Note

1 This is my own translation of the title – the book has not been translated into English.

References

CAVAILHES, Jean, DUTEY, Pierre and **BACHIGNASSE, Gerard** (1984) *Rapport gai: enquête sur les modes de vie homosexuels* Paris: Editions Persona.

LE GARREC, Evelyne (1979) *Un lit à soi* Paris: Editions du Seuil.

The World is Ill Divided: Women's Work in Scotland in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Eleanor Gordon and Esther Breitenbach

Edinburgh University Press: 1990
ISBN 0 7486 0116 3, £25.00 Hbk.
ISBN 0 7486 0212 7 £11.95 Pbk.

This volume of essays forms part of an Edinburgh Education and Society Series. It represents a welcome addition to our understanding of the history of British women's waged work and a challenge to its frequent anglocentrism, constituting an important step in the belated yet now burgeoning fields of Scottish, Welsh and Irish women's history. Three recent books on Scotland are by women involved in this volume (Eleanor Gordon, 1991; Linda Mahood, 1990; Siân Reynolds, 1989).

The eight essays are consistently concise and clearly organized with brief bibliographies, making them especially appealing for students although they are a bit uneven – a few become rather immersed in detail. A useful Introduction pulls together the main themes, drawing attention to the persistence of gender divisions in employment and limited choices for women, but resisting simplistic ideas of women as mere victims of circumstance. Oral history helps challenge many received notions. The concentration on the twentieth century does however slightly belie the book's subtitle with only two essays centrally addressing the bulk of the nineteenth century. Possibly because of this imbalance, the book does not follow a broadly chronological pattern. This is slightly confusing since, for example, the reader shifts from 1910 to 1950 in the opening essay, back to the nineteenth century then forward again to Edwardian Scotland by the third essay. Uniting them, however, is a concern with a gendered division of labour and how this shaped women's lives and prospects at different times and in varying places and occupations.

Linda Mahood's exploration of Victorian Magdalen homes in Glasgow and Edinburgh raises important questions about moral regulation, the definition and control of sexualities and the shaping of ideas about working-class respectability. The directors reconciled their worries about women's employment with the need for these 'unfortunates' to work for the homes and provided not only 'women fit for work, but work fit for women'. The other essay on Victorian Scotland examines the women out-workers or bondagers in the south-east, tracing the decline of the system and the particular vulnerability and powerlessness of those working for their families. Not surprisingly, given the paucity of evidence from the women themselves, much of our knowledge of the system is refracted through the perceptions of the male farmworkers/relatives, the ploughman or hind.

In contrast, the essay on women's memories of work in Stirling in the first half of this century

draws on eighty women's memories in the Stirling Women's Oral History Archive. It challenges the notion that working-class women defined themselves essentially through their domestic life, arguing that most of these women enjoyed their working lives. Yet enjoyment need not connote freedom from exploitation. Moreover, the authors do not question how far the quality of life (or, rather, lack of it) in the present might help determine the way the women remember the past. Lynn Jamieson's piece on rural and urban women in domestic service earlier this century examines this wide-ranging job from both employees' and employers' memories, warning against an image of total gloom and doom. Even some urban women seem to have viewed some of their experiences in a positive light and sometimes opted for service in preference to other limited openings. Oral history has also been used in the essay on Prinlaws, a Fifeshire textile village, concentrating on young women's employment between the wars and questioning their independence, showing how they remained very much under parental control. Some discussion of whether the group interviews might have prompted particular collective responses could have been illuminating.

Alice J. Albert's essay focuses on home-workers who tended to be married women. Her work on Glasgow sweated home-workers between 1875 and 1914 traces the deterioration of their prospects, showing them struggling for work in a diminishing market. Another essay on Glasgow addresses a much more privileged group, 62 early women medical graduates. Wendy Alexander shatters several preconceptions, revealing a wider social background than comfortable middle class and showing that despite gender-based obstacles in appointments and promotion, over 88 per cent practised after graduation for either a considerable period or a lifetime, with many marrying and continuing their work. Skilled workers were also the subject of Siân Reynold's essay which examines the fluctuations in women's fortunes as compositors and bookbinders as part of her study of Edwardian employment in the printing and paper trades. Her account of disputes within the trades shows not only how women's work was delimited but also sensitivity towards exploring some of the perceptions men and women had of each other as workers and hence their misgivings.

