racialized others. Both films use the device of historical distancing to provide a progressive perspective on the present that elides the historical reality of black oppression. Brian H. Onishi considers the vampire movie *Twilight* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2008) and the horror/teen movie *Let Me In* (Matt Reeves, 2010), films that center on vampire figures who “share a common lineage with racial discourse” (p. 197). Recent vampire movies, however, depict them as desirable, rather than fearful, figures of otherness, suggesting a misguided belief that racism has been overcome. By analyzing the intersection between race and the technologically enhanced vampire body, Onishi suggests that these films reflect contemporary desires for “enhanced bodies associated with technological innovation”: a desire for a body no longer tethered to one’s racial identity that is reshaping how racism operates in contemporary culture.

In a different vein, Melanie Walton compares two confronting films dealing with the persisting force of racial and sexual stereotypes, Lars von Trier’s *Manderlay* (2005) and Craig Brewer’s *Black Snake Moon* (2006). The latter is a redemption story exploring the struggles of “a carnally attractive redneck woman” (Rae, played by Christina Ricci) whose “self-destructive hedonism” is cured by Lazarus (Samuel L. Jackson), “a bluesman with his own demons” (p. 166). *Manderlay*, by contrast, follows the travails of Grace (Bryce Dallas Howard), who tries unsuccessfully to liberate a plantation still worked by slaves “sixty-eight years after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment” (p. 166). In contrast to *Black Snake Moon*, *Manderlay* criticizes well-meaning white attempts to liberate and reeducate the oppressed toward democracy (by force if necessary), suggesting how “acts of openness can smother appreciation of the other and reenact the worst oppression” (p. 166). Both films deploy a variety of racial and sexual stereotypes, channeling while questioning their persisting cultural and psychological power. *Black Snake Moon*’s attempts to show how “charity and liberality can save lives,” however, relies on an opposition between good and evil, using the “good” stereotypes to “seduce” the viewer toward correct ethical choices (p. 176). *Manderlay*, by contrast, “assaults” the viewer into a critical awareness of the seductive power of grotesque and excessive stereotypes (p. 176). Denying the audience the pleasure of moral resolution, *Manderlay* offers a more critical response to prejudice by forcing the viewer to confront the cultural–psychological power of such stereotypes.

Continuing this theme, Lucy Bolton offers a stand-out philosophical analysis of racial and sexual oppression in *Monster’s Ball* (Marc Forster, 2001). Drawing on the feminist thought of Luce Irigaray, Bolton explores the complex presentation of race in the film in conjunction with Irigaray’s theorization of femininity under conditions of patriarchy. Combining philosophical reflection with critical film interpretation, she argues that *Monster’s Ball* “presents a vision of femininity that both accords with and goes beyond Irigaray” (p. 211). Questioning Irigaray’s subordination of race to gender, Bolton articulates the intimate entwining of sex and race in the formation of (feminine) identity within a patriarchal and racialized society. Her analysis of *Monster’s Ball* enhances our critical understanding of Irigaray, while the film’s representation of Leticia’s (“raced body”) enables the viewer to better understand the “raced experience of living in a black body” (p. 223). The film thus serves as an expression of and invitation to philosophical reflection on race, sex, and cinema.

One of the challenges in such a volume is to strike the right balance between theoretical discussion and film analysis. It is not difficult to find films that illustrate the way racism works or which themselves express racist views. It is more challenging, however, to analyze cinematic representations that show how race intersects with gender, class, and other aspects of our situated identities. The best chapters in the volume succeed admirably in this regard; others select film examples that illustrate a theoretical point without really advancing our philosophical understanding of how cinema, in particular, deals with race. It is understandable, moreover, that many chapters (and Hollywood films) would focus on African American/white race relations. However, there are cinematic explorations of race across the globe (Indigenous, Asian and Middle Eastern, South American, and African cinemas) that would also have merited attention. It is clear that racism can be propagated via popular film; it is less clear how and why this is the case or in what ways it might be countered cinematically. The most challenging philosophical question raised by the volume—why representations of racial difference in cinema remain invisible or else confirm prejudicial stereotypes—thus remains a topic for future research, one that *Race, Philosophy, and Film* opens up in a productive way.

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*Feeling Beauty* is an ambitious text. Gabrielle Starr has set out to integrate the methods of cognitive neuroscience and literary criticism in an effort to “reshape our conceptions of aesthetics and the arts” (p. xi). The book builds on Starr’s previous
interdisciplinary collaboration with two neuroscientists, Edward Vessel and Nava Rubin. The author and her collaborators have used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to explore the neural underpinnings of those aesthetic experiences commonly thought to be associated with successful works of art. This research is as exciting as it is timely, drawing new associations between aesthetic experience, perceptual imagery, multisensory perceptual experience, and default mode network processing.

