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Introduction

In fields as diverse as history, philosophy, biology, and the law, the feminist scholarship that has developed in the last two decades has changed the direction of research and the development of knowledge. By shifting the perspective brought to scholarship to a consciously gendered view, feminism has revealed previously unnoticed masculine bias in research and has filled the gaps in our understanding that have been revealed thereby. The areas closest to aesthetics have been among the most affected by the feminist scholarly revolution. Literary scholarship has been virtually transformed with perspectives that consider the study of text and representation from the point of view of the female Other. Art history, criticism, and especially film theory have been similarly influenced by awareness of gender as it determines the roles of the audience and the content of the objects of perception. Philosophy, initially seeming the most "neutral" of disciplines with regard to its significance for gender difference, has an entire new area of studies that reexamines this presumption, revealing deep-seated gender dimensions in such basic concepts as rationality and autonomy. Furthermore, all these fields have become sites for the development not only of feminist perspectives on particular disciplines, but also of feminist theory itself.

Despite these enormous developments in cognate areas, aesthetics and the philosophy of art, traditionally construed, have come in for relatively little revision from a feminist perspective.[1] Regular readers of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* will recognize that prior to this special issue, no articles from a feminist perspective have appeared, and few books of feminist scholarship have been reviewed. This special issue devoted to "Feminism and Traditional Aesthetics" is a first step towards correcting this situation.

One notable feature of feminist scholarship has been its openness to interdisciplinary approaches to study and research. Since the structure and methods of the academic disciplines themselves often have been revealed to screen out matters of relevance to women, feminist researchers have adopted eclectic methods and insights from scholars of many different orientations in order to enhance and sharpen their own investigations. Thus at first it may seem peculiar that all but two of our contributors to this issue come from the field of philosophy. This decision is justified, we feel, by the uneven pattern of development of feminism in fields that constitute the broad terrain of aesthetics. While areas like literature, film theory, and art history have ballooned with feminist perspectives, philosophical aesthetics has remained relatively underrepresented in the revolution in feminist scholarship. Thus we devote most of the space here to philosophical discussions in order to begin filling this void.

In the order in which they are arranged, the essays proceed from investigations of general, traditionally recognizable philosophical matters to more particular treatments of criticism and specific art forms. Several essays directly address the changes that will inevitably result from the influx of feminist theorizing on traditional aesthetics (what Mary Devereaux refers to as the "new aesthetics"). Hilde Hein's opening piece, "The Role of Feminist Aesthetics in Feminist Theory," notes that aesthetics has traditionally occupied a somewhat peripheral place in the discipline of philosophy, in contrast to the "hard core" of metaphysics and epistemology, and surmises that the absence of systematic claims

for universal truths that characterizes much aesthetic philosophy accounts for this. It is this very lack of insistent system, however, that suits the methods of aesthetics to feminist theory, for the latter grows out of challenges to what have been revealed to be false universals in philosophical theories. Feminism represents a strong contemporary voice for caution about generalizations; not only have claims on behalf of "man" been shown actually to refer largely only to males, but increasingly generalizations about "woman" are challenged within feminism itself. Hein argues that the methods of aesthetics suit this more dispersed, pluralistic type of enterprise, and aesthetics should move from the "margin to the center" of theoretical developments.

The next two essays focus attention on several of the primary texts of the history of modern aesthetics. In an essay entitled, "Beautiful and Sublime: **Gender Totemism** in the Constitution of Art," Paul Mattick, Jr. treats a broad range of eighteenth and nineteenth century theorists, including Burke, Kant, and Lessing, and links their ideas—which metaphorically stereotype the beautiful as female (passive and weak) and the sublime as male (active and strong)—with the conceptual system of the fine arts that also crystalizes during the modern period. In this system, the hierarchy of male over female is maintained by characterizing literature as sublime and painting as beautiful. This tradition of favoring the sublime over the beautiful, challenged in the nineteenth century by Mary Wollstonecraft's notion of "the feminine sublime," is shown to persist even in Modernism's rejection of beauty for the sublime, e.g., in the work of Barnett Newman.

In the essay that follows, "Intensity and Its Audiences: Notes Towards a Feminist Perspective on the Kantian Sublime," Timothy Gould continues the discussion of the foundations of modern thought by focusing solely on Kant. Though Kant's views on the sublime have come in for severe criticism for their masculinist bias, Gould discovers in his theory a redeemable insight about consciousness of oppression and awakening beyond its limits that he finds consonant with developing feminist awareness. Building upon one trend of feminist scholarship, *viz.*, that of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gould notes that nineteenth century women authors such as Charlotte Brontë moved beyond the oppressive limits imposed societally and formalistically to develop female protagonists who express "the untellable." According to Gould, the participation of readers in such expressions of the sublime constitutes a completion of the sublime, as it is fully described by Kant. Gould argues further that Kant's own views actually resist any simple attribution of "masculine" identity to the sublime.

