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Mary A. Waters

Elizabeth Eger, ed., *Bluestockings Displayed: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Pp. xv + 309. £60.00/\$95.00.

The twenty-first century has witnessed a surge of interest in eighteenth-century women's intellectual life. Propelled by such books as Harriet Guest's *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750–1810* and Anne Mellor's *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780–1830*, both published in 2000, this new turn in research has shredded the twentieth-century commonplace that feminine modesty kept women out of the public sphere. Instead, in sometimes small but nevertheless often recognized and always significant ways, women shaped British arts, cultural identity, and public policy. Among those early influential volumes figured *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700–1830* (2001), a collection Elizabeth Eger edited with Charlotte Grant, Cliona O'Gallchoir, and Penny Warburton. In *Bluestockings Displayed*, Eger collects twelve essays on a similar topic, and those familiar with her prior work will not be disappointed.

Eger's previous collection included her own essay on the 1778 painting by Richard Samuel entitled *The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain*, which emblemizes the nation's women intellectuals and artists as the triumph of advanced civilization. The current collection extends this inquiry by exploring the dynamics of visual representations, public image, and reputation in a culture with shifting, often even hostile, views regarding female agency in literature and the arts. Inspired by the 2008 national Portrait Gallery exhibition "Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings" that Eger co-curated with Lucy Peltz, the collection comprises the fruits of a conference associated with the exhibit. Together, its essays explore how visual culture shaped Enlightenment views on the relationship between virtue, patriotism, and female learning.

As one would expect of a book as engaged with the visual arts as with the literary, *Bluestockings Displayed* is illustrated with many of the prints and portraits that its contributors address. Unfortunately, all illustrations are in black and white, making detail difficult to discriminate in some prints, and leaving important background completely obscured in others. The exhibition catalog, *Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings* (2008), also by Eger, might usefully supplement, but that is a separate publication by a different press. Having invested in rich illustration, Cambridge might have taken the additional step of providing at least some of these images in color, especially in cases where the argument depends on details lost in the black-and-white renderings.

Eger organizes the volume into three sections, beginning with five essays under "Portraits." Spanning the years between Alexander Pope's *Epistle to a Lady* (1743) and the early Victorian era, this section charts women's efforts to represent themselves as respectable, even admirable, in the face of such visual and verbal derogation as Pope's *Epistle* and the licentious satire of cartoonists like Thomas Rowlandson, James Gillray, Isaac Cruikshank, and others. Anne Mellor's essay explores visual representations from the early years of the nineteenth century that combine eroticized femininity with moral propriety to contain public unease and depict female intellectual authority as compatible

with Victorian respectability. Elizabeth Clery's piece extends this argument with an overview of women authors who used paintings and prints, especially book frontispieces, to promote an image of virtuous femininity in an increasingly anonymous literary marketplace. Clare Barlow's essay continues the exploration, analyzing Bluestocking portraits in the guise of mythological and historical figures as advocating female learning. In the only essay devoted to a woman visual artist, Anne Yarrington discusses the relationship between sculptor Anne Seymour Damer's politics and her artistic fame. This section that opened with sentimentally erotic portraits of young women authors winds up with Devoney Looser's essay confronting the ageism that often depicted elderly women as physically repulsive and forced older female intellectuals into self-representations of exceptional propriety and reserve.

Part two on "Performance" opens with Joseph Roach arguing that soprano Elizabeth Linley, consigned to private concerts by her husband Richard Brinsley Sheridan's ban on public performance, "recaptur[ed] her lost voice" in verse and "in the visual imagery she could control" (124). Susan Staves follows on exceptional female sopranos who mastered the musicianship, technical virtuosity, and vocal strength needed to compete with more dominant male castrati for the most demanding opera roles. Bluestockings' unconventionally complex and sympathetic views of Shakespeare's female characters allow Shearer West to claim that Elizabeth Montagu, Sarah Siddons, and Anna Jameson "read the character of Lady Macbeth against the grain" (164). And Felicity Nussbaum suggests that Hester Thrale Piozzi's role as "rogue bluestocking" (195) brought her a London circle that rivaled Montagu's own, and into contact with the Italian Della Cruscan circle that shared many of her personal and aesthetic views. While all these women performed for the Bluestocking circle, only Linley, who gave up her performance career, enjoyed their acceptance. Others were held at arm's length, Siddons for her lack of learning, Thrale for her irreverent attitude toward Dr. Johnson and her scandalous marriage. But the cases of women vocalists in particular expose the Bluestockings' own vexed views on female publicity and their reservations about whether music could be regarded as a learned art.

The final essays on "Patronage and networks" chart the transition from the formation of Elizabeth Montagu's Bluestocking network to the professional culture of the 1790s, wherein women gained standing as professional writers. Markman Ellis surveys Montagu's epistolary efforts to extend her intellectual influence during the mid-century decade when her Bluestocking network began to take shape. Political opposition to George II forms the backdrop for Clarissa Campbell Orr's link between Montagu's Bluestocking activities and her husband's political fortunes. Finally, Harriet Guest looks at representations of metropolitan high life to compare Charlotte Smith's authorial persona of elegant provincial retirement with the notoriety of Mary Robinson, who relied for professional support on the lax fashionable circle she purports to despise.

To date, a few central Bluestocking figures known for their classical learning and mentoring of other women intellectuals have received the lion's share of research attention. *Bluestockings Displayed* probes new questions while turning attention to a much wider range of intellectual pursuits and several less frequently studied figures among learned women. These women drew on the rich visual culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to manage public perception as they attained fame for their place in the Enlightenment intellectual world.