

**Kathryn R. King, *A Political Biography of Eliza Haywood*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012. Pp. 288. £60. ISBN 9781851969173.**

The publication of Kathryn King's *Political Biography of Eliza Haywood* is a welcome addition to eighteenth-century scholarship. As King's preface makes clear, a traditional biography of Haywood would be a near impossible feat, and one best-avoided if Haywood is to be liberated from the pitfalls of biographical supposition that have plagued and coloured the reception of her writing over the centuries. Written through a political lens, King's study simultaneously sifts questions of Haywood's party political agenda alongside the gender politics that frequently temper our understanding of her work. Readers of the biography will be surprised by the figure of Haywood that emerges from its pages – one of an anti-establishment, feminist patriot writer who sought to benefit from political opportunism and who, repeatedly drawn to the figure of the outsider, would by the 1740s emerge as a voice aligned with 'extreme strands of popular radical thought' (123).

King stresses that the biography offers a starting point for a wealth of future study on Haywood's relationship to contemporary politics and the literary marketplace, and in doing so throws down the gauntlet for a new generation of scholars – a generation, King suggests, who may well be more interested in how Haywood's writings repeatedly engage with 'an Enlightenment preoccupation with the meaning of knowledge' (198) than in the themes of sex and gender. Positioning herself on the cusp of a shift in Haywood studies, King avoids any totalising claims or conclusions that would serve as an apparent final word on an understanding of any aspect of Haywood's career. This goes a long way in explaining the apparent gaps in King's analysis – she herself admits the glaring absence of an analysis of Haywood's *Secret History of the [...] Court of Caramania* (1727), a work that surely demands political analysis alongside *Memoirs of [...] Utopia* (1725), which is here researched in impressive depth with King offering new suggestions for the identities behind Haywood's fictional courtiers – suggestions that, it should be noted, change the widely accepted explanation behind Pope's apparent attack on Haywood in *The Dunciad* as one motivated by a chivalric defence of Martha Blount.

King's study brings Haywood out of the shadows – indeed, out of the streets – by showing how a writer often bewailed as one whose immense talent never brought her enough success to lift her out of relative poverty was, for a time, an inhabitant of the fashionable Great Piazza of Covent Garden. King proves this through a newspaper advertisement of 1744 in which 'the genuine Houshold Goods of Mrs. ELIZA HAYWOOD, Publisher' were advertised for sale, revealing that Haywood was, for a time at least, a woman of considerable property. Indeed, King's excellent study brings a startlingly new image of Haywood into focus. She ably examines Haywood's repeated promotion of Bolingbrokean principles in her writing throughout the greater part of her career, and a support for Frederick, Prince of Wales, as the embodiment of a 'Patriot King capable of dissolving all distinctions of Party and uniting the people around a monarch-father who would rule the country as if it were a patriarchal family' (9). Simultaneously, King argues, Haywood's writings increasingly explore the potential role of women within public service. The second half of the biography offers an analysis of the politics of Haywood's journalistic endeavours in the 1740s and early 50s which she views as Haywood's most politically-engaged works. But King is wary of reading into them the Jacobite agenda that other critics have made claims for, instead suggesting that we need to consider them within the wider context of Haywood's political agenda: the 'long view' of Haywood's 'core values – chief among them, constancy, social justice and reason or the sceptical intelligence' (9).

King's *Political Biography* is far more than a biography of a single woman or, indeed, a unique writer. It takes to task the politics of writing biographies of female writers of the

period, and as such provides a useful frame for thinking about figures like Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley who share similarly undocumented lives and have attracted the same vein of speculative, condescending and largely damaging biography. To this end, much of King's work lies in reassessment and in reading against the grain of the scholarship of previous decades in order to provide insightful new interpretations of texts that are here more firmly considered within their specific historical and political contexts than has often been the case. Gone is the biographical insistence on making a claim for Haywood's romantic entanglements with Richard Savage and William Hatchett, and the desire to mould Haywood into the mistreated romantic heroine of one of her own amatory novellas. This refreshing, well-researched study brings important new sources to light, questions the veracity of many ideas about Haywood and her career currently in wide-circulation, and seeks to understand Haywood's writing within a wide-ranging political framework. King's *Political Biography* is surely a field-changer, and generously gives to its readers a revitalised interest in the future direction of Haywood studies.

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