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FOREWORD BY CAROLYN KORSMEYER

Indiana University Press
Bloomington and Indianapolis

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In memory of
my late husband,
best friend,
and fellow philosopher
who loved beauty
Myles Brand
(1942–2009)

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I, too, find the flower beautiful in its outward appearance:
but a deeper beauty lies concealed within.

PIET MONDRIAN

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Foreword

CAROLYN KORSMEYER

The venerable problem of the One and the Many is nowhere more dramatic than with Beauty—that ultimate value, inescapable in aesthetics, contentious in art, capricious in fashion, and altogether debatable. Inviting yet resisting definition, beauty oscillates between particular and universal. It is a value applicable to objects and scenes in nature, to works of art, and to persons: this mountain pass, this song, this face. And yet what trait could a mountain share with a person? If both are beautiful, is the description univocal? Even within the realm of art, one is hard-pressed to figure out the common link between a beautiful symphony and a beautiful sculpture. Moreover, beauty is a contestable value within the artworld. Is all good art *pro tanto* beautiful? Or does beauty comprise a more limited range of artistic virtues, ceding equal standing to the grotesque, the sublime, the ugly, and the monstrous?

Plato offered a standard to stabilize the oscillation between individual beauties and the idea of beauty itself. Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* recommends that one begin by loving the beauty of a person, the individual beloved, moving from there to the beauty of all boys, then to that of all humans, and thence to the beauty of institutions and abstractions, and finally—almost—reaching Beauty itself, that Form that unites individual beauties by bestowing upon each a portion of its essence. Philosophers, following in the footsteps of Plato, have often focused on the last item in this sequence, hoping ambitiously to unify the many instances of beautiful things—objects, scenes, artworks—under a general concept. This endeavor traditionally has required that one leave behind the starting point of beauty: beautiful bodies incarnate. For only by ignoring the beauty of the human form can one escape the thrall of physical desire and enter the purer world of aesthetic pleasure. Or can one? It is the task of many of the essays in this volume to suggest that the pursuit of Beauty retains at least a trace of some originary eroticism.

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To be sure, abstract, absolute beauty has sometimes been sought as a relief from physical and carnal preoccupations, as with Schopenhauer's sense that aesthetic experience is the sole occasion when the will is at rest; Santayana's observation that in beauty the soul cherishes its freedom from connection with the body; or even Iris Murdoch's claim that beauty is an occasion for "unselfing," for directing attention away from oneself to the world around. Few would argue that beauty can never perform this purifying function, although perhaps it has been pursued with disproportionate attention. It is general, universal beauty that has usually commanded the attention of philosophers, who tend to ignore the individual beauties that manifest it in imperfect and heterogeneous ways. Particularly neglected has been the human body, for beauties of the flesh provoke sensuous desires and their fulfillment, physical rather than aesthetic pleasures. And yet, as these essays make clear, the body is one of the most enduring and powerful aesthetic elements that we live with. What is more, since bodies are so frequently represented in visual art, attention to beauty in the flesh illuminates painted beauties (and their contraries) as well.

Attractions to and aversions from the human body command attention aesthetically, erotically, morally, and socially. Here, too, we find the question of common or diverse tastes manifest. How pancultural are criteria by which the human form is judged to be beautiful? Has nature itself, employing the implements of evolution, perhaps endowed our perceptual machinery with common aesthetic standards? If so, can the erotic tinge of physical beauty truly be transcended in the way that Plato willed, or are tastes molded by innate propensities to seek forms traceable to some remote impulse for sexual selection?

Alternatively, is it the case that tastes are so heavily influenced by social needs and norms that criteria for beautiful human bodies are linked to the structures of gender, social hierarchies, skin color, musculature, youth, and authority—all of which different cultures impose in strikingly variant ways? A social constructionist approach invites consideration of greater heterogeneity among physical beauties, but it is likely to be just as anchored to an erotic charge as evolution's putative common criteria. In either event, beauty wields power—insofar as the body is a site for social values, political changes, and the imposition of norms that implement these. While this approach does not necessarily signal the Many winning out over the One, it represents a radical shift of attention to the kinds of beautiful objects that possess the most immediately evident social and psychological force, and that also manifest obdurate differences among criteria for attractiveness.

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In the last generation, aesthetic theorists have thoroughly questioned the notion that beauty can be purified from social influences that invade our standards of taste. In fact, it is more comfortable now to speak of beauties in the plural, without expectation that beautiful things are necessarily judged by the same gauge. Nor is it so common any longer to consider beauty and other aesthetic virtues innocent of political meaning, not only when it comes to the appearance of one's face and body but also when it comes to one's tastes in art, as Pierre Bourdieu famously insisted. The feminist influence on the revaluation of beauty has been particularly complex. On the one hand, there are challenges to restrictive models of beauty that pressure women in most cultures to mold and decorate their bodies in conformity with local norms. Probing more deeply, such challenges reveal the spread of values that they manifest—of class, ethnic type, race, lineage. Gender and racial-body type both have their standard norms and their more subtle and subversive roles to play in social aesthetics, as several of the essays here explore. On the other hand, there is also the expansion of the concept of beauty to encompass body types that by more conventional standards would be judged awkward, imperfect, ugly. In the hands of politically informed artists, individuals, and critics, beauty can be accepted and expanded, or rejected and critiqued.

Whatever approach one favors, the relationships between the most abstract and disembodied sense of beauty and the physical, erotic sense are clearly harder to sever than many philosophers have previously realized. The soul may be glad to forget its connection with the body, as Santayana put it, but that gladness indicates that the connection is there to be forgotten in the first place. And often it is not so much forgotten as reshaped and transfigured. Such transformations are explored here with excursions into the place of beauty in art; into the queering of beauty in the exemplars of beautiful artworks; into explorations of the marginal and exotic that allure while defying conventional models; into the literal carving of facial features for cosmetic and artistic purposes that both conform to and challenge norms of appearance. In such different contexts these authors dramatize the various ways that beauty can function in relation to personal desires, artistic values, and social authority. Here we can discover beauty not only as a quality and a value, but also as a project and a practice that drives our lives from both within and without—internal standards, external expectations, and ambivalence meeting in provocative disputation.

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Introduction

PEG ZEGLIN BRAND

We are more than a full decade into the new millennium and, inevitably, the world has become smaller, more complex, and immanent. Post-9/11, we live daily with the "war" on terror. An image of a veiled woman is fraught with political overtones, yet stunning in its starkness, simplicity, and evocation of beauty that is innocent and long gone (plate 1).

Try to ignore world events, debates over nuclear proliferation, arguments over immigration, battlegrounds of ethnic cleansing, strategies for economic recovery, and you will appear out of touch and indifferent. Assert your self, your home state, or your country as superior and someone—somewhere—will invariably challenge your claim on the grounds of economic, political, or religious principles. YouTube, 24/7 news, blogs, Twitter, and iPhones allow people across the globe to access one another, at least on a technological level, thereby making all of us Other.

Visually, we can never go back. Isolationism is naïve in an era of collapsing Twin Towers, the tortures at Abu Ghraib, and extraordinary rendition. We enjoy—or endure—a new era of representation, artistic production, and aesthetics. Images abound; we cannot escape their impact. Is it a brave new world or one of bravado and abandoned beauty? Beauty must compete with the horrors of the world as well as the images that we are not allowed to see.[1] How do we see and process world events, such as the quiet and unremarkable return of a woman to her home devastated by war (plate 2)? Is beauty relegated to the scrap heap or insistently, perhaps even unintentionally, ever-present?

