imperialist project of 'texting, textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood' (quoted p. 77), provides Cherry with a means of interpreting the contradictory position of feminist radicals, who maintained an effortless superiority to Arab women in Algeria while simultaneously planning their campaigns on behalf of Englishwomen in London. This comes as a timely reminder that, then as now, feminists do not occupy consistent positions and that feminist and imperialist politics may sometimes form disturbing alliances.

This is a compelling book that wears its scholarship lightly and makes a major addition to the rich feminist literature on the gender, visual culture and urban spectacle in the 19th century London (Nead, 1988, 2000; Walkowitz, 1992). I have two minor caveats, both of which hinge on the misleading nature of the title: this is not an account of feminism and visual culture in *Britain*, but rather in London – the emergence of feminist cultures in the provinces and in Scotland are mentioned only in passing in the final chapter – and while she touches on the figure of the 'New Woman' of the 1890s, it is evident that Cherry's real passion and research lies in the 1850s and 1860s, decades of the emergence and formation of the new subjects and visual cultures of feminism.

Rosemary Betterton

references

- Cherry, D.** (1993) *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Nead, L.** (1988) *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Nead, L.** (2000) *Victorian Babylon*, London and New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Walkowitz, J.R.** (1992) *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London*, London: Virago.

doi:10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400125

Looking back to the future: essays on art, life and death

Griseida Pollock, introduction and commentary by Penny Florence; G + B Arts International, Amsterdam, 353 pp, 2000, PbK ISBN 90-5701-132-8 £16.99

This book is an edited collection of Griseida Pollock's critical, polemical and theoretical essays from the 1990s, with an introduction and commentary by Penny Florence. It brings together writings that have previously appeared in a number of different publications ranging from the women's art magazine *make* to the

academic journal *Art History*. As Florence states, Pollock is the 'most important voice in feminist art history in Britain' (p. 2), and one whose influence on younger colleagues and students, both here and internationally, has been enormous. She has combined academic rigour with activism, research with polemics, and has transgressed disciplinary borders between art history, film theory and cultural studies, in ways that constantly confound her critics. The five sections of the book: on critical interventions; contemporary feminist art; art history; cinema, and autobiography/history, are indicative of the range of Pollock's continuing engagement with cultural theory and practice. Together with a major monograph, two edited collections of essays and several shorter publications, it shows the furious pace of Pollocks' output over the last decade (Pollock 1992, 1996, 1999; Pollock and Orton, 1996). She writes as if there were no time to lose.

The 1990s was the decade of 'backlash' against feminism when issues of gender identity came to be seen as irrelevant to the making of new art. Pollock's essays provide a powerful antidote to this prevailing view, arguing persuasively for 'the social contradictions we call class, race and gender' (Pollock, p. 17) as the crucial categories that continue to constitute the practice and reception of art, as much today as in the past. It is depressing but important to acknowledge how risky the associations of feminism still are within the art world. However, as the title suggests, there is something elegiac as well as forward looking in this collection, positioned as both a feminist reflection on and intervention into the condition of art history. Arguing consistently for a feminist materialist analysis of art practice over three decades, Pollock at times has appeared to be a singular voice – although perhaps less so when put into the context of the 'New Art History' (Harris, 2001) to which she, among others, has been a significant contributor. The contradictory position of the individual producer – artist, writer or historian – in relation to the collective, is one that Pollock herself addresses in a key polemical essay entitled 'Critical Positions' (pp. 11–21). Examining the paradox for women posed by Barthes' 'The Death of the Author' (1968), she argues for the political importance of advocacy for individual women artists, like Lubaina Himid or Bracha Lichtenberg-Éttinger, whose work proposes a 'critique of social, economic and cultural power' (p. 15) while, at the same time, recognizing how they are themselves implicated within the capitalist and commodity structures of the art world. Thus, she defines her role as not one of an art critic, but of a 'partisan' (p. 19) – fighting for a different kind of 'writing of art's histories' (Pollock, 1999). Part of her preoccupation with death, present both in the title and the final section 'Autohistories' – 'a self portrait of a feminist intellectual haunted by death' (p. 371) – is linked to her continuing attachment to the radical and unfinished modernist project, while acknowledging its consequence in the 20th century racial and sexual holocausts. This tension, I think, lies at the core of Pollock's writing and gives it both its passion and its continuing drive.

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!

Rosemary Betterton

references

- Harris, J.** (2001) *The New Art History: a Critical Introduction*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Pollock, G.** (1992) *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888–1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History*, London: Thames & Hudson.
- Pollock, G.** (1996) editor, *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Pollock, G. and Orton, F.** (1996) editors, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Pollock, G.** (1999) *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, London & New York: Routledge.

doi:10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400126

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