Introduction

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I write the introduction to this issue with great sadness, as my composition signals that its true author, John Richardson, is no longer here to write it himself. At the same time, I am heartened and touched that the authors featured here, as well as the editors of *Eighteenth-Century Life*, have come together to release this special issue in tribute to John and to his life of exemplary scholarship.

The essays in this volume were originally delivered as part of a workshop—"Literature and War"—that John hosted at the National University of Singapore in April 2018. Later in his career, John had gravitated toward this topic, and specifically toward depictions of suffering as they emerged across eighteenth-century poetry. Initially, this turn seemed to me strange and incongruous; John was kind, fatherly, and full of sardonic wit—why this attraction to conflict, violence, and anguish? And isn't war an awfully curmudgeonly topic? I soon came to understand, of course, the embarrassing unfamiliarity that engendered this response. As the essays in this issue demonstrate, new theories about war and its representation, whether biopolitical, affective, or linguistic, are redefining how we understand and experience the violent conflict that has proven, however depressingly, one of the most enduring facets of human existence. I also realized that John, of all people, would want to analyze the dynamic of discord and how it

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arises; how suffering can be articulated and understood; and how war has its own poetics that demand our careful attention: gentle souls are often attuned to such topics because they know the stakes of interpretation are tremendously high.

As John himself emphasized, the long-held assumption that war is not a major feature of eighteenth-century literary production is simply not true.[1] While there is no major work that offers a sustained account of the experience of war—no *War and Peace*, as Max Novak famously argued nearly thirty years ago—we find authors across the century grappling with the reality of war and its lasting effects.[2] It was, after all, an era of almost incessant war, from the English Civil Wars through the revolutionary and Napoleonic battles at the turn of the nineteenth century.[3] The Age of Reason is also the Age of War—an age, then, far beyond the scope of reason. Indeed, the century looks *different* when viewed through the lens of war, as recent scholarship in both the eighteenth century and Romantic periods has illustrated.[4] This scholarship has picked up dramatically over the past twenty years, as we see in the pioneering work of Mary Favret, Gillian Russell, Simon Bainbridge, Philip Shaw, Suvir Kaul, Jeffrey N. Cox, Sharon Alker, M. John Cardwell, Carol Watts, and Neil Ramsey, to name only a few.[5] As all of these scholars demonstrate in varied ways, apprehending war—its true costs, its violence and suffering, its role in national and colonial enterprises—demands the work of imagination. Specifically, an ongoing concern in recent scholarship, and in many of the essays featured here, is how imaginative and aesthetic frameworks allow individuals to sound the depths of experiences that resist direct expression. If pain and suffering often elude language, as Elaine Scarry has elegantly argued, the realm of imagination opens an alternative means of articulation.[6]

While Scarry and others like Jonathan Lamb have shown us "the failure of language adequately to express what happened or what it is like to experience an incomprehensible event," or, in other words, the "embarrassment of language in the face of an immeasurable phenomenon" like "pestilence, war, starvation, and death," the vast majority of eighteenth-century individuals did not experience war directly.[7] Instead, as Favret has established, war was mediated via "institutions and verbal conventions that filtered and altered its content"; ultimately, such mediations created an "aphasia about war" that not only protected contemporary readers, but also, as she suggests, stymied criticism up until the present day.[8] Favret expands

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these concepts in *War at a Distance* (2010), which elaborates on the dynamic of distance and shows how war permeated home in fundamental yet often imperceptible ways: "The literature of the Romantic period reveals the everyday not as a zone of peace in contrast to distant war, but as the unspectacular register or medium of wartime."[9] War took root in culture and cultural production as structures of feeling, emotions that lie beyond clear knowledge—beyond cognition, even—and that manifest in a certain mentality and an array of literary tropes and figures. Numerous studies have furthered and refined Favret's foundational work—for instance, Bainbridge's exposition of how war shapes Romanticism, Russell's study of the migration of war into culture and performance, and Shaw's analysis of the ideology of sacrifice.[10] Even those scholars who remind us of the accounts of actual combatants—such as Richardson, Ramsey, and Shaw—emphasize the imaginative channels through which that experience can be formulated and transmitted.[11] Thus, contemporary war studies remain deeply indebted to Favret, who was generous enough to write the afterword to this collection.

