However, while our economic landscape has changed significantly and we have expanded our knowledge of the social dynamics which inhibit economic parity with men (such as implicit bias), the methodology of analysis which takes an honest look at the way in which we theorize class, gender, and the intersection between the two is valuable even though the specifics of social reality have changed. In the first chapter, Barrett discusses important methodological and conceptual issues when addressing the intersection of Marxism and feminism. In this chapter, Barrett describes the "object of Marxist feminism" as "[identifying] the operation of gender relations as and where they may distinct from, or connected with, the processes of production and reproduction understood by historical materialism" (9). This chapter, in a way, provides the framing for the remainder of the book as Barrett addresses more concrete and specific issues where we see the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy as she addresses the issues of sexuality and the social construction of femininity and masculinity (chapter two); ideology in relation to the construction of gender (chapter three); the way in which the educational system reproduces gender stereotypes as well as class inequalities (chapter four); the gendered division of labor (chapter five) and the dynamics of the family in relation to women's subordination (chapter six); the relation of feminism to state politics (chapter seven), and, finally, the relation between the project of women's liberation and its relation (and opposition) to the reproduction of a capitalist system (chapter eight).

Interestingly enough, the areas of most contention and revision within modern feminist theory—the ontology of gender and the dynamics of our sexual practices in relation to patriarchy—is where this work could use more critical engagement. For example, as Barrett notes in her introduction to the 1988 edition, the very concept of gender and its relation to biological differences (which some feminists argue are themselves socially constructed) is a highly controversial concept that warrants theorization (xlii): "'Oppression', too, looks rather crude in terms of current feminist work. . . . As for the term "Women', it contains the kernel of a dispute that has problematized the politics of contemporary feminism and come to dominate theoretical polemic" (xxi). While I am perhaps not as quick to surrender the idea of womanhood as an oppressed class or the idea of femininity as a product of patriarchal subordination, it is true that the way in which we theorize and understand gender is going to be central to any feminist critique. It is also important that, insofar as feminism is a political project commitment to women's liberation, that any feminist work adopt a nuanced understanding of what constitutes oppression as well as how its dynamics in relation to the subordination of women.

However, this is interesting from a historical point of view precisely because of the way in which later radical feminists made gender and sexuality the focal point of their theories. Specifically, Catharine MacKinnon, a frequent interlocutor and target of contemporary feminist critique, made the Marxist methodology in conjunction with feminist political practice central to her analysis of gender, sexuality, and sexual practices such as pornography and prostitution. Through this critique, MacKinnon posited a highly contentious but nonetheless influential theory of gender.[1]

It is perhaps impossible to write a work on feminism that can be truly timeless; however, the analysis within *Women's Oppression Today* can still resonate and inform feminist theory.

NOTES

1.

Beauty Unlimited

Peg Zeglin Brand, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). 427 pages. $28.00. ISBN 978-0-253-00642-4.

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Most artists who are familiar with the contemporary art scene—especially the New York City scene—know that "beauty" is not especially hip. Unless, that is, it serves a "deeper" purpose, e.g., it helps to make a conceptual or political point. Danto's influence, it would seem, pervades and persists (31). But, as Brand points out in her introduction, in the past twenty years or so, the philosophical study of beauty has been making a comeback; she lists over fifty titles that have been written on the subject since the nineties. Brand's book, *Beauty Unlimited*, promises to add to the feminist oeuvre on the subject. The book is comprised of twenty essays, with a foreword by Carolyn Korsmeyer and an introduction by Brand. Although the majority of the essays are interdisciplinary, they are primarily written by trained philosophers. Other essays are written by practicing artists and writers, historians, and cultural anthropologists.

Korsmeyer's forward focuses on a Platonic distinction between the One and the Many. Is beauty a function of the "many," i.e., do we find beauty instantiated in particular, individual things, like human bodies? Or is it a function of the "one"? In other words, is there a purified concept of beauty that transcends the particularity of our bodies and, thus, our sexualized, politicized, and gendered selves? As Korsmeyer points out, a number of the essays in *Beauty Unlimited* focus on the notion of beauty *qua* the particularized many.

Brand explains why in her introduction. She begins by asking us to consider two recent photographs, each depicting a figure surrounded by the rubble of war. Both photographs contain striking visual elements—we might even call them beautiful. But when we understand the context of the pictures—war destruction, loss—we realize that this beauty comes at a price; it even seems to "hurt" (3). Gone, she tells us, are the "idyllic scenes of the eighteenth century or the tempests of J.M.W. Turner" (2). Instead, these images are "records of human suffering, but not abstracted like the figures in Picasso's *Guernica*. Instead, they jolt us back to the here and now in their function as 'real' scenes of actual lives" (3). These images then—these photographs of actual people—provide a more contemporary vision of beauty. Indeed, she writes, "Such images impugn core philosophical notions like aesthetic distance, disinterest, and simplistic notions of pleasure. Beauty begs for reassessment in order to propel itself forward with intent and resolve" (3). The essays in *Beauty Unlimited* are meant to expose us to contemporary, "new examples" (3) of beauty, especially as they are manifest in the human body. And thus, she writes: "The essays of *Beauty Unlimited* position the readers in the twenty-first century by pointing them forward and forcing them into the future, toward a more extensive and far flung understanding of beauty" (3).