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Consider a comparison of two prime ways we as viewers might choose to perceive an image of such an event: as photo-documentary and as artistic vision. Plate 2, taken by photojournalist Michael Kamber, cannot help but portray a certain beauty of contrasts—the lone figure against the clutter of brick and stone, the vertical figure against the slope of a destabilizing horizon and clear blue sky—as well as an irony of reversals: the blackness of life against the whiteness of rubble and death. The photo was prominently placed on the front page of the *New York Times* on July 12, 2008, and its caption read, "Nafeeya Mohsin looked over what remained of her house last month, two days after returning to it in the village of Al Etha in Iraq."[2] Did Kamber intend to capture the haunting beauty he portrays, or is beauty far from his mind when he sets out to accurately document a moment in time? Moreover, how do we as viewers process the beauty we see: with despair? Disinterest? Or perhaps a bit of both?

Compare the image in plate 3, which is uncannily similar. Three years earlier, video artist Lida Abdul had returned home to find whiteness and ruin as well, but, in her case, within her native Afghanistan.[3] How does this portrayal of the lone dark figure amidst the whitened ruins of her former house compare? Does this work of "fine art" exhibit beauty better than the more recent journalistic photo? A sensitive observer would not presume so distinct a difference and would, I suspect, allow the artist to document and the journalist to beautify. As viewers who process and perceive beauty in the two photos, we might ask ourselves whether this beauty differs from past, traditional beauties we have come to enjoy for their pleasure(s) or their promise of happiness.[4] What sorts of pleasure or happiness can be felt, if any? How is our perception of beauty in the second image informed by our knowledge of its title, *White House*—particularly once we know that Abdul spends the full five minutes of the video whitewashing (with a brush and a bucket of paint) architectural ruins? The term is, of course, ambiguous in meaning, vacillating as it does between the residence of the U.S. president who ordered the initial bombing of the Taliban in 2002–2003 (George W. Bush) and the resulting white rubble that underlies the action of the artist who whitewashes. To whitewash is to hide the truth about something or to cover up.

Difficult questions like these can challenge the presumptions operative in our perception, (re)cognition, and interpretation of these images as examples of beauty. They are landscapes, but do not easily resemble idyllic scenes of the eighteenth century or the tempests of J. M. W. Turner. They 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

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function as "real" scenes of actual lives, i.e., as art critic Eleanor Heartney reminds us, as "bearers of truth."[5] Given that 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. Some art critics fear that in this day and age, beauty has become "an infatuation" on the part of artists who seek an escape from distasteful politics and difficult art.[6] Others see, and welcome, beauty that hurts—as in the video by Lida Abdul.[7] How can beauty both evade the contentiousness of world politics and also capture a fragile vision in the maelstrom of war? Perhaps a new approach to beauty is needed . . . to reconcile the dissonance.

The essays of *Beauty Unlimited* position 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. Clearly, the past cannot—and should not—be ignored; in aesthetics and the philosophy of art, revered pronouncements on beauty by standard-bearers like Plato, Burke, Hume, and Kant inevitably serve as a backdrop to any modern approach one might adopt in assessing representations of war, abuse, the environment, cultural identity, even fashion and the popular cultural icons that saturate our visual fields. The authors in this volume bring a fresh perspective to such imagery; they ask new questions and they acknowledge the overlap of scholarship on the topic of beauty from such fields as art criticism, art history, music, film, dance, feminist theory, and cultural studies, in addition to philosophy. Beauty as an interdisciplinary exercise quickly complicates simplistic assumptions underlying one's aesthetic experience and pleasurable reaction. Whether we're ready or not, it drags in the nonaesthetic in all its clumsy inclusiveness, i.e., issues of ethics, politics, gender, race, ethnicity, and class.

Our challenge is to decipher visual representations of beauty—both unfamiliar and problematic—through an integrated context of apprehension and appreciation. New images of beauty presented by authors in this volume embed layers of meaning that invite us to review past philosophical and aesthetic theories through broader cognitive and global perspectives. They propose new examples that deviate from standard examples of the past—so ably represented by the canon of ancient Greek ideals and the European "great masters"—and the paradigmatic beauty so often depicted in Western popular culture that enshrines the bloom of youth with flawless perfection, whiteness, and socially and culturally acceptable standards of femininity. The authors presented here serve as guides for scholarly adventures into new terrain, i.e., for beauty unlimited.

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The Backdrop of Beauty

One reviewer, writing for a philosophy journal, listed recent titles in the ever-growing discourse on philosophical concepts of beauty: *Natural Beauty: A Theory of Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, by Ronald Moore (2007); *Six Names of Beauty*, by Crispin Sartwell (2004); *The Abuse of Beauty*, by Arthur C. Danto (2003); *Beauty*, by James Kirwan (1999); *Beauty in Context*, by Wilfried Van Damme (1996); *Beauty Restored*, by Mary Mothersill (1984); and A *New Theory of Beauty*, by Guy Sircello (1975).[8] He could have also included such notables as *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction*, by Roger Scruton (2011); *Beauty*, by Roger Scruton (2009); *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution*, by Dennis Dutton (2009); *Functional Beauty*, by Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson (2008); *Plato and the Question of Beauty*, by Drew A. Hyland (2008); *Beauty's Appeal: Measure and Excess*, edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (2008); *Aesthetics and Material Beauty*, by Jennifer A. McMahon (2007); *Kant on Beauty and Biology*, by Rachel Zuckert (2007); *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*, by Alexander Nehamas (2007); *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, by Paul Guyer (2005); a reissue of George Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty* (2002); *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, by Nick Zangwill (2001); *Aesthetic Order: A Philosophy of Order, Beauty and Art*, by Ruth Lorand (2000); *Real Beauty*, by Eddy M. Zemach (1997); *What About Beauty?* by Marcia Eaton (1997); and *The Gift of Beauty: The Good as Art*, by Stephen David Ross (1996). Exhibiting an amazing array, these titles are even more astounding when we consider that, less than twenty years ago, some philosophers had, with great certainty, declared the death of beauty as an essential feature—or any feature at all—of art; James Kirwan, cited above, and Marcella Tarozzi Goldsmith, author of *The Future of Art: An Aesthetics of the New and the Sublime* (1999), are only two such examples. Few philosophers dared to disagree. But much has been written in the past decade or two, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. These philosophical texts focus on the aesthetic experience and its resulting pleasures, yet seem to bear little resemblance to other disciplinary approaches to beauty that run parallel to this inquiry within aesthetics. Books from nonphilosophical disciplines have an even wider audience than books routinely listed under "aesthetics" or "philosophy of art."

Consider, for instance, the following titles authored by writers in literature, art history, and aesthetic theory who cast their nets more widely than those of philosophical aesthetics: *Truth, Beauty and Goodness Reframed*, by

