

## REVIEWS

Women Writing Art History in the Nineteenth Century: Looking Like a Woman by Hilary Fraser. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014. xv, 230 pp. + 18 b/w illus. ISBN 978-1-107-07575. £60; \$95.

Dressed as in a Painting: Women and British Aestheticism in an Age of Reform by Kimberly Wahl. Durham, NH: U of New Hampshire P, 2013. xxxiii, 203 pp. + 42 b/w illus. ISBN 978-1-61168-438-4. \$40.

The subject of art criticism in the Victorian era has only recently begun to attract attention, and Hilary Fraser's book is a valuable addition to the subject, in particular because of its perspective on women writers. During the Victorian era, John Ruskin above all wrote about art in a decidedly didactic manner, intentionally or not, reinventing and professionalizing the role of the art critic in society. There have been few examinations of this general topic, one being Claire Richter Sherman's 1981 collection *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts, 1820-1979*, and Fraser's achievements eclipse that book. The author poses the thorny yet apt question of "whether women saw differently from men" and, if so, whether it was because of a state of exclusion "outside the categories and value judgements that structured the writings of their male counterparts."

Much of what Fraser unearths, reconstructs, and deconstructs is highly revealing as well as rivetting. Chapter 1 examines the lives of Anna Jameson and Elizabeth Eastlake along with the less-known Mary Merrifield, Julia Cartwright, and Maud Cruttwell. However, first Fraser sketches a very useful overview of the rise of the professional critic and how women "invaded" typically male turf in the 19th century. As always, scholar Deborah Cherry's observations are apt and succinct: Cherry notes that these women writers "assisted in the framing of those discourses of art which became hegemonic in the later nineteenth century" (qtd in Fraser 18). Canon formation is another central issue that Fraser intelligently investigates, along with how women gained connoisseurship and their knowledge as art critics and "art historians," a term Fraser and other scholars rightly find to be loaded.

One surprising fact may be how many women utilized original archives for their knowledge of artists, even when Cruttwell discovered her secondary sources on Della Robbia to be replete with errors. The depth and scope of women art historians are also a joy to discover; for example, Emilia Dilke's four-volume opus on eighteenth-century French art was a prodigious under-