

Review: Andrew Hopper and Philip Major, eds., *England's Fortress: New Perspectives on Thomas, 3rd Lord Fairfax* (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), xv + 290; 20 illus. \$149.95.

It is no mean achievement for a man to stand at the center of poems by the two greatest English poets and yet be effaced from history quite as much as Sir Thomas Fairfax has been: or rather, as he allowed himself to become. But how, other than by self-effacement, was an honorable and godly gentleman lacking a clear sense of futurity to comport himself? It is tempting to suppose that this patron's public character was determined as much by family circumstance as was that of his poet: for if Andrew Marvell was preternaturally conscious of shadows cast by a father, Fairfax was, his poet suggested and modern scholarship has sometimes agreed, no less conditioned by a shadow—the truncated one he himself cast forward. After all, he built an estate and shaped a projection and a career without a direct male heir to look to.

Marvellian readers of *England's Fortress* will look for new light on the relationship Fairfax and Marvell must have built, even new clues to purposes that they may have shared. And they will not be disappointed on either front. Without exception, the essays underscore the seriousness of Fairfax's endeavors and in so doing make of him a worthy intellectual and moral companion for the poet. Not least, the volume is to be welcomed for the way it rescues the Lord General's verse from the oblivion to which critics have so often consigned it. A thoughtful and learned essay by Philip Major on Fairfax's famous preoccupation with his "Solitudes" gives proper space to his voluminous religious meditations as well as to his earnest fascination with French *libertin* verse, and especially that of Saint-Amant. This piece finds a worthy partner in Keith McDonald's wide-ranging address to the theme of privacy in Fairfax's life and in that life reflected in Marvell's poems, and it has much new to say about landed property, about the vista (at Bilborough in particular), and about mirrors and reflexivity more generally.

No less remarkable is Rory Tanner's careful exploration of a part of Fairfax's intellectual—and spiritual—life that is rarely given equal billing these days, his translation of the Psalms. This essay contains what readers of forensic tastes may be forgiven for thinking the volume's smoking gun, for Tanner notes (231) that at junctures where the Psalmist's text might have called for something else this scrupling paterfamilias avoided endorsing filial succession. Could it be that the Lord General's determination to over-ride his family's entail on the estate in order to make provision for his daughter

and his readiness to take stern action against his king came from a similar place in the psyche? That suggestion is undoubtedly simplistic, and we might understand why Tanner makes so little of the filial point, for Fairfax's translation-work post-dated alike his work with the estate lawyers and his New Model Army commission. At the least, though, we might infer a retiree's concern to shield his record from scriptural challenge.

A shared theme of all three of the literary-critical essays is Fairfax's very self-conscious ambivalence. And the volume opens with another address to Fairfax the ambivalent in a fine account by John Callow of his 1650s Lordship of the Isle of Man. Unlike his Stanley predecessors in the Lordship, Fairfax respected the islanders' rights even as he protected the position and revenues of the widowed Lady Derby: had he had a son to build for, might he have been more aggressive? That question is further complicated not just by Fairfax's well-known sympathy for the hard-pressed Diggers, of which Andrew Hopper reminds us in his remarks on the Brownlow and Mollo film *Winstanley*, but by his use of his household (including Daniel King, Marvell's successor as tutor to Mary) to investigate and administer the island. Was Marvell himself somewhere in this kitchen cabinet? It is fitting that the juncture where so many value-schemes overlapped—personal, familial, gender, dynastic, partisan—should be addressed by one of the best essays in the volume, Jacqueline Eales's piece on Lady Fairfax and her Vere connections and heritage. The "great Nymph" was not some pastiche target for mockery but one of an iconic sisterhood shaped by the grim struggles in the Netherlands and the Palatinate.

Other contributors provide us new ways of understanding more familiar elements in the General's career. Robert Barcroft points out that Fairfax was not just the great cavalry commander but also no mean hand at siege-work, where his direct and decisive approach was as characteristic as it was unfashionable. No less than Barcroft, Mandy de Belin adds depth and texture to Fairfax's generalship, for her essay on the Naseby landscape reminds us that physical obstacles were a constraint in a cavalry set-piece as in a siege. She also demonstrates with unusual authority how the landscape has changed: the scale of change even in the still-rural east Midlands has made it difficult to visualize the terrain over which Fairfax, Rupert, and the others fought. Urban streetscapes, as Ian Atherton notes, have been just as impermanent, though his essay on memorializing Fairfax's battles is more concerned with the important question of what it is that we try to commemorate and why that has changed. Andrew Hopper roams over not unconnected terrain in his entertaining piece on Fairfax in modern retellings.

A question that Atherton and Hopper touch on is raised no less by the editors in their introduction: why do we hear so much more of Cromwell than of his erstwhile commander? Richard Nash's elegant address to Fairfax the horse-breeder may offer an end-run around that challenge, for it introduces us to the man in his natural world in a newly topical way. But though the

volume is interested in the Fairfax who seems to have been short-changed by history, it does not work hard to ask why.

We might feel that the very diffidence and unfixedness of the Fairfax the essays deliver, and even the vexed question of the woman in his life, make him the very hero for our times, and certainly the apt partner for his poet. But the literary-critical essays for their part don't quite suggest the urgency of the issues at stake, for too often their terms of reference are set by the texts they expound. Thus, McDonald's essay tends to take Marvell's words as simply expressive of an inner state, and such an approach is shared by Tanner, who fails to raise the problem of the dating of Fairfax's poem, "On the Fatal day Jan. 30," and who, by the tenses he uses about it (222), seems to suggest that its writing was more or less coincident with the regicide: that assumption is unproven. More largely, Tanner does not allow for the possibility that the psalter's many expressions of regret were in some fashion retrospective apologetics rather than immediate truth-telling.

Indeed, it is hard to avoid the feeling, when reading Major on Fairfax on retirement, Tanner on the psalm translations, and even McDonald on privacy, that we are confronting a series of essays on texts in need of their author. In their introduction the editors reflect helpfully on the meaning of Fairfax's resignation by examining reactions to it in its moment, but this doesn't quite compensate for the absence of a real grip on the man himself: it is odd to see, in a commemorative collection on Fairfax, no real engagement with the voluminous sermon notes, with the hermeticism, with the millennialism, or with the sympathy expressed in the famous encounter with Gerard Winstanley. It is an opportunity lost, and I suspect for a long time to come those curious will be turning to Ian Gentles's essay in the *ODNB*.

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