

There are several criticisms that can be made of this collection. Most curiously, the essays are not attributed to their original context, nor are their first dates of publication given. Thus deracinated, they lose some of their cutting edge, which – as with all of Pollock’s work – is crucial to a sense of her ‘analytic awareness of the major concerns of the feminism of [her] time, the Marxism of [her] time, the art history of [her] time’ (p. 3). For readers like myself who are familiar with Pollock’s work this is frustrating, and invites a game of ‘check the sources’; for those unfamiliar with Pollock’s output, it gives no sense of the diversity of her many interventions into contemporary art criticism and art history. Likewise, the absence of an index or bibliography makes it hard to track various lines of thought to their sources – and for a specialist arts publisher, the quality of design, production and illustration are disappointing indeed!

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references

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Beauty matters

Peg Zeglin Brand (editor); University of Indiana Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2000, out of print (ISBN 0-253-33726-7) HbK, 368 pp, PbK ISBN 0253213754 £12.49

Beauty Matters has received well-earned attention from aestheticians. Peg Brand has assembled essays that represent both artistic and cultural diversity. In so doing, she has helped to extend a problem of great importance in philosophical aesthetics and art criticism to feminist theory and cultural studies. In the early 20th century, the concept of beauty came under fire from various philosophers who regarded beauty as a philosophical fiction, and from various conceptual artists who considered beauty a political construct. Art, in this climate, had only social or

personal significance. This view was to colour the artworld for much of the century, despite many renegade movements, such as abstract expressionism and formalist criticism. This tendency has lost its verve over the last 15 years or so as beauty came to be seen as indispensable if we are to understand human experience in its complexity.

In Brand's 'Introduction' she discusses the peregrinations of beauty through the history of philosophy and, especially the 20th century. She suggests that the traditional standards undergirding our aesthetic responses to artworks and our erotic and affective reactions to people (both self and other) have been conditioned by the male gaze. This, of course, is not a novel idea. Brand does, however, offer much that is new in her introduction and in her very choice of essays. She argues that to acknowledge the reality of beauty is not to return to a transcendent Platonic ideal or to the romantic (male) sublime. Beauty, she tells us, is edgy and dangerous, as artists like Mapplethorpe, Serrano, and Cindy Sherman show us, working as they do at the razor's edge of genre, style, and subject matter.

The book offers essays on philosophical aesthetics, body art, ballet, personal beauty, eroticism in the visual image, representations of disability in art, the use of art to experience transexuality, the representations of race and ethnicity, and Brand's interview with the radical performance artist Orlan. One thing common to all of the essays, though, is the interest in showing how our reactions to things as beautiful or ugly are enmeshed in our moral beliefs. Marcia Eaton, in the book's lead article, her 'Kantian and Contextual Beauty' defends the primacy of this 'contextual' notion over the perennially alluring, Kantian, nonethical view of beauty. Each article demonstrates this thesis from a different perspective.

To look at a few examples, Sally Banes, in her 'A New Kind of Beauty: From Classicism to Karole Armitage's Early Ballets' brings to light the neo-classical, Renaissance world view and ideals of feminine beauty presupposed by basic elements of classical ballet: verticality (political hierarchies, social nobility, and spiritual uprightness), the turn out of the body (openness to others, to light, to truth), and pointe work of the female dancer (an equilibrium beyond nature, the ethereality of feminine beauty). Banes then explains how Armitage's work challenges traditional social values by highlighting the eroticism and ironic potential of the canonical elements and by making ballet, with its strict gender roles, one of the subjects of her work itself. Dawn Perlmutter's 'Miss America: Whose Ideal?' reveals the deplorable political assumptions in the selection of the beauty queen and the cultural havoc these views have wrought. From an Eastern perspective, Eva Kit Wah Man, in her 'Female Bodily Aesthetics, Politics, and Feminine Ideals of Beauty in China' analyzes the contemporary, communist Chinese ideal of feminine beauty by tracing the feminine ideal through Confucianism and Taoism and then exploring the complex moral and aesthetic terrain of the courtesan in Late Imperial China.

In 'From the Cooked Timber of Humanity' philosopher Anita Silvers considers why we can find beautiful a representation of disability or anatomical anomaly (e.g., Picasso's 'Maya With a Doll') and yet avert our eyes from the same human trait when we encounter it in life. Silvers argues that disability is the binary opposite against which the normal is defined. She thus recommends that in our efforts to broaden our standards of beauty, we view those who are physically different as deepening our insight into humanity just as a distinctive artwork can deepen our comprehension of art. Noel Carroll, in his 'Ethnicity, Race, and Monstrosity' focuses on ugliness, especially in horror and humor, both of which he contends are 'rhetoric[s] of hatred' that betray racial and moral prejudices.

As for racial and sexual stereotypes, Paul C. Taylor challenges philosophical aesthetics arguing that it should focus less on art and more on human bodily beauty, and that it should be primarily cultural criticism rather than philosophy of art. Arthur Danto responds to Taylor sympathetically but with a forceful defense of aesthetics.

The other articles treat various topics: Kathleen Higgins contrasts real beauty of persons with its imitators, flawlessness and glamour; Susan Bordo discusses beauty in the image of the male body; Hilary Robinson examines Luce Irigaray's views; Kaori Chino explores the haunting photographic self-portraits of Yasumasa Morimura, a male who impersonates legendary movie actresses.

Brand has put together a varied array of high-quality essays. This excellent anthology will appeal to specialists in aesthetics, the arts, feminism, and cultural theory.

Carol S. Gould

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The Great Arizona orphan abduction

Linda Gordon; Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, London, England, 1999, 480 pp, HbK ISBN 0-674-36041-9 £21.50

Linda Gordon has achieved that unusual position of writing a highly scholarly book (winner of the Bancroft and American Historical Association Prizes) which has also enjoyed success with a general readership. The accessibility of this text is largely attained through a distinctive narrative strategy, interspersing chapters on the wider historical context with a detailed narrative of the unfolding crisis over orphan adoption in a small Arizona Anglo-Mexican mining community. Historical analysis is interwoven with the drama of a highly emotive confrontation in which race, gender and class identities play out within the charged atmosphere of attempted inter-racial adoption.