

Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting, 1830-1908, by Marcia Pointon. Cambridge University Press, 1990. Pp. xi, 160; 48 illus. ISBN 0-5213-8528-8 (hardcover), \$50.00; ISBN 0-5214-0999-3 (paperback), \$19.00.

Synthesizing semiotics and history, Marcia Pointon offers innovative and striking readings of canonic paintings. Focusing on the representation of the body, she examines works by Delacroix, Eakins, Renoir, Manet, Courbet and Madox Brown, exploring the meanings of the representation of the female nude. She frequently includes cartoons and lesser-known artists' works to situate her readings in contexts of reception,

both historical and contemporary.

Her method is to go beyond studies of production (mostly Marxist and feminist and concerned with the powerlessness of female images) and public reception, and to ask instead "how makers and consumers of art invest images with communicative identities and relevances that are particular as well as communal" (1). Her intent is to examine the power and authority invested in the image of the female nude and the space produced for the communication of desire and pleasure through a disunified, polyvalent, but nonetheless intersubjective discourse: "Reading as a woman. . . does not construct a simple alternative hermeneutic" (8). Pointon is not driven to closure in her readings, but instead opens up points of interpretation in her exami-