How one can express or convey that which cannot be directly stated—whether due to psychological, cognitive, or political factors—remains a central concept in scholarship on war, while it also concerns many of the essays featured in this special issue. The contributors here examine how expression takes place—implicitly, metaphorically, secretly—in the context of events unimaginable or inarticulable, as authors turn toward oblique modes of analysis and representation, whether in dictionaries, secret histories, or depictions of civil unrest, to probe and convey what tends to remain hidden (and that which is actively suppressed). Their attentiveness to the often cryptic poetics of war leads to surprising new readings of canonic authors—Defoe, Swift, Johnson, and Mary Shelley, for instance—while also drawing our attention to lesser-known figures who were important to literary developments of the time (in the case of poetry, especially). For all of our contributors, war offers an important new heuristic for viewing the literary production of the eighteenth-century and Romantic periods, as, in turn, the authors and texts they study facilitate new and invigorating ways of reading war, which has become a vital area of critical inquiry far beyond the eighteenth century.

In his commanding opening essay on war poetry and fiction of the 1740s, Thomas Keymer examines what we mean when we talk about civil

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war, as well as "the heuristic value" of these varying definitions as they pertain to the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 (which was only later viewed as a civil war rather than a rebellion). Tracing the foundational Enlightenment discussion of Emer de Vattel, as well as the more modern theories of Giorgio Angamben and David Armitage, Keymer explores the poetics of civil war across the Towneley manuscripts and the poetry of Alexander Pope, William Hamilton of Bangour, William Collins, and Hester Mulso (later Chapone). All of this builds toward a dazzling reading of the perspectival complexity of Tobias Smollett's "The Tears of Scotland" (1745/46) and *Humphry Clinker* (1771), where, as Keymer suggests, we find the unresolved ambiguities enfolded into the term "civil war" emerge as "a literature divided against itself."

Similarly focused on political constraints and on the limits of what can be spoken in any given historical moment, Melinda Rabb illuminates how Jonathan Swift contributes to the genre of secret history, and, more broadly, how "the reverberations of violent conflict could be felt even by those who did not participate directly." As Rabb outlines, the secret history arose in England after the reestablishment of monarchy and claimed to expose the hidden motives behind the exercise of power. For Swift, however, it serves an alternate purpose: "It allows more painful realities to remain buried and thus provides a means of displacing, postponing, and avoiding direct confrontation with the devastation caused by war." Swift illustrates how "secret history, as a post-Civil Wars discourse, exposes embarrassing moments while deflecting attention from even more horrifying deeds that press against the limits of writing." Both revealing and concealing, exposing and deflecting, our "ironic historian" examines hidden interests while always remaining aware of all that "remains buried under 'the heap.'"

Concentrating on the spatial dimensions of war in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Ala Alryys explores Defoe's "remarkable geography imaginary," and, specifically, how Crusoe's behavior on both land and sea extrapolates contemporary structures of thought wherein war offered a model for colonial encounter and the envisioning of global domains. Engaging two forms of imperial knowledge, cartography and political theory, Alryys locates in Crusoe a supreme "strategist, a user and interpreter of space and the knowledges of space," and suggests that the early novel explores individual subjectivity specifically in relation to a hostile world. His essay, therefore, reflects the "spatial turn" in the humanities and the social sciences, as well as newer scholarship on the novel's focus on space, and shows how Defoe's

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brand of realism imports extraliterary discourses that were already both political and mimetic.

Bridging the gap between the earlier century and the Romantic period, yet maintaining focus on indirect expression, Lynda Mugglestone explores what she calls "war words," or a "metalanguage of words for words about war." As she suggests, the "langscape" of eighteenth-century conflict offers crucial insight into an era defined by war, as well as by related concepts of power, conquest, nation, and identity. Specifically, she explores how words for and about war function in Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, which constitutes a referential system that extends far beyond "the formal specification of word and definition." Mugglestone ascertains that the entries in Johnson's *Dictionary* tend to cast war as an ethical or socio-moral problem, even in definitions of words that seem only obliquely related to war. Surprisingly, then, Johnson provides an underlying discourse that becomes a "critical probing of war," expressing skepticism about its benefits as well as an acute awareness of its costs.

Moving squarely into the Romantic period, Neil Ramsey infuses the history and theory of the novel with biopolitics in order to offer a fresh reading of *Frankenstein* (1818) and, more largely, a new interpretation of Shelley's profound concerns with war. As Ramsey persuasively argues, scholars have typically read the obvious parallels between Napoleon and Victor Frankenstein in relation to revolutionary politics, but have not fully explored related questions about the violence of war and the political monster. By contrast, he reads the text as a postwar novel that anticipates the "war-machine" concept that consolidates later in the nineteenth century. As Ramsey outlines, Shelley depicts the individual as shaped by history and, therefore, by war, violence, and political difference. *Frankenstein* illustrates that nation-building always involves estrangement, monstrosity, and suffering, while it also normalizes the military model of the management of life.

