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Wettlaufer, Alexandra K. *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Painting and the Novel in France and Britain, 1800-1860*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011. Pp. 338. ISBN: 978-0-8142-1145-8

Heather Belnap Jensen, Brigham Young University

Alexandra K. Wettlaufer's ambitious study of real and fictitious woman painters in early nineteenth-century France and Britain explores the subject of female artistic self-fashioning at a critical historical juncture. Characterizing this as an auspicious time for the development of the woman artist, the author seeks to examine how historical figures and fictional characters both marked as well as facilitated this process. The stated rationale for the use of a comparative approach is that it enables the author "to highlight the dialogic context in which these novels and paintings were produced and consumed, and to map out aesthetic and political intersections in women's history in the arts that are too often elided by the disciplinary boundaries of study" (5). The construction of a cogent account of myriad artists and writers, paintings and novels, and their various and shifting contexts (national, historical, and otherwise) requires a keen vision and deft hand, and in her *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman*, Wettlaufer provides both. Offering trenchant analyses of women painters and their literary representations, the author convincingly argues for their significance in early nineteenth-century British and French culture.

Organized into three thematic sections, paintings by female artists are juxtaposed with a pair of novels—one French and one British—as a means to examine the significant sites and structuring categories for the figure of the artist as a young woman. The introduction lays out several critical and constitutive components to the figure of the woman artist and some of the key issues with which she will contend. The formation of sisterhoods, the subversion of artistic genres, the commitment to inclusion and collaboration, and the refusal to reify masculinist Romantic precepts are a few of the key tropes that emerge out of the discourse surrounding the woman painter. Wettlaufer's first consideration is the studio, a primary site in the production of the woman artist, and in this section she analyzes a number of early nineteenth-century atelier paintings, including those by Gabrielle Capet, Adrienne Grandpierre-Deverzy, and Amélie Cogniet, as well as two novels, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore's *L'Atelier d'un peintre* (1833) and Anna Mary Howitt's *Sisters in Art* (1852). In the second section, the organizing principle is gender and the nation, with a discussion of Germaine de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) and *The Princess* (1835), Angélique Arnaud's *Clémence* (1841), and the Italian genre paintings of Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot. The last section considers women artists within the constructs of Romanticism, looking to George Sand's *Elle et lui* (1858), Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), and the genre paintings of British artist Margaret Gillies. The conclusion offers a brief overview of the configurations of the woman artist in the second half of the nineteenth century, where she and her art "played a formative role in transforming the cultural habitus [. . .] in such a way as to enable French and British society to imagine, envision, and ultimately even understand or accept a professional female subject entering the field of cultural production and representing the world" (265).

A book with this kind of scope runs certain risks, but Wettlaufer is, by and large, able to avoid these in her sophisticated comparative study. Given that this text covers significant chronological and geographical terrain, it gives over occasionally to generalizations regarding the status of early nineteenth-century women artists, their access to education and exhibition, and their place within the artistic community—for example, the author bypasses revisionist scholarship that suggests women had much more agency and presence in the post-Revolutionary artistic

and cultural spheres than previously accorded. But what bears emphasis is Wettlaufer's fluency in the fields of both art history and literature; indeed, she proves equally conversant in the secondary literatures of these fields, and provides equally adroit readings of image and text. Drawing upon this expertise, the author masterfully grafts together the narratives of women artists and their fictional counterparts, demonstrating how women painters functioned as disruptive, transgressive agents within established artistic and social frameworks, which resulted in the weakening or recasting of existing categories and codes. Importantly, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman* performs a similar task in traversing disciplinary boundaries, and has much to offer art and cultural historians, British and French literature specialists, and feminist scholars. This compelling examination of the woman painter attends to the complex intersections between gender and representation in the production of her professional identity, and does much to restore this figure to her rightful place in the annals of nineteenth-century artistic culture.