

Artemisia, and observes Banti's experiments with the boundaries between her narrator and artist. Heller often avoids forcing simple parallels among her subjects, and points to the differing cultural contexts that create distances between modern readers and Staël and Eliot in particular.

Aspects of Heller's critique are questionable, however, and could have been strengthened by a differently balanced approach. Her chapter on Grace Paley fills one third of the book and is about three times the length of the other chapters. Heller argues that because Paley's artist, Faith, appears in many of her short stories, a longer analysis of these texts is in order. She takes an extensive look at Faith's personal perceptions and relationships, her social consciousness and activism - all of which do much to shape her character, but take space from a deeper consideration of Faith as an author. Here, I am left curious about how Faith responds to the other writers and writing subjects in Paley's stories, the "metafictional play" (112) between Paley and Faith, as well as the challenge of reading Faith as an author when her creative identity is so often flexible, elusive. A more concise study of Faith also might have allowed for elaboration on the glimpses Heller offers of the reception histories of her other authors. (Her brief comments on Corinne's readers are especially intriguing.) Occasionally, Heller's statements on her artists' continued relevance are heavy-handed: "these writers and their subjects, in their different ways, can help illuminate our own separate and shared worlds" (13); Eliot's "novel may still engage us, move us, and even make us weep" (35). These comments read as unnecessary because the ideas explored by each author and the critical questions raised by Heller are provocative themselves.

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Pegi by Herself: The Life of Pegi Nichol MacLeod, Canadian Artist. Laura Brandon. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005; 246 pages; ISBN 0-77352-8636; \$39.95 (cloth).

Other than Emily Carr, whose curious lifestyle and own prolific writings saved her from obscurity, most Canadian women artists of the early twentieth century have been all but eclipsed by the Group of Seven narrative that overwhelms this nation's art history. In *Pegi by Herself: The Life of Pegi Nichol MacLeod, Canadian Artist*, Laura Brandon revives the life of a painter, teacher, wife and mother who, despite the challenges she faced, made a significant contribution to the direction of Canadian art. Brandon's account is presented as a chronological unfolding of Nicol MacLeod's life, from her birth in 1904 in small-town southwestern Ontario to her untimely death in New York City at the age of forty-four. She tells the story of a bohemian character who struggled to balance her career with the restrictions of being a woman in early twentieth-century Canada; a thorough picture of Nicol MacLeod is constructed through reference to letters, photographs and autobiographical paintings. While the biography seems to be aimed at a general rather than art history audience, and interpretation of Nichol MacLeod's work is kept to a minimum, Brandon's art historical training is evident in her penetrating analyses of the photographic documents of the artist's life, which is used to make postulations about the artist's character and disposition. The vivid portrait that results is an intriguing read; it conveys an engaging picture of Nicol MacLeod's struggles for success at a time when artistic triumphs did not come easily to women.

Brandon's depiction is one of an artist who was forward-thinking, who worked within an aesthetic that many laypeople found unconventional, and who therefore faced doubts about her own work over the course of her career. The author offers a detailed image

of these tribulations by referring to primary documentation such as contemporaneous reviews of Nicol MacLeod's exhibitions and the artist's own writings. A Montreal Star reviewer is quoted as observing that "Miss Nicol is making her own way of painting, and some of the pictures seem to be experiments of which the results do not quite carry out her intentions" (52); while reference to a 1942 letter from Nicol MacLeod to her friend and colleague Madge Smith provides "I am trying hard in between house cleaning to finish up a lot of my paintings. I can't tell you how poor I found them when I expected them to seem very beautiful" (160). Because Brandon recounts the difficulties that Nicol MacLeod faced in such depth (a necessary step towards creating a layered and colourful portrait of her subject) while keeping the art historical analysis of her paintings to a relative minimum, at times these somewhat disconsolate sentiments seem to overwhelm the artist's achievements and place in Canadian art history.

Yet Brandon's regard for her subject's work seems undoubted - in early 2005, Pegi Nicol MacLeod: A Life in Art, an exhibition curated by Brandon, opened at the Carleton University Art Gallery and went on to travel to three other Canadian venues. This exhibition, which brought together more than fifty of Nicol MacLeod's paintings and works on paper, is a notable celebration of the artist's achievements. Perhaps it is by considering the biography and exhibition together, however, that we can best understand Nicol MacLeod as a woman whose remarkable artistic achievements were but one part of a complex and multifaceted life.

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Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation. Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, with contributions by Leon Botstein, Shira Brisman, Barbara

Hahn, and Lucia Re. New York: The Jewish Museum and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005; 280 pages; ISBN 0-300-10385-9; \$50.00US (cloth).

For the art historian the term "salon" denotes the high cultural enfranchisement of the bourgeoisie that marks modernity, while "conversation" carries connotations of the ancien régime and the pre-modern sensibilities of the aristocratic, ruling European elite. "Salons were among the first institutions of modern culture," write Bilski and Braun on the first page of the introductory chapter to their catalogue of an innovative exhibition of the same name that was held at the Jewish Museum in New York. "From the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries they fostered the decline of aristocratic castes and the rise of new egalitarian elites." The conventions for the kinds of discussions that made up the conversations of the older elite had been outlined in a variety of manuals that appeared beginning in the fifteenth century, most prominent being Stefano Guazzo's *La Civil Conversatione* published in Brescia in 1574.¹ In all of the subsequent books in this genre, which proliferated in early modern Europe, "civilized" discussions emphasized the informed judgement and choices of the gentleman. In the words of the art historian Rudolf Wittkower, "select models - epitomes of ideal nature - rather than select nature were recommended for imitation" - both in the life one lived and in art.²

By the late 1660s this ideal for the social mores, speech, and writing of the elite class had become a truly "continental" phenomenon in which art and artists played a central role, not least in the dissemination of the model and its conventions abroad.³ For example, Queen Cristina of Sweden's move to Rome at this time might be seen as a direct result of her attraction to the conversations of *honnestes gens*, e.g., gentlemen, their families and acquaintances, and the papal and foreign courts, which resided in the Eternal