By exposing us to instances of this new, contemporary kind of beauty, Brand hopes to reconfigure the canon. In particular, her intention is to reconfigure the notion of female "agency, mode of representation and embodied identities across cultures" such that we may "expand the concept of beauty" (11). The implication is that beauty should no longer be confined to the pleasure one may take in viewing a female body, or, at the very least, this pleasure may no longer be used as a paradigmatic instance of beauty. Rather, let us consider instances of beauty where female agency is restored—in regard to both the artist and the subject—such that we do not "objecti[fy], sexual[ize] or stulti[fy] the female on view" (13). Doing so provides us with a sense of what Brand refers to as "deep gender," after Korsmeyer (2004). Brand writes: "A reading of deep gender provides a broader framework in which female artists create and utilize beauty to a more intense degree, reclaiming female agency from the male artists who depicted women in the past" (14). When we begin to appreciate beauty from a feminist perspective, we see that it can be, and is, much more than the beauty of a female body that is presented primarily for the pleasure of males. However, as suggested above, this kind of beauty can be complicated, and at times, "hurt." To carry out this project, Brand divides the book into four parts: 1) Revising the Concept of Beauty: Laying the Groundwork, 2) Standards of Beauty, 3) Body in Performance, and 4) Beauty and State.

In Part 1, Revising the Concept of Beauty, we find five essays. Appropriately, the first addresses the Danto problem; particularly, how and why does the concept of beauty "imperil Danto's system" (30)? For, according to Danto, "dumb beauty," i.e., beauty that does not augment or otherwise enhance the content of the piece, is rather worthless. The remaining four essays deal with a number of historical approaches to beauty, as well as beauty in relation to race, queer theory, and feminism. In particular, in Monique Roelofs's "Beauty's Relational Labor," we find a discussion of Plato, Shaftesbury, Hutchenson, Hume, Burke, and Wollstonecraft. Roelofs discusses the ways in which the "moral and political commitments" (73) of each philosopher are intertwined with their respective notions of beauty.

In Part 2, Standards of Beauty, we are given six essays that challenge conventional standards of beauty, or, at least, standards that are generally associated with the female body. Here are discussed indigenous beauty, the notion of the female nude, the ethics of plastic surgery, the phenomenon of Vida Guerra—Cuban model and sex symbol—and the transformation of Frida Kahlo into a paper doll. Brand tells us that these essays serve to "reposition . . . the body, particularly the artist's body, at the center of increased agency of the female depicted" (17). In other words, at least in part, these essays explore how women may, while retaining agency, use their own bodies as their subject matter.

The majority of the essays in Part 3, Body in Performance, explore how the female body is depicted in various kinds of performances, films, or surgeries. Here, we find Brand's essay "ORLAN Revisited: Disembodied Virtual Hybrid Beauty." Brand argues that ORLAN, who subjected herself to a series of plastic surgeries to make artistic/philosophical points, is not "monstrous" (306). Brand writes: "Even if ORLAN's goal is to create a substitute for female beauty or to subvert ideals of physical beauty *per se*, does she warrant the description 'monstrous?' Human blood and sutures may indeed be distasteful, or even disgusting, but surely the artist's intent is more complex than what is seen on the surface" (307).

Finally, in Part 4, Beauty and the State, are four essays that explore the relationship between the female body and the state. These essays explore the notion of modesty in the Middle East and North Africa, the concept of orientalism, and the role of the female body in Chinese politics and contemporary art. All of these essays address how a women's body may or may not be used for political purposes. Brand writes: "To utilize one's body in the service of the state, or indeed in opposition to the state, can open widening pathways to exploring deep gender in the artworks of various cultures" (19).

This is a rich and informative collection of essays. Most are accessible to anyone who is interested in the topic, regardless of whether she is a philosopher, an artist, or is interested in cultural studies. Moreover, Brand keeps her promise to make a significant contribution to the feminist oeuvre. Because of its accessibility and breadth, this book could be employed in a variety of undergraduate or graduate venues, e.g., courses on the philosophy of beauty, the philosophy of art, anthropology courses, cultural studies courses, and/or studio art courses. I do wish, though, that Korsmeyer had contributed an essay on "deep gender," since this notion plays such an important role in Brand's introduction, and concomitantly, the framing of the book. However, the interested reader can, of course, track down this information on her own; the reference is clearly provided.

