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Temma Balducci, *Gender, Space, and the Gaze in Post-Haussmann Visual Culture: Beyond the Flâneur*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. 236 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. £100.00 (hb). ISBN 978-1-4724-4586-5; £36.99 (eb). ISBN: 978-1-315-21385-9.

Response by Temma Balducci, Arkansas State University.

The time and effort that Allison Deutsch took to write such a thoughtful review of my book is much appreciated. While I do not necessarily agree with all of her criticisms, I do think that she made some excellent points and did a great job outlining the general direction of the book. Deutsch correctly notes that I did not engage in a close reading of Charles Baudelaire's "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), but instead focused on the emphasis the essay has received in art historical scholarship. It is also likely true, as she points out, that I overemphasized Baudelaire throughout the text. Honestly, it was a difficult balancing act and certain versions of the manuscript omitted nearly all references to Baudelaire. Deutsch's assessment regarding the book's probable impetus for future scholarship was particularly pleasing to read, and I do hope that my work will serve as a springboard for fresh narratives. In what follows, I will address a few small issues I have with the review before getting to the meat of my response, which deals with more systemic concerns with the field.

There was an odd lacuna in Deutsch's summary of the book. While she acknowledges my focus on the works of Jean Béraud, my greater attention to the paintings of Edouard Manet are not remarked at all. Indeed, there is no mention of Manet in the review even though his works and life were a central element in shaping my argument. I concentrated purposely on Manet throughout for several reasons, which I stated in the introduction. Briefly, because Manet's art and personae have so often been read within the framework of Baudelaire, I gave several extensive readings of many of his best-known paintings that moved beyond these conventional understandings of his work. For example, how does our reading of *Absinthe Drinker* (c1859) change if we do not think of the figure as a ragpicker, but instead as a bourgeois gentleman? What happens if we talk about the gaze of the prostitute in *Olympia* (1863), rather than the gaze of the male viewer? Through painting after painting, it is Manet's works that guide the reader through the book and set the tone for each chapter.

In her discussion of chapter two, which focuses on the ubiquity of the female gaze in nineteenth-century visual culture, Deutsch asks rhetorically, "what if to see is not to have power?" In almost a dozen images and a substantial stock of archival evidence, the fact that women *were* looking in nineteenth-century Paris was unmistakable, and I spent quite a bit of

effort (and not an insignificant number of footnotes) unpacking the relation between power and the gaze, going into great detail about the different ways of defining power. My conclusion was that power and the gaze were in actuality not mutually defining, thus opening the way for a theorization of the female gaze. While I agree with Deutsch that my argument could likely have been pushed further, the question of how power and the gaze inflected each other is a major theme in that chapter.

Moving past these smaller issues, I want to address a larger discourse in our field centered around the issue of public/private spheres. In order to take on what I considered lingering misconceptions among art historians about women's role in modernity and urban life, I spent a number of pages, especially in the introduction, discussing Griselda Pollock's important essay "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity."<sup>[1]</sup> As I stated there, the dominance of Pollock's thinking on feminist art history over the last forty years can hardly be overstated. It is safe to say not only that she is one of art history's feminist matriarchs, but also that critiquing her work often invites fierce rebuttal. It was Pollock's essay that, in large part, laid the groundwork for a dichotomous public/private reading of nineteenth-century visual culture that was acceptable to feminists with the argument that, yes, women were confined to the interior and men (i.e. the flâneur) dominated the public spaces of the city, but (and this was one of her crucial points) only because of social restrictions/expectations rather than because of inherent gender differences. Pollock's analysis boiled down to a separate but equal argument for the interior, or what she considered women's spaces. As I outlined in my introduction and repeated throughout the book, while Pollock's argument was incredibly valuable at the time, it has become outdated. In her review, Deutsch disagrees with my assessment of Pollock's essay, arguing that Pollock nuanced her discussion of the flâneur by using the flâneur as a "figure and not a person." In fact, Pollock did no such thing. What she actually does is elide the difference between the flâneur and the (bourgeois) male artist almost completely. Pollock writes rather plainly that "as both ideal and social structure, the mapping of the separation of spheres for women and men on to the division of public and private was powerfully operative in the construction of a specifically bourgeois way of life."<sup>[2]</sup> Rarely can a grid be considered nuanced, and Pollock quite literally uses Baudelaire's flâneur and the entire baggage of public/private as a framework through which to understand Impressionism. The scholarship of art historians who followed in her wake, and built on her arguments, often mirrored her construction of borders, specifying not only which spaces men and women were allowed, but also which ideas should be considered in and out of bounds.

Closely related to Deutsch's defense of Pollock is one of the criticisms that I find most puzzling, concerning the idea of "settled knowledge;" it is one that I have received before in a review for my co-edited volume *Women, Femininity, and Public Space in Nineteenth-Century European Visual Culture*.<sup>[3]</sup> Both reviewers argued that bourgeois women's active role in modernity/public spaces has been established and that women's mobility and full participation in urban Parisian life is now a given in scholarship. I emphatically agree that scholars in other fields of study (including history, literature, and cultural studies in particular) have been doing this kind of research for almost fifty years. In responding to this review, however, I went back and looked at some of the art historical scholarship upon which I relied and by which I was influenced in the research for my book (which would have been largely pre-2015). I focused again on well-known feminist art historians who have written about Parisian women (especially Linda Nochlin, Tamar Garb, Pollock, and Marni Kessler) and could find almost no instance of women being discussed as actors in modernity/public space without the scholar either feeling the need

to add that women were limited in their visual experience of the city or hedging their bets about the respectability of the women being discussed. The idea that well-to-do women could not look freely and could not participate in the public life of the city without being considered déclassé to some extent is utterly engrained in art historical scholarship. The few art historians who have consistently posited something other than a passive or sexualized role for bourgeois women in public would include Heather Belnap Jensen, Greg Thomas, Gen Doy, and, to some extent, Ruth Iskin, but I struggled and failed again to find a consistent body of scholarship among art historians that builds on the feminist work of this sort in other fields. As is obvious from the reviewer's apparent acceptance of women as co-equal players in modernity, the archival evidence to support this is overwhelming, yet the readily available material that would complicate tired art historical narratives about women seems to fall by the wayside when the proverbial pen is put to paper.

So, as I did many times in the book, I will once more ask a series of rhetorical questions that I hope will stimulate further dialogue: What is the purpose of claiming that these questions are settled in art history? Why posit that everything has been said and done? Who is being served by this pretense? Are we protecting past scholarship? Current reputations? Are we attempting to keep certain people from having a voice? Why is it so important to invent a false narrative? Because clearly it is important. Otherwise, why discourage scholars who endeavor to move art history in directions that other fields have been exploring for decades? In just such an attempt, Deutsch writes that portions of my first chapter were difficult to read, implying that what I proposed was already so implicitly understood by art historians that it was simply embarrassing. Claims such as these that ignore actual historiography are easily refuted by reading almost any art historical scholarship of the last forty years where the same prevarications about women appear repeatedly. When does "settled" become stultifying, and the selective reading (and misreading) of the historiography become simple gatekeeping? In the end, however, all of this is but a rehashing and abbreviated summary of what I spent many pages and footnotes considering throughout my book. I encourage those who are curious to read my entire argument there.

## NOTES

[1] Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

[2] Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, p. 68.

[2] Temma Balducci and Heather Belnap Jensen, eds., *Women, Femininity, and Public Space in Nineteenth-Century European Visual Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014). See Alexandra Wettlaufer's review of *Women, Femininity, and Public Space in Nineteenth-Century European Visual Culture* in *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 70/1 (January 2016): pp. 122-123.

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