There is a growing cottage industry within empirical aesthetics in what has come quite loosely to be called neuroaesthetics. The general methodological strategy within this nascent field is to model our engagement with artworks as a computational problem, as a question of how readers, listeners, viewers, and spectators acquire, represent, manipulate, and use information present in the formal-compositional structure of a work to recover its abstract formal, representational expressive, and aesthetic content. On this account, we can think of artworks’ and artists’ formal strategies as communicative devices that are fine-tuned to and so naturally resonate with critical aspects of perceptual, cognitive, and emotional processing systems. Starr, Vessel, and Rubin have adapted this methodology to generate a unique strategy for exploring the nature of aesthetic experience. Rather than investigate stable, common aesthetic responses to universally recognizable artworks with canonically recognizable aesthetic features, they have explored individual differences among responses to a large set of unfamiliar museum-grade works. Within this test set, variance in individual tastes entails that equal numbers of participants will rate any given work as aesthetically moving as rate it aesthetically dull. Their hypothesis: these results do not reflect responses to expressive, perceptual, representational, or aesthetic qualities of the works per se but rather the quality of the participants’ aesthetic responses themselves.

Vessel, Starr, and Rubin found that intense aesthetic responses, aesthetic responses to works that truly move us, engage what has come to be called the default mode network. The default mode network is a network of neural activity that is normally suppressed in tasks that require focused attention on external stimuli but engaged in wakeful rest states, daydreaming, and contexts that involve introspective attention or the monitoring and integration of self-referential information. The authors of the study suggest that these results lend credence to the idea that there is an important relationship between our aesthetic sensibilities and our sense of self. This in turn grounds their intuition that the arts are deeply important to a human life lived.

The research model employed in this study depends on a number of assumptions about the nature of art and its relationship to the aesthetic that philosophers may find controversial. Nonetheless, the research is exemplary within the growing field of neuroaesthetics, and the focus on individual differences, real-time physiological responses, and a broad range of less well-known works opens the door to a novel, ecologically valid approach to studying the nature of art and related behaviors.

The goal of Feeling Beauty is to generalize the model for understanding aesthetic experience derived from this study to what Starr calls the sister arts: poetry, painting, and music. The purpose: to uncover commonalities among the cognitive strategies that underwrite our engagement with works in these diverse media, commonalities that might explain why works in media that address a diverse range of sensory modalities might nonetheless produce a common class of aesthetic affective responses. The findings of the original study are extended in the book to include a role for the default mode network in mental imagery and multisensory integration, suggesting that her model can help explain how readers, listeners, spectators, and viewers draw on a broad range of modality-specific imaginative processes in aesthetic experience.

Starr employs a case study approach in the book. This is a strong methodological virtue. Rather than start from platitudinous aesthetic principles about the nature and value of beauty or aesthetic experience, she grounds her discussion in a close reading of works from various media. For instance, she introduces her model for aesthetic engagement via a discussion of the functional role unimodal and multimodal imagery play in specific passages of Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” She then develops this model through a close reading of passages from Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Bernini’s exquisite sculptural interpretation of Daphne’s transformation in the text, and Alice Fulton’s contemporary take on the same story, “Give: Apollo and Daphne.” Finally, Starr generalizes her model to discussions of rhythmic compositional devices in bluegrass (for example, in Ralph Stanley’s “Clinch Mountain Backstep”), Beethoven’s use of repetition and revision in the Diabelli Variations, and the use of erasure and repetition in Van Gogh’s “Ravine.” Starr’s strategy grounds the explanatory work of neuroaesthetics in concrete cases. This is how it should be. Neuroaesthetics is grounded in the observation that artists develop their productive strategies though trial and error experimentation with the cognitive, perceptual, emotional, and aesthetic effects of particular formal-compositional strategies on their audience. The net result is a fine-tuned relationship between particular formal elements of a work and cognitive systems that can be used to explain the expressive effects and power of art. Here, the devil—the potential, limits, and pitfalls of the methodology—is in the details.
in the capacity to actually model artistically salient
cognitive, perceptual, expressive, and aesthetic ef-
fx, in particular interactions with actual particular
artworks. Starr deftly applies this strategy to discus-
sions of the role of imagery, pleasure and reward,
and emotion in our engagement with artworks.

Feeling Beauty is at its best when Starr is en-
gaged in close reading, leading the reader step by
step through a careful explication and elucidation of
a body of text with the aid of her model. Particularly
important to this project is the way Starr models sen-
sorimotor representation and the temporal dynamics
of shifting multisensory imagery in the arts. She finds
these effects most clearly present in poetry where the
text cues us to imagine dynamic changes in the repre-
sentation of some narrative scene by subtly shifting
from one modality to another, as when Ovid’s Meta-
morphoses shifts from concrete visual imagery of
Daphne’s transformation to the somatosensory im-
agery depicting the body in transformation (cuing
an embodied appraisal of the subject matter via em-
pathetic projection) to a hedonically inflected under-
standing of the text that is realized in the semantic
resolution of perceived conflict between these dis-
parate modalities and impossible images.

