Karen A. Callaghan, ed. — *Ideals of Feminine Beauty: Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Pp. xv, 184.

The eleven essays in this eclectic collection are primarily by sociologists and social scientists who discuss feminine beauty as ''a socially constructed normative standard, which supports a discourse of feminine oppression and male dominance'' (p. ix). Fortunately, the collection includes essays by a philosopher and two historians, although these are overviews of broad topics rather than specialized research papers. Partly through this emphasis on social science analyses, the collection leaves the impression that beauty ideals are fairly complex forms of social control. Gender hierarchy is linked to an entire tradition of ''social ontological dualism'' in the West; many ideological strands are shown to have contributed to the depiction of beauty standards, however artificially achieved, as ahistorical or ''natural''.

The first chapter, ''The Terrible Beauty and Her Reflective Force'' by philosopher Algis Mickunas, delves back to the prehistoric shift from goddess worship to patriarchal religions (referred to as mythologies) that resisted the erotic attractions and power of the goddess by representing her as ugly and sinful. He argues that Western philosophy from Plato to Kant recast ideals of feminine beauty in ways that emphasized timidity and purity. The generalizations are thought-provoking, though historians unfamiliar with recent research on goddess worship or with the history of philosophy will wish for more comprehensive and concrete documentation.

Historian Ben Lowe's essay, ''Body Images and the Politics of Beauty: Formation of the Feminine Ideal in Medieval and Early Modern Europe'', also posits continuity in the ''means for internalizing'' concepts of female beauty but at least offers some empirical evidence. He traces the ''inferiorization'' of women, through negative representations of their physical appearance, back to Greek male/female dyads such as reason/emotion and light/dark. He also analyzes the Christian redefinition of beauty in behavioral rather than physical terms, as moderation and goodness. The most original section of Lowe's essay is his brief examination of how the ''unitary'' Christian aesthetic influenced explorers' reactions to Amerindian women's nakedness and body painting: they interpreted these women as immodest, evil, or beast-like, and hence requiring salvation or domestication. The influence of European aesthetics on the treatment of aboriginal women — and aboriginal men — merits much more attention.

Historian Amira Sonbol's paper, ''Changing Perceptions of Feminine Beauty in Islamic Society'', reflects the challenge of trying to explain a less familiar religious and cultural aesthetic. She begins with the pre-Islamic Arabian origins of demands for sexual purity from women and practices such as veiling and seclusion. She identifies certain symbols of feminine beauty, such as those likening women to the full moon, that have persisted from pre-Islamic time until today. However, Sonbol is more interested in, and interesting when she recognizes, at least two discourses on beauty, one traditional and one modern. She is more optimistic about the meaning of modern standards than the other contributors, who focus on the West. For instance, she notes that fair skin was an ideal from the medieval into the modern

Islamic period because of its association with the ruling elite, but differences in skin colour — she uses the term race — no longer determine conceptions of beauty or the selection of marriage partners. Here, too, the reader is left wanting more evidence about and exploration of the decline of unitary, racialized ideals of feminine beauty.

Many of the social science contributions to this collection are either so theoretical that only readers conversant with the theorists will find them rewarding, or so entangled in convoluted debates (on subjects such as anorexia or pornography) that only specialists will fully appreciate them. The least theoretical, most comprehensible, and most empirical of the social science studies are based on surveys of hairdressers and young African-American women. ''The Frosting of the American Woman: Self-Esteem Construction and Social Control in the Hair Salon'' actually quotes hairdressers before interpreting their remarks to be examples of how they use ''appearance anxiety'' and ''the flawed self'' in their practice. ''Young African-American Women and the Language of Beauty'' discerns major contradictions between the young women's stated ideals and their beauty practices, but also between their rejection of artificiality and their respect for the hard work required to be attractive. The author, Maxine Leeds, suggests that their discourse reinforces a Eurocentric ideology of beauty and femininity, and that this ''discourse on gender'' undercuts attempts to establish ''a new discourse on race''. Such attention to beauty workers and women, with all their contradictions, should appeal to historians.

One final quibble. While the editor, Karen A. Callaghan, offers a broad theoretical orientation in her introduction, she does not identify or speculate about the many opportunities for comparison between the individual essays, especially those on Islamic and Christian aesthetics of feminine beauty.

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Timothy Tackett — *Becoming a Revolutionary: The Deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture (1789–1790).* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. Pp. xvi, 356.

A new book by Timothy Tackett is always one to be welcomed, for he is at once an able writer, a respected scholar, and a pioneer in the art of applying a new methodology to major problems in socio-political history. Moreover, in this book, which is as informative in detail as it is authoritative in substance, he brings his fresh approach to a particularly crucial question, that of the composition and character of the Constituent Assembly, the first national parliament of Revolutionary France.

Although Tackett does not give more than minimal attention here to the historiography of his subject, some understanding of this is necessary for any proper appreciation of his latest work. In this perspective, three relatively recent develop-