Consideration of contemporary philosophical aesthetics and its openness to feminist revision leads Joanne Waugh to investigate what is at stake in the variations of pragmatism advanced by Joseph Margolis and Richard Rorty. In an essay entitled, "Analytic Aesthetics and Feminist Aesthetics: Neither/Nor?" Waugh, like Hein, examines the requirement of feminism that philosophy pursue new methods in order to break from the structures of the past that have carried covert masculine biases. The reliance Margolis places on tradition as part of his philosophical method validating rational discourse leads Waugh to speculate that this strategy will resist the sorts of deep changes—in art, art theory, philosophy—required by feminism. Without advocating separatism, Waugh stresses the feminist call for a new language of metaphorical and poetic discourse to accommodate feminist themes.

In "Reconciling Analytic and Feminist Philosophy and Aesthetics," Joseph Margolis takes up Waugh's challenge, clarifying his philosophy in relation to feminist theory. He argues that his theory does not entail political or philosophical conservativism in the name of tradition and that his recommendations are compatible with the feminist position. He proposes a philosophy (and aesthetics, in turn) that goes beyond analytic, continental and feminist philosophy—one whose legitimation is based neither solely on "past practice" nor on the use of a Kantian-like or Platonizing "universalist tradition." The proper direction for philosophical thinking about art, he argues, is one in which open-ended inquiry (infinitely many interpretations of a work of art) sufficient to satisfy feminist, Marxist, and other "interested" parties, is balanced with some (minimal) tie to the narrative continuity of the history of the interpretation of works.

The next group of essays gathers together diverse approaches to feminism and critical assessment, illustrating them with reference to

several art forms. The first three (of this group) consider recent feminist theories of spectatorship, with all three authors drawing heavily upon psychoanalytic trends in feminist film theory. "Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers and the Gendered Spectator: The New Aesthetics," is Mary Devereaux's exploration of views about Laura Mulvey's notion of "the male gaze" in which she concludes that the audience for art is always gendered—indeed that the presumed spectator for most Western visual art is male—and that the male gaze works in film as a mechanism of oppression, i.e., debasement. This explodes the familiar presumption of neutrality and detachment for aesthetic enjoyment (since feminism denies any schism between aesthetics and politics) and lays the foundation for a revised aesthetics that is attentive to differences among (gendered) spectators. This new aesthetics provides a "feminist paradigm" that questions the most basic issues in the field: the nature of art, criteria for interpretation and evaluation, and reverence for works included in the canon.

Noël Carroll, author of "The Image of Women in Film: A Defense of a Paradigm," takes exception to recent psychoanalytic trends in feminist film criticism (such as Mulvey's) and defends an earlier (1970s) approach to understanding the influence of cinema in society that focuses on the "image of women" conveyed by movies. While this latter method has been faulted for its lack of theoretical rigor, Carroll defends it as providing a better empirical basis for understanding gender construction, and he grounds it with recent philosophy of the emotions to suggest that the absence of rigor can be overcome. Thus, Carroll develops a new schema by which filmic images of women are understood in terms of Ronald de Sousa's notion of acquired paradigm scenarios: recurring negative images supply or reinforce paradigm scenarios that may shape the emotional responses of men to women in real life. As in Devereaux's discussion, such emotional responses are highly dependent upon gender.

Questions about the implications of feminist theories of representation are raised in Flo Leibowitz's "A Note on Feminist Theories of Representation: Questions Concerning the Autonomy of Art." In addition to Mulvey's theory, Leibowitz presents two others which share an adherence to what she calls the Principle of Worldly Attachment; it states that depictions, whether in art or not, depend for their meaning on practical concerns. Leibowitz extends the range of images of women to include pornographic images, viewed as vehicles of oppression by Suzanne Kappeler and Melinda Vadas. In the case of pornography, practical concerns include viewers' erotic desires and desires for power and status. Because the traditional notion of disinterested pleasure is rejected, Leibowitz questions whether feminist theorizing leaves any room for a separate aesthetic realm.

