

GeNDeR Studies Program



Research Workshop

Making the Philosophical Hero: "Manliness," Physical Force, and Political Efficacy in Robert Bisset's *Douglas*

The "philosophical hero" is an idealized male protagonist who features in many British political novels of the 1790s and 1800s. These heroes also display a great deal of physical prowess and often engage in daring rescues of vulnerable characters, and in doing so espouse traditional traits of heroic masculinity or "manliness," as it was termed in the period. This paper will explore two underexamined elements of the novels of this period: first, the physical prowess of these philosophical heroes, and second, the conservative response to the Jacobin novel known as the "anti-Jacobin" novel. I analyze a relatively unique anti-Jacobin novel, Robert Bisset's *Douglas*, to argue that it appropriates the physical prowess of the Jacobin hero and, in its efforts to divorce these traits from revolutionary politics, lays bare the political and philosophical purchase of "manly" physicality for novels of the period.

Tuesday, October 10

3-4pm

339 O'Shaughnessy

Presenter:

Jeremy Davidheiser

Jeremy Davidheiser is a third-year PhD student in English literature, specializing in the British long nineteenth century. He hopes to pursue a project that traces deployments of heroic masculinity throughout the nineteenth-century political novel, examining the tensions between the "manly" virtue of physical courage and the complicated ways political violence is understood, and largely condemned, in that period.



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