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Howard Gardner (2011); *100,000 Years of Beauty*, a five-volume set edited by Elisabeth Azoulay, Angela Demian, and Dalibor Frioux (2009); *Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present*, by Deborah Willis (2009); *Finding Beauty in a Broken World*, by Terry Tempest Williams (2009); *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility*, by Arindam Dutta (2007); *In Praise of Athletic Beauty*, by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2006); *Beauty and Art, 1750–2000*, by Elizabeth Prettejohn (2005); *For the Love of Beauty: Art History and the Moral Foundations of Aesthetic Judgments*, by Arthur Pontynen (2005); *History of Beauty*, by Umberto Eco (2004, and reissued multiple times); *Speaking of Beauty*, by Denis Donoghue (2003); *Extreme Beauty: Aesthetics, Politics, Death*, edited by James Swearingen and Joanne Cutting-Gray (2002); *On Beauty and Being Just*, by Elaine Scarry (1999); *Behold the Man: The Hype and Selling of Male Beauty in Media and Culture*, by Edisol Wayne Dotson (1999); *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime*, by Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe (1999); *Beauty and the Critic: Aesthetics in an Age of Cultural Studies*, edited by James Soderholm (1998); *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*, edited by Francis Ames-Lewis and Mary Rogers (1998); and *Beauty Is Nowhere: Ethical Issues in Art and Design*, edited by Richard Roth and Susan King Roth (1998). These authors approach the topic through disciplinary avenues that may overlap with philosophy but rely more commonly upon histories of art, artifactuality, and cultural production than their counterparts in aesthetics. Sometimes representations alone form most of the content of inquiry, as in *Rough Beauty*, by Dave Anderson (2006), a glimpse at a Texas town that kept blacks at bay by holding Ku Klux Klan marches, or *Vanishing Beauty: Indigenous Body Art and Decoration*, a documentation of primitive tribes over four continents by Bertie Winkel and Dos Winkel (2006). Moreover, what is particularly notable is by how many titles—and how far beyond its meager beginnings—the discussion of beauty has grown since the publication of my edited volume *Beauty Matters* in 2000. In the introduction to that volume, I cited only two texts as particularly influential (and controversial): *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty*, by Dave Hickey (1993), and *Uncontrollable Beauty: Toward a New Aesthetics*, by Bill Beckley and David Shapiro (1998).[9]

Even more different in focus and scope are titles such as *Spellbound by Beauty: Alfred Hitchcock and His Leading Ladies*, by Donald Spoto (2009); *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty: The Visceral Eye*, by Linda Nochlin (2006); *Swooning Beauty: A Memoir of Pleasure* (2006) and *Monster/Beauty: Building the Body of Love* (2001), both by Joanna Frueh; *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty*

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in Popular Culture, by Janell Hobson (2005); *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*, by Sheila Jeffreys (2005); *Inventing Beauty: A History of the Innovations That Have Made Us Beautiful*, by Teresa Riordan (2004); *The Beauty Industry: Gender, Culture, Pleasure*, by Paula Black (2004); *Body Work: Beauty and Self-Image in American Culture*, by Debra L. Gimlin (2002); *Venus in Exile: The Rejection of Beauty in 20th-Century Art*, by Wendy Steiner (2001); *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China*, by Wang Ping (2000); *Reconcilable Differences: Confronting Beauty, Pornography, and the Future of Feminism*, by Lynn S. Chancer (1999); *The Power of Beauty*, by Nancy Friday (1996); *The Symptom of Beauty*, by Francette Pacteau (1994); *Ideals of Feminine Beauty: Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, edited by Karen A. Callaghan (1994); *Body Outlaws*, edited by Ophira Edut (1998, with revised editions in 2000 and 2003), and, last but not least, the landmark bestseller by Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women* (1991). These titles constitute a third track that runs parallel to the other two, often invoking the name of Venus—the ancient goddess of love—in ominous ways: Venus in the dark, Venus in exile. With repeated references to women, their bodies, ideals of female beauty, and their cultural creation and consumption, these studies are less about the supposedly universal and "innocent" pleasure(s) inherent in standard philosophical notions of beauty than they are about the identification of uniquely sexualized male pleasure enjoyed at the expense of women whose bodies are routinely on display and may have, incidentally, undergone considerable pain and discomfort to conform to feminine ideals. (Frueh, an exception here, also focuses on female pleasures.) Making little attempt to strive for objectivity, as philosophers would prefer they do, these authors approach the topic with unabashed subjectivity, i.e., from a feminist standpoint, routinely invoking their experiences *as women* to assess female beauty within patriarchal cultural contexts that consistently devalue women (and women's pleasure).

One particularly new and bold approach to the "disarming" of Venus and her entrenched ideals is undertaken by Ann Millett-Gallant in *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art* (2010). I have argued elsewhere that the (self-) depiction of the disabled body for the purposes of redefining beauty—as in the case of performance artist Mary Duffy, born without arms, who poses nude as the classical statue of Venus de Milo in order to "disarm" Venus—exemplifies the agency of the artist, in unheralded autonomous defiance of the norms of feminine beauty long honored by Kenneth Clark and other revered art historians and critics.[10] My endorsement of Duffy's intentionality is neither new nor unique within her context of supporters within art history

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and disability studies, but serves to alert aestheticians to a growing body of work that they can no longer ignore when teaching introductory philosophy of art classes, however replete with obligatory PowerPoint images of the Greek goddess and her Renaissance revisionings. To disarm Venus is to symbolically dismember and destroy her; what remains of the original aesthetic experience when we view an armless Duffy as an armless statue? How do we describe what we now see? Moreover, is there any pleasure involved?

The "problem of beauty" as seen by some feminist theorists is not so much the conflict of its moral and aesthetic implications—namely, the question of whether beauty is good or bad for women (although writers like Wolf and Jeffreys clearly argue its dangers on moral grounds)—but is, instead, pragmatic: "how is beauty defined, deployed, defended, subordinated, marketed or manipulated, and how do these tactics intersect with gender and value?" This is the question posed by Claire Colebrook in the introduction to a 2006 special issue of the journal *Feminist Theory* on the topic of beauty. In it, she casts the context for a feminist political discussion of beauty within the following framework: "If beauty has been associated with the viewed, passive, mastered and nakedly displayed female body, it has also been associated (as in Kant's aesthetic) with a purely formal, disinterested and elevating regard." Given the latter association—and the fact that art appreciators everywhere seek the many aesthetic pleasures that beauty may bring—Colebrook argues against generalizing "a simple moral value" for our familiar concept or phenomenon of beauty, in spite of its "centrality to philosophy, everyday life, art, politics and culture."[11]

The editor of the special issue, Rita Felski, argues that new feminist perspectives on beauty will not only build upon important past feminist critiques that "expose the ugly underside of beauty," such as female subjugation, but also promote an invigorated dialectic of aesthetics and politics that does not become dominated by politics.[12] Traditional notions of aesthetic value and pleasure are prominent components of beauty, and they indeed have their place and are worth savoring; new feminist perspectives on beauty will further explore these dimensions alongside the political. If we reverse the direction of inquiry, however, it is not at all clear that traditional philosophical aesthetics is similarly interested in the political or feminist aspects. In fact, Felski argues,

> Contemporary aesthetic theory, I believe, has been led astray by its conflation of the aesthetic with the artistic and its subsequent, virtually exclusive, focus on the sphere of high art. The challenge for feminism is to rein back its

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> compulsion to immediately translate aesthetic surfaces into political depths; or rather, to keep both surface *and* depth in the mind's eye, teasing apart the multifarious socio-political meanings of texts while also crafting richer and thicker descriptions of aesthetic experience.[13]

The essays in *Beauty Unlimited* hope to move forward in a similarly balanced direction, that is, to motivate the evolution of such new feminist perspectives on beauty, since "all of us, women included, continue to seek out and take solace in beauty."[14] They are organized in four sections in order to maximize strengths and commonalities and to provoke thought: Part 1—"Revising the Concept of Beauty: Laying the Groundwork," Part 2—"Standards of Beauty," Part 3—"The Body in Performance," and Part 4,—"Beauty and the State." The persistence and power of beauty is on full display; aestheticians need to rise to the challenge, to push the boundaries of comfortable inquiry, and to imagine beauty anew.