The editors acknowledge class and regional diversity *within* Scotland. They also make a disclaimer, stating that the essays do not attempt 'to elucidate or define the distinctiveness of Scottish women's experience'. This is understandable since it would have involved engagement in a complex debate not entirely central to the book's aims. Yet it seems a pity that it was not tackled at all. For example, the essay on home-workers stresses that in Scotland (and especially in Glasgow) the conjugal family cannot be seen as the focus for domestic production. Unlike in England, women tended to work alone or in small groups. What factors might have contributed to this? Some brief introductory discussion of the possible impact of indigenous economic and cultural factors and, in particular, the part played by Scottish legal and educational developments in helping shape the attitudes and experiences of women workers in Scotland could have been instructive for readers. Nevertheless, this is a stimulating book with a wealth of fascinating material.

Angela V. John

References

GORDON, Eleanor (1991) *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850–1914* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MAHOOD, Linda (1990) *The Magdalens: Prostitution in Scotland*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
REYNOLDS, Siân (1989) *Britannica's Typesetters. Women Compositors in Edwardian Edinburgh* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Correct Distance

Mitra Tabrizian

Cornerhouse Publications: Manchester, 1990
ISBN 0 948797 16 9, £12.95 Hbk

Correct Distance is a book *of* photographs, but it is also a book *about* photographs; about the politics of representation. Its contribution to debates within culture and representation can be traced to an earlier moment at the beginning of the eighties.

Towards the end of his introduction to *Thinking Photography* Victor Burgin stated: 'It remains for me to explain an absence. There are no essays by women in this anthology. This is a matter neither of oversight nor prejudice. It is the contingent effect of a conjuncture' (1982: 14). Burgin explained that work such as Laura Mulvey's on film, or Griselda Pollock's on painting, was not specifically photographic and Jo Spence's photographic work belonged to a different cultural–political project. None the less, he acknowledged the importance of the women's movement's insistence on the politics of representation.

The particular historical conjuncture which marked the publication of *Thinking Photography* was the post-68 emergence of a critical photographic practice and criticism which was theoretically informed by Marxism, structuralism and psychoanalysis. *Thinking Photography* made available to photographers and cultural historians new perspectives which radically challenged traditional understandings of the medium.

Correct Distance by Mitra Tabrizian represents a significant development of these ideas from the perspective of sexual and cultural difference. (Mitra Tabrizian is an Iranian woman living in London). While *Thinking Photography* brought together essays published between 1970 and 1980, *Correct Distance* presents photographic work and articles about representation made during the following decade.

In her introduction to *Correct Distance*, Griselda Pollock traces the shift within feminist interventions in visual culture which took place in the intervening years. Increasingly, questions of pleasure, desire and identity became important. 'Radical cultural practice of the seventies seemed to experience the weight of regulative ideological power in culture and hence felt the need to practice a negative deconstructive aesthetic as a strategy of resistance.' (Pollock in Tabrizian, 1990) But by the eighties what had emerged was something 'less disciplined by a practice of disidentification and negation and more willing to address the power of fantasy and the destabilising force of pleasure.' (Pollock in Tabrizian, 1991)

Correct Distance offers a map of the ways in which the debate on sexual difference and photographic practice developed during the eighties. It is through this broader feminist project, with its emphasis on the *sexual* politics of representation and the questions of desire and pleasure, that the work should be read. The eighties saw an explosion of feminist cultural publishing which has made work more widely available. One of the most significant contributions of feminism has been the refusal to accept traditional disciplinary boundaries. Its task, rather, has been to trace the discourses of femininity as a means of understanding how 'woman' is not only socially and culturally but also psychically pro-