

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,

Charles Willson Peale affirmed the right of citizens to look into governmental spaces and interrogate what they saw. Thomas Birch evaded mathematically perfect perspective in his engravings to convey an emplaced way of seeing the city's marketplaces, themselves a challenge to the geometrically precise street grid. Samuel Lewis juxtaposed an original tableau with its trompe l'oeil copy to facilitate visual comparison of originals and imitations—a skill handy in sussing out authentic bank notes from forged ones. Even when deceptions evaded full explanation or aroused anxieties, viewers took comfort in developing skills that promised to undeceive them. Only in the 1820s, Bellion argues, did Americans roundly accept visual invitations to revel in the ability of illusory images to deceive by drawing viewers into a visual interior.

Bellion loses steam when she extends her visual analysis to broader arguments about politics and citizenship. Her discussion of the relationship between art and party politics covers familiar ground; it is no surprise that early Americans articulated political arguments with metaphors of vision and entwined discussions of art with debates over federalism. But when Bellion turns to the epistemology of sensing, she constructs a fresh framework for reconsidering the ways that early Americans claimed membership in a national citizenry defined more powerfully by republican culture than by law. Visibility was a right; discernment was a responsibility. But for whom were these arguments meaningful? Bellion readily acknowledges the paucity of direct evidence of attendance of illusionary exhibitions, but she sells herself short when she falls back on the conclusion that “not all Americans had equal access to visibility” (280). Certainly, white men with disposable income occupied a privileged position in exhibition spaces and the historical record. But Bellion hints at a more complicated story: the prosperous free black population of Philadelphia could have subscribed to Peale's museum but did not; diaries and images regularly place women in sight of deceptions; both groups projected their voices from the presses of Philadelphia. These facts offer opportunities to address the nature of contested citizenship more comprehensively. When and where did politically marginalized groups demonstrate critical visual perception to position themselves as active citizens? When did they shun the public spaces and rhetoric of perception as a means by which enfranchised individuals reinforced their power? Bellion's book deserves praise for pushing scholars to consider original questions like these and for proving that they cannot answer them without taking into account the rich visual culture that she masterfully brings to light.

University of Virginia

WHITNEY A. MARTINKO