Part 1. Revising the Concept of Beauty: Laying the Groundwork

Just a quick glance at the literature has shown us the diversity of writing on the topic of beauty, and yet, sadly, a closer look reveals the persistent lack of influence that parallel tracks have had on the ongoing philosophical tradition. Most philosophers have yet to acknowledge the insights and advances made by art historians and cultural critics who find issues of race, gender, class, disability, and sexuality to be essential to discussions of beauty. One exception is Arthur C. Danto, an influential philosopher who has been art critic for various publications, art exhibition catalogues, and *The Nation*. It is his work on which the first essay in this volume, by Noël Carroll, focuses. In "Arthur Danto and the Problem of Beauty," Carroll presents an overview of the intersection of Danto's theories of art and beauty, based on an important set of lectures Danto delivered in 2001 outlining "the problem" of beauty, which he published as *The Abuse of Beauty* (2003). Carroll discusses the threat that beauty poses to Danto's long-standing theory of art as a problem of containment. Narrowly construed, beauty is that which is pleasing to the eye or ear, but the requirement that art have such a discernible property was banished long ago with the advent of German expressionism, Dadaism, and, more recently in the twentieth century, Conceptual Art. Therefore, for Danto, the definition of "art" cannot rely on a discernible property like beauty unless it is a form of internal beauty, i.e., unless it serves

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the meaning or content of the artwork. Such beauty significantly differs from external beauty (or "dumb beauty"), recognizable as eye candy or delightfully contrived artifice.

In the second essay, "Savages, Wild Men, Monstrous Races: The Social Construction of Race in the Early Modern Era," cultural critic Gregory Velazco y Trianosky delves into the modern conception of race that initially developed in the early 1500s—both visually and textually—yielding a problematic concept of "the savage." The author draws upon Noachic legends, according to which the three peoples of the earth—the inhabitants of Africa, Asia, and Europe—each descended from one of the three sons of Noah. He argues that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers invoked medieval manuscript illustrations and legends of the Wild Man and monstrous races that were based, in part, on European visits to the New World, in order to craft a notion of "the savage" that is highly racialized and stubbornly pervasive. He urges aestheticians and historians of philosophy to explore these early origins of modern ideas and images of race that continue to influence us today.

A third essay further invites expansion of the concept of beauty while invoking the foundations of historical philosophical figures. In "Beauty's Relational Labor," Monique Roelofs looks at race, gender, and class in the Scottish Enlightenment (as embodied in Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Burke, and Adam Smith) as well as historical critics of this tradition (Mandeville and Wollstonecraft) in order to bring out moral and political difficulties with the concept of beauty, especially its controversial role in supporting the allegedly adequate moral and political social order. After describing the flip side of beauty's ethical and political aspirations, Roelofs sketches a relational approach between aesthetics, race, and gender. While the essay is not specifically focused on the body, it does critically examine both Burke's reading of the body of a black woman and Wollstonecraft's challenge to the feminine focus on the body. Her discussion is framed by a close reading of a Brazilian novel by Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*, which Roelofs cites as an example of *écriture féminine*, a genre of feminine writing that philosopher Hélène Cixous promoted in her 1975 essay "Le Rire de la Meduse."[15]

The next essay, "Queer Beauty: Winckelmann and Kant on the Vicissitudes of the Ideal," offers an analysis of objects familiar to readers of Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Immanuel Kant that present us with what the author calls "a paradox." Art historian Whitney Davis cites the role of pederastic representations of youthful male beauty in order to explore how they have fed into the canonical representation of beauty in the modern

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Western tradition, despite the ban on homosexuality in the modern world. The "paradox," from a strictly Kantian point of view, is that there should be no queer beauty for Kant, but, Davis argues, there clearly was. Much as Roelofs focuses on race and gender, Davis delves deeply into the assumptions beneath standard philosophical conceptualizations of beauty in order to bring hidden issues of sexuality to light, particularly as they function to reinforce standards for canonic inclusion.

Finally, "Worldwide Women," an important essay by art critic Eleanor Heartney, rounds out this section. It is reprinted from its original venue, *Art in America*, and included here to familiarize readers with a variety of works by women artists that have been canonized (with a small "c") in a well-known and highly publicized feminist exhibit: the Brooklyn Museum's 2007 "Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art." Heartney's essay offers noteworthy scrutiny of both the range of curatorial choices made by the veteran feminist art critic Linda Nochlin and her less experienced co-curator, Maura Reilly (nearly ninety artists from fifty countries were chosen for the show), and the curators' presupposition that the term "feminism" still has a shared meaning, in spite of its evolution over time and its current unpopularity with younger women. The use of the plural, i.e., "feminisms," supplies what "feminism" lacks. But as Heartney notes, "global feminisms" inevitably reveals "the unequal march of feminism internationally," and she challenges the use in 2007 of a phrase with which Western feminists are typically more comfortable, particularly in their attempts to export or impose their views upon others. In the catalogue for the exhibition, the curators posit "a transnational network of global feminisms."[16] The array of artworks discussed in Heartney's essay will invite the reader to be more receptive to the creative innovations advanced in the next section of this book, where female artists and nonartists alike push the boundaries of the first phase of feminist art (1960–2000) and female expression into new and unchartered territory.

Repositioning the Body

Since the human body is the site of performance in a variety of ways, not the least of which includes the variations used by news agencies and mainstream media to cast worldwide *events* (like returns to homes in devastated war zones) in terms of *persons* and their personal narratives, many of the authors in this volume focus on the body in terms of agency, mode of representation, and embodied identities across cultures. Artists can act and assume agency (as in Lida Abdul's performance of whitewashing in *White House*);

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they can appear to us via a particular medium or art form (as in a video or still shot of that performance); and they can present themselves through art that yields multiple meanings within a particular culture (its sociopolitical context of origin) as well as across cultures. Let us reposition the artist and the artist's body, allowing the artwork to guide the expansion of the concept of beauty and its accompanying enterprise of aesthetics.

Consider a pair of photographs by IngridMwangiRobertHutter entitled *Static Drift*, from the 2001 "Global Feminisms" show.[17] These photographs contrast regions of the world as a "bright dark continent" and "burn out country" by means of maps imposed on the artist's own female body that contrast two shades of color, indicating a "drift" that is apparently not moving but rather "static" (plate 4a and b). An artist of Kenyan origin, MwangiHutter documents the dislocation of moving between her native land and Germany, thereby renegotiating her identity in a new and other culture. Once relocated, the immigrant feels "other" not only to the natives of her new land, but also, inevitably after a time, to those left behind in her homeland. As one critic describes the constant shifting of geographic identity, self-definition becomes a process of negotiating between conflicting feelings of belonging:

> The individual becomes multiple, a mosaic of possibilities. In her videos, performances, and photo works, Ingrid Mwangi projects this fractured perception, in which we see ourselves through the eyes of others. In such a case, our own sense of identity defines the borders of a continually shifting process of self-protection, responding, for instance, to globalization.[18]

The particular case of MwangiHutter differs from those of other artists who have journeyed west, according to critic Simon Njami, particularly because she uses her own body to depict herself as two kinds of "other," i.e., to depict her "dual belonging":

> She is certainly African, her family name attests to that, but her German mother helped her avoid a trap: the comfort of the established image that can be identified and described. It was never an issue for her to acquire the language of the other, since she was at once the same and other. She spent the first fifteen years of her life in Kenya, where she was born, before leaving for Germany, where she lives and works today. Her dual belonging is not only symbolic, it is physical. It runs through her veins and is read on her body. And that richness, which makes her both from here and from there, creates a fragility in her, a prism through which she tries to see herself and see the world.[19]

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The representation of MwangiHutter's body captures the multiple levels mentioned above: that of agency, mode of representation, and embodied identity within a multicultural context. She is the agent and performer of her art; she documents herself by photographing her body in the act of performing; and she questions and creates a fluid identity based on her place—as both one and the other—within the broader cultural framework of the world: across continents. Her body becomes the locus of a "mosaic of possibilities" that is documented and recorded but also functions at a higher level: as an icon or symbol within a visual language of bodies represented on a worldwide stage of news, popular culture, art galleries, etc. Horst Gerhard Haberl focuses on the use of her body as a tool that advances the potential for communication across a broadening global context:

> In the photo series *Static Drift*—as an example of a "different" readability of the world—the performer exposes her "Borderlines," having had the "Burn Out" of a Germany shadow burned into the skin of her stomach by the white sun, or the words "Bright Dark Continent" into the stencil of Africa. As a media artist she is familiar with the rhetorical power of projected pictures, signs, symbols and texts, and aware of the media characteristics of the body as a vessel of memory and remembering, a generator of energy fields, data logger and processor, both receiver and transmitter—but also as a resounding body or instrument.[20]

What does the analysis of MwangiHutter's work, alongside that of Lida Abdul, show?

