Julia Banister, *Masculinity, Militarism and Eighteenth-Century Culture, 1689-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 258. £32. ISBN 9781107195196.

Julia Banister's book provides a compelling investigation into the relationship between militarism and masculinity. Utilising a range of sources, her research offers a comparative approach to the subject, considering the relationship between cultural discourse and the practice of military masculinity, predominantly through the context of the court-martial.

The book does not attempt to be comprehensive in its account, nor does it seek to situate the military man in relation to a civilian 'other' (3). Instead, Banister offers a focused analysis of competing military masculinities which struggled for cultural and social hegemony over the course of the long eighteenth century. In particular, she focuses on two 'parallel lines of argument' (13), the first of which conceived of militarism as essential to masculinity, 'lodged within and made manifest by a "naturally" sexed body' (3). The second understood military masculinity as something which had to be cultivated, performed, and sustained. Here Banister draws on the work of Judith Butler and Thomas Laqueur to suggest that the counterargument to essentialism stressed the performance of masculine gender identity in a manner which could be understood as proto-constructionist (6-9). As Banister illustrates, these two lines of argument were not static but profoundly affected by the growing cultural currency of politeness, sensibility, and celebrity, as well as the growth of the public sphere and the structural changes to the army and navy. In taking this approach, the book avoids an overly linear narrative and instead examines the complexity of conceptualising the military man both in print *and* in practice.

Beginning in post-revolutionary England during the reign of William III, Banister analyses the standing army debate as a framing device for understanding the essentialist and proto-constructionist perspectives. Opponents of a standing army, such as John Trenchard and John Toland, argued that it was a tool of absolutism. Utilising the language of civic humanism, they suggested that the militiaman, naturally endowed with courage and military prowess, would ensure the security of the nation. Conversely, proponents of a standing army suggested that 'male bodies are not imbued with latent military capacity' (23) and must be shaped through training to fight effectively. An uncomfortable aspect of this argument, however, was its emphasis on performance. The modern military man lacked an innate civic militarism yet was seemingly too rough and ready to be 'properly polite' (33). The progression of this debate within Banister's book is not reduced to new writers putting forward new ideas, but a mix of social, cultural, and political conditions that fostered a revaluation of how men were either naturally militaristic, or necessarily deficient and therefore in need of training facilitated by the professionalisation of the military man.

As noted, case studies of court-martials are interspersed throughout this book, serving to anchor these abstract debates by examining the actions and practices of individual military men. Due to the nature of the source material, these formulations of military masculinity were, quite literally, put on trial, making them ideal for understanding how the practice of masculinity measured up to legal, as well as public, scrutiny. For example, during the trials of Admiral Lestock (1745) and Admiral Byng (1756-7) both men defended their actions by emphasising the importance of discipline and correct procedure by deferring to the navy's *Articles of War*. The outcome of these respective court-martials resulted in a verdict of innocence for the former and guilt for the latter. Banister demonstrates that the modern military man, who was disciplined and adherent to a strict code of conduct, did not exponentially gain traction throughout the eighteenth century but faced public pushback and, in the case of Byng, condemnation from military authorities.

Banister's decision to eschew 'a single narrative of "change"' (10) is not at the expense of tracking actual change over time. She concludes that the centralisation of military authority 'conquered the old ideal of the militiaman, but only by cannibalising the civic assumption that all men are capable of militarism and turning this into an assertion that all men can be made to be military men' (225).

Overall, Banister's book is a coherent, thorough, and interesting piece of research which effectively examines the complex relationship between militarism and masculinity. As a result, any criticism of the book is marginal. One aspect worth highlighting is the case studies' exclusive focus on naval officers. However, Banister convincingly argues in favour of her source selection by stating the importance of Britain's fleet to national defence and the role of the navy in military innovation, citing Jeremy Black. Furthermore, the chronological structure of the book runs the risk of repeating or reiterating arguments already made in previous chapters; however, Banister adeptly avoids this pitfall, throwing into sharp relief the change *and* continuity of this period. To conclude, specialists and students alike will undoubtedly find value in this excellent publication.

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