There is a plausibility to this story. There is ample
independent evidence in the literature that narrative
understanding is underwritten by contributions from
premotor, sensory, and affective processing systems.
These processes are thought to support sensorimo-
tor simulations of the actions, intentions, and emo-
tions of depicted agents. There is likewise good ev-
dence to suggest that motor simulation is used to
represent implied biological movements in static pic-
tures and that areas involved in processing of abstract
motion cues are active in the perception of nonbio-
logical movement in similar contexts (for example,
when motion lines are used to imply the movement
of a bowling ball in space in a cartoon). Further, and
perhaps most importantly, ordinary experience is a
crossmodal, multisensory, hedonically inflected af-
fair. One story about the cognitive function of imagi-
nation, and one Starr seems to adopt, suggests that
it enables us to model the consequences of adopting
attitudes and engaging in actions, helping us sort
through alternative courses of action and integrate
novel associations into our current base of knowl-
dge. Art is a tool, on this account, that reinforces
this function and extends its limits into novel do-
 mains outside the boundaries of ordinary experience.
Starr proposes that default mode network processing
plays a critical integrative role in these processes that
can explain a range of aesthetic phenomena. In this
regard it is a welcome addition to the literature.

However, there are a number of standard method-
ological difficulties with research in neuroaesthetics.
Whereas Starr’s approach does avoid some of them,
I am afraid that the biggest elephant in the room re-
 mains unmoved. Neuroaesthetics is an aesthetic the-
ory of art with a deep interest in understanding the
experience of beauty. In this context, artworks are
implicitly defined as artifacts intentionally designed
to produce aesthetic experiences. The trouble is that
this yields a narrow view of art. Standard counterex-
amples are drawn from contemporary conceptual, in-
stallation, and performance art, for instance, Robert
Barry’s Inert Gas Series or All of the things I know but
of which I am not now thinking, Vito Acconci’s Fol-
lowing Piece, or Adrian Piper’s Catalysis No. 4. These
works are neither beautiful nor triggers for aesthetic
experiences in spectators. In fact, if either Acconci or
Piper’s works were catalysts for aesthetic experience,
they likely would consider them failures. And, per-
haps more importantly, we genuinely recognize them
as canonical exemplars of a particular category of art
without any attendant aesthetic feeling or judgment
that they are beautiful. So, neuroaesthetics, as Starr
herself construes it, provides at best a narrow view
of art or, perhaps better, is an attempt to explain a
range of behaviors associated with a narrow class of
artworks fit to something like a modernist template
for the history of art.

This is not the end of the trouble. The very concept
of the aesthetic which defines this narrow class of art-
works is itself a moving target, defined in a range of
different ways (for example, differing formalist, af-
fective, and axiological theories), whose content is at
best underdetermined. Starr never explicitly articu-
lates what she means by “aesthetic” or “aesthetic ex-
perience” in the text. Rather, she restricts herself to
discussions of how cognitive, perceptual, emotional,
and reward systems might contribute to our under-
standing of how we engage with a narrow set of par-
ticular artworks. I think this is the right way to go.
But it is not clear to me that it provides any insight
on its own into the nature of the aesthetic or its pu-
tative relation to our concept “art.” It certainly does
not tie easily into the traditional definition of aes-
thetic experience as a form of “disinterested plea-
sure” Starr tacitly aligns herself with in brief com-
ments on the history of the subject. One way out
here would be to interpret her use of the term ‘aes-
thetic’ as a generic term for art. But, the opening line
of the book, “Beauty matters in life and in art, but it
also matters in the architecture of the brain” (p. xii),
imagines against this interpretation.

Finally, Starr has worked hard to make the book
accessible to a lay reader. But in doing so, she has
left out a broad swath of the behavioral, psychologi-
cal, and neurophysiological evidence that might have
been used to articulate and support her model. As a
result, although the close readings of works em-
ployed to articulate her theory are clear, legible, and,
frankly, a delight to read, I found it difficult to sort out
how the neurophysiological material contributed in places. For instance, correlational data from imaging experiments are often presented without a functional description of the information-processing role played by the neurophysiological processes described or a description of the behavioral tasks used to generate the data. Short this information, it is often hard to understand how these results articulate, explain, or even confirm the existence of aesthetic behaviors under consideration. The hope, I think, is that the first two chapters provide enough background for the reader to bootstrap him- or herself into an understanding of what follows. However, I think the lay reader may be in need of a road map to help articulate the default mode network model Starr proposes and its ramifications for explanations of art and aesthetic experience. Luckily, just such a document does exist! I encourage readers who are interested in the insights of this book but in need of some background in the related neurophysiology as a head start to look at the focused review Edward Vessel, Gabrielle Starr, and Nava Rubin have published, “Art Reaches Within: Aesthetic Experience, the Self, and the Default Mode Network,” Frontiers in Neuroscience 7, Article 258. This is not meant to sell the story Starr tells about art short. It is just to suggest that interested readers may be in need of some context to help interpret it.

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