

build a broader understanding of the role of espionage in the Revolution, a goal he largely accomplished in *Invisible Ink*. He admirably fills the void left by the spies themselves and reconstructs their activities from a range of sources. However, in making this historiographical contribution, Nagy misses out on an opportunity to enrich our understanding of the topic.

Northampton Community College

ROBERT F. SMITH

The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America. By KATE HAULMAN.
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. 290 pp. Illustrations,
notes, index. \$39.95.)

The boycotts protesting imperial taxation in the 1760 and 1770s relied on good recordkeeping. Local committees of observation and inspection stalked city docks, taking down names of wayward merchants who tried to distribute fashionable fabrics and collecting the signatures of those who complied with nonimportation agreements. With their logbooks, these committees enforced a political reading of imported material culture that linked fashion with unacceptable political dependence. Less than a decade later, this simple equation had collapsed, as one such logbook illustrates. On its back cover, a new owner (or perhaps one of those same community enforcers) inked a list of imported hair powder, silk stockings, and other fashionable finery purchased for a season of social visits. In her book *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*, Kate Haulman sets out to explain what happened to cause such a reversal.

Haulman argues that the Revolutionaries' claim that imported goods threatened the political order grew out of a half century of power struggles in which fashion seemed to menace the social order of the colonies. From the beginning of the century, fashion served as a critical way to mark distinctions of rank and sex and, at the same time, to confuse and undermine them. For elite men and women, dressing the part was important in finding a mate and securing a social position, but critics of women's hoops and men's periwigs complained that such styles made women too commanding and men too decadent. As she explores these confrontations over power, Haulman reminds us that fashion was both a series of popular styles of dress and a larger cultural concept associated with luxury, taste, changeability, and sexual desirability. Both senses of the term were deployed as cultural weapons. Drawing upon transatlantic print culture, merchants' business records, and personal letters, she presents a subtle and detailed narrative of the changing ways that Anglo-Americans thought and argued about what to wear and what it meant. Other historians have depicted episodes in fashion wars; Haulman connects them to a fuller picture, rooted in

the lives of urban Americans, of the political uses of material life across the eighteenth century.

While the content of fashion critiques changed over time, their ubiquity—and, simultaneously, the likelihood that they would be ignored—persisted. In the years following the Seven Years' War, prominent Anglo-American colonists championed a homespun movement and "country" style they believed would cultivate modesty and sacrifice, but few people of means were willing to give up their fine fabrics and big hair for long. Patriot rhetoric during the Revolution likewise highlighted fashion but struggled for adherents. In the book's strongest chapters, Haulman's reading of consumer politics builds upon, but differs from, T. H. Breen's influential *Marketplace of Revolution*. Whereas Breen highlighted the liberating potential of choice in consumer purchases, Haulman's focus on fashion stresses instead the ways these choices were constrained. Breen's Americans bought the same calico and felt a sense of unity; Haulman's Americans used purchases the way they always had—to maintain or manipulate distinctions of class and gender.

Taking her story into the years of rising partisan politics in the new United States, Haulman concludes that, ultimately, fashion proved too slippery to serve as a reliable political tool. Its meanings were too multivalent. Style itself was stubbornly linked with Europe and femininity, two categories firmly excluded from political ideals in the early republic. Yet, as Haulman's densely argued book shows, fashion's rich possibilities for variation in style and its function as costume continued to make it rhetorically irresistible for Americans debating social and political power.

University of California, Davis

ELLEN HARTIGAN-O'CONNOR

Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America. By WENDY BELLION. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. 388 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$45.)

Wendy Bellion casts the canonical paintings and vernacular illusory displays of the early republic into relief in the Philadelphia galleries, taverns, and theaters where viewers confronted them. In so doing, she considers how early Americans scrutinized these exhibitions when "the senses were politicized as agents of knowledge and actions" (5). Creators and audiences agreed that *trompe l'oeil* paintings, "Invisible Lady" displays, cosmoramas, and phantasmagorias were tools of instruction. Because these images enabled discernment of the very deceptions they purveyed, they encouraged viewers to hone the visual perception that would help them rout deception in early republican society and government. In positioning his renowned *Staircase Group* in the State House, Bellion argues,