Shifting to a different project of feminist scholars, Anita Silvers investigates the effort to adjust the canon of "great art" in order to include works by women artists. In "Has Her(oine's) Time Now Come?" she considers the case of Artemisia Gentileschi (c. 1593–1652) who has been the subject of recent feminist reclamation. She analyzes the appeal to "internal" and "external" artistic properties, arguing that if canon reformation is to succeed, feminists need to concentrate attention on internal properties, i.e., those that properly can be attributed to the artwork itself rather than the circumstances of its production. Silvers's essay thus juxtaposes some traditional requirements of philosophy of criticism with the political agenda of revisionist scholarship, opening anew matters of criteria of evaluation and what is to count as a genuine property of a "work of art."

Another woman artist, contemporary feminist Nancy Spero, provides an illustration for Elizabeth Ann Dobie's discussion of feminist theory and critical assessment. Like Gentileschi, Spero's work is excluded from the male-dominated canon and the current artworld mainstream. Spero's unique images depict active and engaged women; "they will not submit to a mastering gaze." In "Interweaving Feminist Frameworks," Dobie takes three types of feminism usually viewed as mutually inconsistent (for example, by feminist critic Lisa Tickner) and argues that as interpretive frameworks for art they are not only compatible but mutually enriching. Her essay reminds us of an important aspect of contemporary feminism, namely, that a good deal of theory has been explored in and through art. As disciplinary boundaries are breached in academic feminist scholarship, so the distinction between art and theory is blurred by artists such as Spero.

Recalling Margolis's suggestion for a revisionist aesthetics that engages in the ongoing reinterpretation of texts, the final two essays of this issue deal with music and literature over a broad sweep of history, and so pursue speculative examinations about persistence and change in gender identity as it is manifest in art. In "A History of Music," Renée Cox analyzes changes in aesthetic form and its effects on listeners by taking us from the ancient musical components of goddess-worship, through early Church music and its cautions against sexual associations with certain musical forms (the de-emphasis of the worldly and the feminine), into the intricacies of the mixed misogynies and beauties of Mozart's and Wagner's operas, to the blatantly anti-female lyrics of the Rolling Stones (commonly known as "cock rock"). Following feminist treatments of the disturbing (and debasing) nature of the visual image in art, Cox cites her own uneasiness in responding to certain canonical musical works. Rather than just condemning degrading visual works, Cox is ambivalent about her capacity to continue to enjoy such music in spite of its denigrating nature, thus reviving the question of moral (or political) assent versus aesthetic enjoyment.

Finally, issues of tradition and feminist revision are broached in yet another way in Ellen Handler Spitz's essay on mother-daughter imagery in literature entitled, "Mothers and Daughters: Ancient and Modern Myths." The "tradition" in focus here is Freudian psychoanalysis with its emphasis on the myth of Oedipus, for which she substitutes the myths of Demeter and Persephone. Returning to ancient texts (as Cox returned to ancient music) to explicate contemporary texts, Spitz argues that similar forms of these generational relationships persist in literature through very different cultural and historical contexts. (The ancient texts include the Greek "Homeric Hymn to Demeter" and Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* while the contemporary texts include Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club,* Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John,* Anne Roiphe's *Lovingkindness,* Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun,* and Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl.*) In highlighting these relationships and their positive strengths, Spitz redresses the weight given by psychoanalysis to the negative aspects of relationships among women.

It should be evident from an introductory summary of the essays in this issue that feminist perspectives both recast our understanding of the philosophical tradition and bring new questions to bear on aesthetics and philosophy of art. Such familiar subjects as the relation of audience to aesthetic form and the critical evaluation of art, and indeed the presumptions of aesthetic method, are reopened and rendered newly problematic when approached from feminist perspectives. Once the notion of "the spectator" or "the percipient" is fragmented by gender, relatively settled generalizations require reexamination. This work is just beginning and needs careful pursuit, not only from gendered vantages, but with the complications of racial, class, and other differences in mind as well. Furthermore, comparatively untraditional topics such as psychoanalysis and gendered consciousness move to center focus in many feminist approaches to art, forcing the theorist of aesthetics to confront issues that previously have resided outside the purview of the field. The methods employed to examine philosophy of art are themselves the subject for feminist debate, for while several of our authors argue for the need for entirely new approaches to accommodate feminist insights, others insist on the established rigor of the tradition to refine subjects uncovered by feminist perspectives.

Feminism potentially can invigorate and freshen old areas of philosophy of art and expand its already blurry borders with newly relevant issues. We offer this special issue as an invitation for continued debate.[2]

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1. The only other special journal issues devoted to this subject, as far as we know, are *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 5 (1990), and the APA *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* 89 (1990).

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