First, that contemporary art is complex, nuanced, and intimately tied to—and expressive of—the world outside the narrow confines of the mainstream "artworld" of the high-profit New York and London galleries, museums, and auction houses. Political art is being made by numerous non–New York artists, who are often involved in local and international issues and, not surprisingly, in artistic and political activism. Some of the artists presented in this volume, particularly women around the world who have relocated to new lands or who routinely travel the world between (home)lands, define themselves in terms of political activism bent on abolishing injustices to women everywhere. Heartney's "Worldwide Women" probed issues of war, exile, abuse, sexuality, and identity. Beauty—in particular, of the female body—often played a role in conveying a political message. This is not news, of course, since women have often used their bodies to undermine stereotypes about beauty and its traditional role in providing pleasure within the artistic canon and the artworld. Often their intent is to disrupt their easy

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classification as objects of sexual longing and to subvert viewers' aesthetic pleasure; the intentionality is provocative and complete.

As exemplified by MwangiHutter's *Static Drift* photographs, there is a desire to erode comfortable dichotomies between here and there, private and public, self and other. All of the artists chosen for the "Global Feminisms" show were born after 1960, and Heartney gives a sense of what third-wave feminism is all about: *differences* among women (whereas second-wave feminists sought commonalities but were primarily white, middle-class, and hetero), the blurring of boundaries (the fluidity of cultural identity and sexuality), the move away from postmodern appropriation (particularly through images of victimhood) toward a postfeminist sense of agency and empowerment, and the political and parodic expression that some critics find too "didactic" and lacking focus on "aesthetic pleasure."[21] Even after decades of feminist art and evolving gender constructions, basic questions remain and debates continue over feminists' use of sexually explicit imagery (since such imagery may also inadvertently serve the patriarchy) and how political art may function as a viable strategy for gaining attention and recognition (given that severe gender inequities continue to persist).

Consider, for a moment, how distant MwangiHutter's (real) "self-portrait" of her nude torso is from that of the (imaginary) portrait of Olympia, as depicted by Manet's nude model, Victorine Meurent.[22] At first glance, they seem light years apart; yet they are connected as embodiments and expressions of beauty, particularly by means of the use of the meaning-laden female body. When film theorist Laura Mulvey introduced her theory of the male gaze in the 1970s, she emphasized the passivity of the female sitter who is positioned for the scopophilic gaze of the male viewer.[23] When bell hooks suggested an oppositional gaze, she called attention to the predominance of images of white women looked at by the viewer of color.[24] Yet many aesthetes continue to promote the same gaze that objectifies, sexualizes, and stultifies the female on view.[25] Alternative modes of reading have been suggested by feminist theorists over the years that reveal multiple meanings below the surface—what philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer so aptly calls "deep gender."[26] How might we probe for deep gender, and how might we cast the difference between the approaches in perception and interpretation of artworks such as MwangiHutter's and Manet's?

The old-fashioned philosopher would look for the pleasure inherent in the work, accessible by means of a possessing gaze that reflects a dominance of male over female, clothed over naked, and privileged over powerless, all the while denying his feelings of desire and outwardly feigning disinterest.

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He would tout the aesthetic properties of the composition in order to distract attention from the titillation he feels while looking upon an exotic body "under" his gaze. Alternatively, a more enlightened viewer might delve below the surface—beyond personal urges—to dig deeper, discovering gender as one key to unraveling and understanding "the problematic" of a woman's body, which is *not* necessarily on view primarily for the delectation of a(ny) male viewer. The difference hinges on the attribution of agency, and to what degree.

Most old-fashioned interpreters attribute agency to the model for Olympia because Victorine Meurent notoriously stares back at the viewer! This was considered scandalous in 1864; most sitters were prostitutes and did not presume to return the viewer's gaze. This reading of Olympia as accorded some degree of agency by her creator has prevailed for nearly one hundred and fifty years. But what degree of agency does Meurent display in comparison to MwangiHutter, who controls the entire creative process and utilizes her own body as the "canvas" or mode of representation? 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 days past. Consider some examples of this interpretive strategy as outlined by the authors in Part 2.

Part 2. Standards of Beauty

The widespread Western obsession with female beauty, perfection, cosmetic surgery, and youthfulness places female bodies in a unique position when they are scrutinized as objects that also convey political meaning and ethical embodiment. In a recent volume entitled *Too Beautiful to Picture: Zeuxis, Myth, and Mimesis,* Elizabeth C. Manfield eloquently tracks the limits of natural beauty and societal pressures that come to bear upon women by revisiting the story of the ancient painter Zeuxis, who, in his attempt to portray Helen of Troy, used five different models because each was individually inadequate.[27] Cosmetic surgery was not available in ancient Greece, Renaissance Europe, or eighteenth-century England and Scotland, the birthplaces of philosophical aesthetics. Its extensive use today can be seen as evidence that any traditional notion of "beauty" risks marginalization when the entire playing field has changed and women (and men) can drastically change their looks at will. Critics of widespread contemporary beauty practices challenge Western postmodern feminists who claim that women gain empowerment and agency through invasive procedures like body art

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and cosmetic surgery. Like Naomi Wolf, who wrote before cosmetic surgery became a billion-dollar annual industry,[28] Sheila Jeffreys has more recently argued in *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West* that they are socially acceptable forms of self-harm that serve to perpetuate the subordination of women under patriarchy.[29] Looking at standards of beauty can be intriguing and is essential to any forward-looking discussion of beauty, and the authors in this section take up the challenge with vigor and insight.

For instance, in her essay entitled "Jenny Saville Remakes the Female Nude: Feminist Reflections on the State of the Art," Diana Tietjens Meyers explores how British artist Jenny Saville (also represented in the "Global Feminisms" exhibit of 2007) reconfigures representations of feminine body images, endowing the human body with subjectivity and agency. Having previously written on the concept of women's agency and self-knowledge,[30] Meyers extends her work in exploring the autonomy of bodies to Saville's paintings, explaining the psychocorporeal aspects of an artist's work that monumentally rejects "admired or idealized beauty." Saville's nudes are endowed with agency and power, for instance, while Victorine Meurent, depicted by Manet as Olympia, exemplifies "the defensive agency of the powerless in the presence of the powerful."

Like MwangiHutter, several other artists discussed in this volume straddle multiple worlds, exploring identities that mix together dominant and minority subcultures and, in one case, geographically distant locations. "Indigenous Beauty" is a photo essay by Phoebe Mills Farris, who artistically documents the inherent possibilities of Native American beauty, infused as it is with generational differences, tribal background, and racial mixing.[31] These photographs of women and men with roots in the tribes of the eastern coast of the United States display a physical appearance that diverges from the "typical" images familiar to the dominant white culture, namely, those of Indians of the Plains states and the American Southwest. Instead Farris highlights the cultures found on the Atlantic coast and in the Caribbean, particularly those who had early contact with Europeans, Africans, and racially mixed nonwhites. She honors their traditions of indigenous beauty by presenting a rich range of examples that emphasize skin tone, facial features, dress, and, in some instances, native regalia.