Examining two women writers whose work was published just as Britain prepared for hostilities against France in 1793, Andrew Lincoln explores the concept of guilt and the corrosive effects of war as they appear in Anna Barbauld's sermon, *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation*, and in Charlotte Smith's novel, *The Old Manor House*. As Lincoln argues, the focus on national and individual conscience appears frequently in liberal and radical writing of the period, but Barbauld and Smith are unique because they recognize that "necessary acquiescence" implicates all citizens and thereby raises questions about how one can attain a position from which to judge

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social and national affairs. While each author approaches this problem in slightly different ways, both demonstrate that "sympathy for the victims of war provides a way out of the moral impasse they encounter," and a means "of recovering a natural moral authority that seems almost inevitably undermined by living in a nation dominated by a modern system of war."

This volume concludes with John's essay, which was delivered at the "Literature and War" workshop in Singapore. Here, John examines poetry of the American Revolution and its contribution to the larger tradition of Anglophone war poetry through what he calls the "private sublime," which aligns with the more general focus on privatized experience in the eighteenth century. While the private sublime came into being with individuals exposed to war in America, later authors like Smith, who never experienced war firsthand, locate meaning in a similarly intense, emotional, and aestheticized response. As John argues, these expressions emerged almost unseen at the time yet are some of the earliest iterations of what will become a central mode of war representation.

Taken together, the essays in this special issue showcase exciting new scholarship in war studies, while also honoring the life and work of John Richardson. We hope, too, that this issue opens new paradigms for thinking about national, social, and global conflict at a time when institutionalized forms of violence have consolidated and proliferated to such an extent that they *appear* timeless. In reality, of course, war is always rooted in specific histories and power dynamics, not least in a new global order that not only engages in but manufactures war and allows so much access to the sites and casualties of armed conflict that it paradoxically desensitizes us, and fails, in its very abundance, to generate sympathy—a key step, as eighteenth-century authors remind us, in triggering moral action. Each contributor to this issue combats such habituation, calling our attention to the implicit, the oblique, the circuitous, and in doing so formulates new ways of reading war. More broadly, they illuminate registers of experience that manifest in writing in such subtle and complex ways that their elucidation demands the work of literary scholars.

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Notes

1. John Richardson, "Literature and War in the Eighteenth Century," Oxford Handbooks Online, at <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935338-e-005?rskey=pMK6Xr&result=1>.

2. Maximillian E. Novak, "Warfare and Its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Or, Why Eighteenth-Century Fiction Failed to Produce a *War and Peace*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 4 (1992): 185–206.

3. While much of this combat took place outside of Britain, war remained, by the Romantic period, "the single most important fact of British life." See *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism: 1793–1815*, ed. Betty T. Bennett (New York: Garland, 1976), ix. On this distance and increasingly sanitized practices of warfare, see Julie Park, "Preface," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19 (2006): vi–xii. Yet war remained central to the cultural consciousness, as Christopher F. Loar has argued: even in "early eighteenth-century Britain," which is "not typically understood as a society at war," political thinking was shaped by the Civil Wars, as well as more recent events that centered on force and liberty (including the Sacheverell trial of 1709–10 and the Jacobite risings of 1715). See Loar, "How to Say Things with Guns: Military Technology and the Politics of *Robinson Crusoe*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19 (2006): 1–20, especially 5–6.

4. Simon Bainbridge, "Romanticism and War," Oxford Handbooks Online, at <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935338-e-111?rskey=RaQXMN&result=7>.

5. For a useful summary of the eighteenth-century and Romantic periods, respectively, see Bainbridge, "Romanticism," and Richardson, "Literature." See also the important special issue that precedes ours: "War," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19 (2006).

6. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 1985).

7. Jonathan Lamb, "Sterne, Sebald, and Siege Architecture," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19 (2006): 21–41; the quotation is from 21.

8. Mary A. Favret, "Coming Home: The Public Spaces of Romantic War," *Studies in Romanticism* 33 (1994): 539–48; the quotation is from 539.

9. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton: Princeton Univ., 2010).

10. Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 2003); Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); and Philip Shaw, *Suffering and Sentiment in Romantic Military Art* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

11. Neil Ramsey, *The Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture, 1780–1835* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), and Shaw, *Suffering and Sentiment*. Richardson's final book on this topic remains unpublished.

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