Finally, I have a rather minor complaint about Brand's claim that she is presenting a "new" concept of beauty. We certainly *do* need to move beyond concepts of beauty that do not, among other things, recognize female agency—both in regard to the artist and to the subject matter. This much is obvious. But I don't think that we should call such an inclusive concept of beauty "new" or "contemporary," as Brand so often does, as noted above. Rather, we should call it "correct," or perhaps "more accurate." "New" sounds like the latest fashion, which, as soon as it gets a bit dusty, will be cast aside for something else. However, Brand's insistence on finding a "new" concept of beauty (as opposed to the correct concept) can, in part, be blamed on the art world (Brand is also a professional artist). The contemporary art scene is almost entirely obsessed with the "new," almost to the point of being pathological. We might even say that this obsession is, in part, a symptom of a postmodern malaise, i.e., a conviction that all we have is "the new" because there is nothing else, particularly, there is no *truth*. Indeed, because the new object/idea is old almost as soon as it is finished, many contemporary art galleries resonate with a frantic, if not occasionally *desperate*, kind of creative energy. How long can one's work possibly *stay* new? But a better, more inclusive, and less prejudiced concept of beauty need not be associated with such energy. Rather, as suggested above, it merely needs to be correct, or more accurate. Of course, unfortunately, given the way that women have been treated traditionally, this concept might initially seem new, or different. But we should not be motivated to uncover it *because* it is new. Nor should we value it *because* it is new. Rather, as already suggested, we should be motivated to articulate it, and, in turn, value it, because it is right.

REFERENCES

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Philosophical Feminism and Popular Culture

Sharon Crasnow and Joanne Waugh, eds. (Lexington Books, 2013). 210 pages. $39.99 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-7391-9777-6.

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Given nearly two decades of feminist analyses of popular culture from *BITCH* magazine on the one hand, and over one hundred volumes from the philosophy and popular culture series from Open Court and Blackwell on the other, it's surprising that *Philosophical Feminism and Popular Culture* hasn't appeared sooner. In the introduction to their collection, Sharon Crasnow and Joanne Waugh speculate that feminist philosophy's lack of attention to popular culture stems from a widely held view that the proper domain of philosophy is that of the abstract, universal, and ahistorical. Since the study of popular culture (as well as feminism!) concerns matters that are concrete, particular, historically situated, and implicated in social change, it is viewed as a lesser form of philosophy, if viewed as philosophy at all. Rejecting such a conception, they argue that philosophy ought to study actions, events, and inferences in the context from which they emerge. Given that popular culture is a primary vehicle for presenting and reinforcing gender roles and stereotypes, they argue that feminist philosophers who ignore popular culture fail to engage conversations about gender where they occur.

Crasnow and Waugh are not alone in their defense of the philosophical study of popular culture. William Irwin has characterized the Blackwell series as a form of public philosophy, one which disseminates important philosophical ideas to a wider audience.[1] But unlike many of the essays in the Open Court and Blackwell series, the essays in this volume do not aim to simply teach philosophy using examples from popular culture. Instead, these essays offer philosophical responses to popular culture. Thus, Crasnow and Waugh develop a political argument for engaging with popular culture from a feminist perspective: examining the representation of women in comedy, film, television, and popular literature enables us to challenge those representations and create possibilities for social and cultural change.

In their introduction to the collection, Crasnow and Waugh respond to several arguments against paying serious attention to popular culture. These arguments defend the view that mass art fails to be genuine art because (1) it is manufactured for mass consumption, (2) it is designed to be accessible to audiences, and (3) it is formulaic in both its means and ends. Referencing Noël Carroll's responses[2] to each of these arguments, Crasnow and Waugh point out that (1) mass production does not entail that a work lacks taste, sensitivity, and intelligence, (2) accessibility does not preclude active engagement on the part of the audience, and (3) plenty of "genuine" art has a formulaic character. Then, Crasnow and Waugh summarize the eight essays in the collection, identifying how each undermines arguments against the study of popular culture: Willett and Willett's discussion of the political power of comedy and Zack's discussion of the tension between the subversion and reinforcement of stereotypes in minstrelsy challenge the view that pop culture audiences are doomed to passivity. Oliver's discussion of the persistence of stereotypes and formulas in attempts to offer non-traditional narratives and Wright's discussion of the dominance of "choice feminism" in popular culture are relevant to the discussion of the formulaic character of art. The essays by Schultz, Ingle, Crasnow, and Waugh demonstrate the possibilities for a philosophical engagement with mass-produced popular culture such as television and popular literature. The narratives discussed in these essays challenge the rhetoric of choice and the use of such rhetoric to perpetuate gender inequality and interfere with feminist solidarity.

My favorite essays in this collection are those from Willett and Willett, Ingle, and Crasnow. Each of them exemplifies Crasnow and Waugh's argument for the political relevance of feminist philosophy's engagement with popular culture. In what follows, I summarize these three essays and comment on what I find most inspiring about them.

Cynthia Willett and Julie Willett's essay, "The Seriously Erotic Politics of Laughter: Bitches, Whores and Other Fumerists," offers a delightful beginning to the collection. Not only do they argue for bringing humor into academic practices and social movements, their prose demonstrates as much. Emphasizing the subversive power of feminist humor on knowledge and power, Willett and Willett provide examples from "fumerists" such as Roseanne Barr, Wanda Sykes, Margaret Cho, and Tina Fey, who disrupt oppressive norms regarding motherhood and sexuality. Moreover, Willett and Willett outline a genealogy of feminist humor by uncovering the democratic power and cathartic effects of humor, reminiscent of Linda Bell's arguments[3] for the revolutionary potential of play. This essay not only arouses