Mary Devereaux, a scholar in medical ethics as well as aesthetics, explores the parameters of cosmetic surgery in the pursuit of beauty in her essay, "Is Medical Aesthetics Really Medical?" An incredibly thorough body of scholarship now exists on the topic; consider the provocative nature of only

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two titles by Sander Gilman: *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery* (1999) and *Creating Beauty to Cure the Soul* (1998). An influential body of feminist work has been inspired by the writings of Kathy Davis: *Dubious Equalities and Embodied Differences: Cultural Studies on Cosmetic Surgery* (2003) and *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery* (1995). Devereaux provides a history and terminology of cosmetic surgery in order to question the commonly accepted claim that cosmetic surgery qualifies as a form of healthcare, that is, as a legitimate branch of medicine. In an age of escalating healthcare costs and urgent medical concerns, can one's (mere) beautification be categorized as a medical need?

Jo Ellen Jacobs broadens the scope of women as consumers in her essay, "The Bronze Age Revisited: The Aesthetics of Sun Tanning." Examining why skin color is part of our definition of beauty, she explores the aesthetic aspect of tanning and the skin color that is considered most beautiful in light of racial politics and media hype. Advertisements for both skin-darkening and skin-lightening products reflect the practices of different cultures and different stories about their practices, but, Jacobs argues, women with pale skin are preferred worldwide except in one "bizarre" culture: our own Caucasian-dominated European and American world.

Karina L. Céspedes-Cortes and Paul C. Taylor's essay, "¿Tienes Culo? How to Look at Vida Guerra," explains the career of Cuban-born model Vida Guerra and the persistent gap between white hegemonic masculine norms of female sex appeal, on one hand, and black and Hispanic ones on the other. Guerra's ability to cross over from black "gentlemen's magazines" to their white counterparts suggests that this gap is narrowing. The authors consider the meaning of Guerra's popularity against the backdrop of racial and sexual meanings most famously crystallized by the tragic career of the nineteenth-century South African woman publicly displayed in Europe, Sara Baartman, the so-called Hottentot Venus. Re-presented by contemporary artists like Renée Cox and Tracey Rose, the story of Baartman's removal from South Africa and subsequent display for British and French white voyeurs is one of exploitation and abuse. The legacy of this misuse—for "scientific purposes," no less—is a travesty, an enduring domination of the black female body by white privilege and superiority. No analysis of beauty and race can proceed without measuring its continuing impact on contemporary audiences.

Another instance of a woman's inability to control her reception (and perception) by the public is the marketing of a paper-doll version of the well-known—indeed, venerated—late Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. In "Beauty between Disability and Gender: Frida Kahlo in Paper Dolls," an essay located

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at the intersection of beauty, disability, and gender, Fedwa Malti-Douglas brings our attention to the representations of Kahlo for children's consumption in a colorful paper-doll book (with text in both English and Spanish) entitled *Aquí cuelgan mis vestidos* ("Hang My Clothes Here"). The sort of thing a little girl might typically play with, the book presents a variety of outfits for dressing the doll, all of them authentically detailed and verifiably worn by the artist in photographs and her own paintings. However, the book presents Kahlo's body as beautiful and perfect; standing in high heels, she looks like a fashion model, whereas in reality, her bout with childhood polio and a life-threatening streetcar accident at age eighteen left her disabled and physically challenged. Furthermore, her gender crossing—wearing men's suits and painting herself so outfitted—adds to the mystique of her persona and her art, and belies the ultra-feminine doll version marketed to little girls.

These ruminations give rise to the reconceptualization of the concept of beauty along new and different paths. Having repositioned the body, particularly the artist's body, at the center of increased agency of the female depicted, let us consider additional ways to defy the limits of the old concept of beauty.

Part 3. The Body in Performance

In "Beauty, Youth, and the Balinese *Legong* Dance," Stephen Davies discusses the female artist and performer who participates in "classic" Balinese dance and who presents herself to the world as the quintessence of grace, charm, and beauty while slowly discovering that age is the dislocating factor in her traversal of two worlds. Although she has full agency and control, she performs in a cultural framework that is as little under her control as is her natural process of aging. This example introduces the broader cultural framework of the performing arts, moving us beyond the static world of visual art.

Jane Duran provides a guide to problematic, conflicting images of women in Hindi-language cinema in her essay, "Bollywood and the Feminine: Hinduism and Images of Womanhood," in order to make the case that such representations are culturally complex and not susceptible to one interpretation or reading. She provides a focus for gender-related issues that draws on the region's architectural history, religious practices, and colonial influences to provide an insightful overview. The striking similarities between dance scenes in Bollywood films and Western music videos entice the reader into deeper exploration of the continuing erosion of cultural differences.

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Valerie Fuchs reviews a two-screen video installation which appeared in the 2007 Venice Biennale by Yugoslavian artist Breda Beban in her essay, entitled "Seductive Shift: A Review of *The Most Beautiful Woman in Gucha*." Filmed at a gathering of trumpet musicians in Serbia, *The Most Beautiful Woman in Gucha* captures the passionate interaction between a beautiful belly dancer, an inebriated young man, and a group of Romany musicians. Like other contemporary artworks, this film hovers between "the realness of a documentary situation and its fictionalization through subjective manipulation."[32] This challenge to filmic conventions yields two videos that invite viewers to participate and complete the narrative. In subtle ways, the viewer is invited into a context of Others, i.e., invited to become part of the story and to partake in—to deliberately not distance herself from—the activity.

Keith Lehrer's essay, "Feminist Art, Content, and Beauty," is an epistemologist's foray into the feminist forest of art that reconfigures one's sense of self through sensory experience. While exploring his feelings about the work of Judy Chicago, Carolee Schneemann, and ORLAN, he highlights the performance of each artist, arguing that their art confronts the viewer directly, and that its value—and perhaps also its beauty—lies in that confrontation. Such provocative, challenging, and disturbing experiences challenge the normally comfortable viewer to exercise her autonomy, to remake herself, and to ultimately remake the world. There is pleasure involved; tied to beauty, it offers us a new way of experiencing art, and, ironically, we can become driven to seek out feminist art, in order to study its profound and surprising effect upon us.

The next essay, my own, continues an analysis of the work of the French performance artist ORLAN, begun earlier in my edited volume *Beauty Matters* (2000). If anything, ORLAN has become more visually outrageous with her latest series of photographs, while simultaneously—to the relief of the squeamish—bringing her "aesthetic surgeries" to an end. In "ORLAN Revisited: Disembodied Virtual Hybrid Beauty," the evolution of the artist's work is scrutinized in light of her own proclamations and writings on hybridity, virtual identity, and disembodiment. She forges ahead into an imaginary world that blends together history, portraiture, and elusive identity. I challenge several feminists who call her work "monstrous," in the hope of elucidating more thoroughly the intentionality of the artist and her easily misunderstood oeuvre. She becomes hybrid, "mutant," a "nomad of identity," and never fails to provoke.

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Part 4. Beauty and the State

The final section of this volume with an eye toward "repositioning the body" deals with beauty and the state. Perhaps no one was more opposed to the creation or appropriation of beauty during political turmoil than the French existentialist Simone de Beauvoir. Writing in Paris during and immediately after World War II, she routinely cast beauty as a luxury and a distraction when art should be about the business of conveying truth, regardless of difficulty. Beauvoir was talking about elite Italian aesthetes who were "occupied in caressing the marbles and bronzes of Florence" while pretending to be apolitical in a fascist state,[33] but beauty—particularly involving the female body in interactions with the state—turns us in another direction, one in which beauty can function within the state on a personal, and in some countries highly political, level. For example, American and British suffragists were routinely characterized by male critics as manly and unattractive; naturally, their critics argued, to want to vote like a man is to want to be like a man. 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.

