* (2024), Blair Hoxby’s edited collection, *Shadows of the Enlightenment: Tragic Drama During Europe’s Age of Reason* (2022), and Felicity Nussbaum’s *Rival Queens. Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (2013), to name just a few. Second, I’d like to acknowledge Professor Backscheider’s remarkable pedagogical acumen: while I’ve

always found her textual analyses both thorough and insightful, what I've truly learned from this time are her detailed appendices on "Wars, Recruiting, and Women's Responsibilities and Rights" and "News," which provide the necessary historical context to understand the broader argument of the book. Many questions have been clarified and unknowns illuminated in these concise, sharp, and easily digestible sections. All in all, *Women in Wartime* is, indeed, "a revisionary, revelatory story of the most influential genre of the eighteenth century," written with minutiae and impressive erudition by one of the finest scholars in the field.

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Baker, Christopher. *Creator of Nightmares: Henry Fuseli's Art and Life.*

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Those who look for a first introduction to Fuseli (1741–1825)—or a second one, since his masterpiece, *The Nightmare*, first exhibited in 1782 and later repainted in three further versions and distributed in numberless prints, is so universally recognized—couldn't do better that begin with this book by Christopher Baker, longtime editor of the *Burlington Magazine*.

Born Johann Heinrich Füssli in Zurich, Füssli was intended by his painter father for the clergy: he took orders in 1721 but was forced to leave Switzerland when he and his college friend, Johann Kaspar Lavater (whose work on physiognomy he would later translate into English) exposed the malfeasance of a powerful politician. For the next ten years, he travelled through Germany, France, and England. He initially hoped to be a writer on philosophy and the arts, but his first books—a translation of Winckelmann's *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1765; Füssli did not continue to admire Winkelman's ardent classicism for long) and *Remarks on the Writings and Conduct of Rousseau* (1767) sold poorly. In England, Füssli met Joshua Reynolds, who praised his drawings and encouraged him to visit Rome, where he studied antiquities, Mannerist art, and especially his new hero Michelangelo, for nearly eight years. Here, too, he changed his surname to the more Italian-sounding Fuseli.

Back in London in 1779, Fuseli (now Henry; though fluent in German, French, Italian, and English, he never lost his thick German accent) studied