In order to better understand the concept of beauty within the representation of Muslim women, a short essay coauthored by Allen Douglas and Fedwa Malti-Douglas offers a glimpse into an attitude unfamiliar to Western viewers, namely, that of women who, for religious or other reasons, choose to cover their heads and often their entire bodies. "Beauty Wars: The Struggle over Female Modesty in the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa" offers a glimpse into the reasoning behind the equation of modesty with morality in a variety of cultures that prohibit the display of female nudity and in which visions of female display are competing. The past three to four decades—the height of the second wave of the women's movement in the West—have witnessed a shift from less veiling to more, prompting the authors to note, "Today, it is the unveiled woman who is the exception" on the streets of Arab cities like Cairo and Tunis. Fashion can function as a political tool for women: wearing the veil can become a touchstone of anti-immigration policy (as in France); revealing a lock of hair can function as a sign of revolt (as in Turkey); and refusing to wear a veil on a university campus can provoke attacks by young men who accuse unveiled women of behaving shamefully.[34] New fashion magazines, however, blend Western influences into the aesthetic of modesty predicated on what the authors cite Kariman Hamza, a popular Egyptian television personality, as calling the "clothing of obedience," again bringing

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two seemingly disparate worlds together. Hamza's magazine, *Elegance and Modesty*, blends the two in unprecedented ways. (Interestingly, its title uses a word meaning "elegance" instead of the standard one for "beauty.")

In "Orientalism Inside/Out: The Art of Soody Sharifi," Cynthia Freeland features the photographs of an Iranian-born artist who lives in Houston but returns home to document young women in her native land, while also creating hybrid photo montages that blend contemporary people with Persian miniatures. Freeland confronts head-on the issue of orientalism, a concept made famous by critic Edward Said in 1978 when he described the enterprise of scholars who attempted to explain the Orient to the West, thereby reinforcing their position of superiority while designating Orientals as "other." Freeland notes that the casting of Muslim-Americans as "other" on the basis of their physical appearance, which has greatly increased after 9/11, serves to complicate the representations of artists who, like Sharifi, present the "other" to "us" in order to enhance our understanding. With a foot in both cultures, she challenges the gap between East and West, provoking reactions from viewers who may feel discomfort, but rarely dispassion. Emotions are tapped when viewing a veiled woman photographed by Sharifi (recall plate 1), but Freeland educates us by explaining the artist's intent, which is to dispel our deeply ingrained stereotypes and expectations. Sharifi does not see an oppressed woman in a hijab, nor does she depict the Western male fantasy of an exoticized Arab.[35] Her *Women of Cover* series offers a more realistic and balanced view, serving to connect people across a cultural divide, on the various sides of which "fashion" takes on multiple meanings in a Muslim context that expects propriety. Her blending of documentary style and fictive strategy (like that of Beban's videos) once again occupies the space—and tension—between cultural conventions.

Unlike MwangiHutter in *Static Drift*, the women depicted by Sharifi are fully clothed. Modesty is a concept rare in the West, and a revisiting of beauty cannot help but expose the cultural divide between the perception of a viewer who seeks to see an Arab woman as mysterious, exotic, and "other" and the artist's vision and aesthetic intentions to the contrary. Our reading of the images of veiled women presents the most pressing challenge to a traditionally ingrained approach to beauty that presumes nude women are *naturally* objects of male (and female) pleasure. Consider the long-standing canon of art-historical "masterpieces" satirized by the Guerrilla Girls in a poster that asks, "Do women have to be naked to get into the Metropolitan Museum?"[36] Since Western art history uniformly teaches viewers to read canonic images of nude women as objects created solely for the viewer's

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pleasure and delight, we must process the works of Sharifi differently, thereby expanding our notion of beauty into unfamiliar terrain.

Eva Kit Wah Man examines bodies under service to the state in "Beauty and the State: Female Bodies as State Apparatus and Recent Beauty Discourses in China"—a fascinating look at China's 2008 hosting of the Olympics. Man charts the impact of the Western global economy on female beauty within the context of China's state apparatus and ever-growing consumer society. Surveying changes in beauty standards and the roles of women since 1919, the author brings us to the present day, in which Chinese women are homogenized into smiling servitors as hostesses for Olympic visitors. Recall the state's decision to present to hundreds of millions of international viewers, during the opening ceremony, nine-year-old Lynn Miaoke, who lip-synched "Ode to the Motherland" in order to conceal the real singer, seven-year-old Yang Peiyi, whose voice was better but who had imperfect—thus unbeautiful—teeth. "The audience will understand that it's in the national interest," said Chen Qigang, a member of China's Politburo and the ceremony's chief music director, in an interview with Beijing Radio. Chen asked for the last-minute change, according to one writer, because "the country's quest for perfection apparently includes its children."[37] Consider also the pending investigation into the Chinese women's gymnastics team, entered as sixteen-year-olds; one girl missing her baby teeth was suspected of being no more than fourteen.

From within the same culture but from a different perspective, Mary Bittner Wiseman examines a variety of artists in "Gendered Bodies in Contemporary Chinese Art." The nude has not been a genre in either traditional or contemporary Chinese art, as it has been in the art of the West since its introduction in classical Greece. It emerges in recent representations of the human body in China not as a female body identified or valued as an object of desire but rather as a site and possibility of the body's "flowering." Wiseman poetically describes the Chinese emphasis on the process by which artists create; this contrasts sharply with the emphasis, in Western art appreciation, on the final product. For women in China who choose to portray themselves in their art, the complexities are twofold: they defy a tradition of male artists picturing women in more demure ways, and they challenge cultural norms of women's subservience to men that go as far back as the Confucian era.[38] The times are changing in China today, and yesterday's protesters are today's stars.[39] The women who are pushing the boundaries of art and propriety may indeed acknowledge Western influences, but they pointedly seek to create their own unique forms of women's vision and embodiment.

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Conclusion: Beauty Revisited; Beauty Unlimited

In the Evelyn Waugh novel *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder*, the main character and narrator looks back from his vantage point in 1944 to a simpler and happier time. His life as a privileged white male at Oxford twenty years earlier—replete with an ample and steady allowance, servants to bring tea, and plenty of friends with whom to drink, carouse, and travel across Europe—had been far more pleasurable than the experience of war. Ryder reminisces about his college friend, "the 'aesthete' *par excellence*," as "a young man who seemed to me, then, fresh from the somber company of the College Essay Society, ageless as a lizard, as foreign as a Martian. . . . I found myself enjoying him voraciously, like the fine piece of cookery he was."[40]

Enjoying the company of an aesthete and reliving the beauty of the past can seem easy and comforting. But the nagging problems of growing up, searching for one's identity and purpose in life, rebutting the persistent imposition of religious ideologues, and watching a best friend succumb to alcoholism all come to impinge upon the main character's joys and freedom from care. But revisit Brideshead Charles Ryder does, and when he is encamped as a soldier in a crumbling castle where he once dined on fine wines and found diversion from more serious matters of life, he grows nostalgic and comes to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the persons who helped form him in his life: those who ultimately brought him some feeling of love and some measure of wisdom. In revisiting Brideshead, he recalls memories both sacred and profane, yet looks forward to the future with optimism and good cheer. In similarly revisiting beauty, we recall theories both lofty and mundane, and we, too, can look forward to a future of promise with fresh eyes and an open mind. The promise of beauty may not involve the nostalgic happiness of old, but its pleasures—unconventional and complicated, to be sure—may provide at least one form of escape from the world. Unlimited beauty provides a new window onto the world, through which we may both see ourselves as other, and see others as part of ourselves.

Notes

1. Images of deceased United States soldiers returning from the Iraq War were forbidden to be shown on the news during the George W. Bush era. See Michael Kamber and Tim Arango, "4000 U.S. Deaths, and a Handful of Images," *New York Times*, July 26, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/26/world/middleeast/26censor.html.

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2. Michael Kamber's photo appears online in conjunction with an article by Alissa J. Rubin, "Iraqi Shiites Reclaim a Village Razed by Sunnis," *New York Times*, July 12, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/12/world/middleeast/12diyala.html.

3. Plate 3 is a still from Abdul's video *White House*, which premiered in 2005 at the 51st Venice Biennale, where Abdul was the first official representative for Afghanistan in the Biennale's hundred-year history. Lida Abdul's work has been shown internationally and she was included in the 2007 U.S. exhibit "Global Feminisms"; see the exhibit's catalogue, *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*, ed. Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin (London: Merrell; New York: Brooklyn Museum, 2007), as well as the online Feminist Art Base at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/feminist_art_base/index.php. Abdul, who works in photography, performance, and video art, currently resides in Afghanistan, where she often enlists local residents to participate in projects that explore the relationship between architecture and identity; see http://lidaabdul.com.

4. Both Arthur C. Danto and Alexander Nehamas have cited Stendahl's remark "Beauty is the promise of happiness." See Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Peru, Ill.: Carus, 2003), and Alexander Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

5. Eleanor Heartney, "A War and Its Images," in *Defending Complexity: Art, Politics, and the New World Order* (Lenox, Mass.: Hard Press, 2006), 13. The essay was originally published in *Art in America* (October 2004).

6. Heartney, introduction to *Defending Complexity*, i.

7. Els van der Plas, "Lida Abdul: A Beauty That Hurts," in *Lida Abdul*, ed. Renata Caragliano, Stella Cervasio, Nikos Papastergiadis, Virginia Pérez-Ratton, and Els van der Plas (Torino, Italy: hopefulmonster, 2008).

8. Dan Vaillancourt, review of *Natural Beauty: A Theory of Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, by Ronald Moore, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 303–305.

9. Peg Zeglin Brand, ed., *Beauty Matters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), still available for purchase at http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/product_info.php?products_id=63581.

10. Peg Brand, "Beauty as Pride: A Function of Agency," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Medicine* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 5–9, http://www.apaonline.org/APAOnline/Publications/Newsletters/Past_Newsletters/Vo110/Vol_10.aspx, under "Philosophy and Medicine 1." See also three other articles in the volume, all delivered at the APA Eastern Division meeting, December 2010: Anita Silvers, "From the Crooked Timber of Humanity, Something Beautiful Should Be Made!"; Sara Goering, "Disability, Internalized Oppression, and Appearance Norms"; and Bonnie Steinbock, "Comments on Talks by Silvers, Goering, and Brand, APA December 2010." For a classic iteration of art-historical ideals of female beauty that "must reflect a peaceful or integrated frame of mind," see Kenneth Clark, *Feminine Beauty* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), 7.

11. Claire Colebrook, "Introduction," in "The Feminine and the Beautiful," ed. Rita Felski, special issue, *Feminist Theory* 7, no. 2 (August 2006): 132.

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12. Rita Felski, "'Because It Is Beautiful': New Feminist Perspectives on Beauty," in Felski, "The Feminine and the Beautiful," 273.

13. Ibid., 281.

14. Ibid.

15. Cixous' essay was translated into English by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen and published as "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 875–93. In homage to French theorists of the feminine, Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard's *Laughing with Medusa* was published by Oxford University Press in 2006.

16. Maura Reilly, "Introduction: Toward Transnational Feminisms," in Reilly and Nochlin, *Global Feminisms*, 17. This show, along with a second show, "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution," and their accompanying catalogues, are tied to efforts to counter the erasure of women's artistic achievements since the 1970s, as outlined by the Feminist Art Project. For more discussion of this effort and its relationship to the future of philosophy, see Peg Brand, "The Feminist Art Project (TFAP) and Its Significance for Aesthetics," in *Feminist Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art: The Power of Critical Visions and Creative Engagement*, ed. Lisa Ryan Musgrave (London: Springer, 2013).

17. IngridMwangiRobertHutter is the preferred name of the collective artist(s), blending Mwangi's identity with that of her husband, Hutter; for more information on their work, see http://www.ingridmwangiroberthutter.com/.

18. N'Goné Fall, "Providing a Space of Freedom: Woman Artists from Africa," in Reilly and Nochlin, *Global Feminisms*, 75.

19. Simon Njami, "Memory in the Skin: The Work of Ingrid Mwangi," trans. Jeanine Herman, http://ingridmwangi.de/_/text__simon_njami.html. Originally written for *Looking Both Ways: Art of the Contemporary African Diaspora*, catalogue (New York: Museum for African Art; Gent: Snoeck, 2003).

20. Horst Gerhard Haberl, "Art is the Message," http://www.ingridmwangi.de/_/text_horst_gerhard_haberl-art_is_the_message.html. Originally written for Ingrid Mwangi et al., *Your Own Soul* (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2003), 32–41.

21. Peter Schjeldahl, art critic for the *New Yorker*, as Heartney reports in "Worldwide Women," this volume.

22. For the famous painting of Olympia, see the website of the Musée d'Orsay, at http://www.musee-orsay.fr/index.php?id=851&L=1&tx_commentaire_pi1[showUid]=7087.

23. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

24. bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1999).

25. See, for instance, Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness*, and Charles Harrison, *Painting the Difference: Sex and Spectator in Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). See also my reviews of the former (in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 244–46) and the latter (http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/1051).

26. Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

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27. Elizabeth C. Manfield, *Too Beautiful to Picture: Zeuxis, Myth, and Mimesis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007º).

28. Alex Kuczynski, *Beauty Junkies: Inside Our $15 Billion Obsession with Cosmetic Surgery* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

29. Sheila Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West* (Hove: Routledge, 2005).

30. Diana Tietjens Meyers, *Gender in the Mirror: Cultural Imagery and Women's Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

31. Steven Leuthold outlines the differences between Western and indigenous cultures' descriptions of aesthetic experience by arguing that the latter often emphasize arts that involve embodied, often religious experience ("Is There 'Art' in Indigenous Aesthetics?" in *Indigenous Aesthetics: Native Art, Media, and Identity* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998], 45–63).

32. The phrase is quoted from an advertisement for the film at the Speed Museum, Louisville, Ky.

33. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* trans. Bernard Frechtman (1948; New York: Citadel, 1996), 76. See also my essays "The Aesthetic Attitude in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*," *Simone de Beauvoir Studies* 18 (2001–2002): 31–48, and "Salon-Haunters: The Impasse Facing French Intellectuals," in *The Contradictions of Freedom: Philosophical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir's "The Mandarins,"* ed. Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett (State University of New York Press, 2005), 211–26.

34. Recall Azar Nafisi's narrative of the veiling required on her Iranian campus: *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (New York: Random House, 2004).

35. Consider the insightful analysis presented by Mohja Kahf, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

36. The poster is online at "16 Years Later," Guerrilla Girls, http://www.guerrillagirls.com/posters/getnakedupdate.shtml.

37. Cara Anna, "China Had 'Cute' Girl Mime Opening Ceremony after Singer Banned for Crooked Teeth," *Huffington Post*, August 12, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/08/12/cute-girl-mimed-opening-c_n_118349.html.

38. See Eva Kit Wah Man, "Female Bodily Aesthetics, Politics, and Feminine Ideals of Beauty in China," in Brand, *Beauty Matters*, 169–96.

39. Zhang Yimou, the creative director of the 2008 Beijing Olympics' spectacular opening ceremony, was a former dissident who was punished by the government and then came around to working for it. See David Barboza, "Gritty Renegade Now Directs China's Close-Up," *New York Times*, August 8, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/sports/olympics/08guru.html.

40. Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder* (1944; New York: Back Bay Books, 2008), 32–33.

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