Feminist Collections
A Quarterly of Women’s Studies Resources

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CONTENTS

From the Editors ii

Book Reviews
The Power of the Personal: Keeping Consciousness-Raising Alive 1
by Stacy Russo

Which Way Is Feminism Leaning? A Critique of Sandberg’s “Feminist Manifesto” 3
by Ashley Hartman Annis

Historiographic Production: Women’s & Gender History 6
by Madeline A. Court

Considering Housework: An Uneven Anthology 7
by Beverly Gordon

Who Gets to Keep the Baby? Reproductive Justice & the Discourse around “Bad” Mothers 9
by Rae Moors

Food Is a Feminist Issue: Women Reclaiming Autonomy & Protecting the Planet 11
by Anna Pinks

Striving for Clarity: A Complicated Comparison between Judaism & Islam Made Clear 14
by Nicole Rudisill

Feminist Visions
Films on Women & Gender 16

Periodical Notes
Special Issues/Thematic Sections 19

Items of Note 23

Books Recently Received 24
FROM THE EDITORS

FROM THE EDITORIAL INTERN...

When I was asked to write an introduction for this issue of Feminist Collections, I knew right away what I wanted to say: I’ve decided I’m going to become an editor, just like my internship supervisor and mentor, JoAnne Lehman.

Additionally, I think I may be a serial careerist.

In the spring of 2016 I enrolled in GWS 660, a weekly gender and women’s studies seminar paired with a 150-hour internship. I chose an editorial position with Feminist Collections, in the Office of the Gender & Women’s Studies Librarian, for several reasons. Some of my reasons were immediately obvious (like the convenient location on campus and the monetary compensation, which allowed me to give up all but one of my waitressing shifts), but I’ve identified others over the course of the internship. I’ve always surrounded myself with words (for instance, I would bring a book to recess in elementary school, I’ve kept journals on and off my whole life, I married a writer and his library), but editing was not a connection to words I had ever considered before. As it turns out, I enjoy the work, I think I may even be good at it, and I’d love to pursue it more in the future.

But here’s where I get nervous. “I’ve decided to…” is something I’ve said before. I get excited about new possibilities, I think about constructing my life around them, but then I replace them with something new. I want to plan a future, but I keep changing. An idea that comforts me, however — one that was discussed intensely in my internship seminar — is that regardless of the job or career or calling I choose, and for however long I choose it (or it chooses me), the work I do can be feminist work. I’m still grappling with this question, though: What gets to be called feminist, and why? (This is also one of the main ideas in the book review I wrote for this issue.) I wonder if all work really has the potential to be feminist work. I think this editing internship is feminist work, but I can’t stop constantly questioning that.

So, here’s to feminist editing, whatever it is or can be. Right now editing is part of my big adult life plan — feminist work or not — and I know the lessons I’ve learned and the questions I’ve asked will continue to haunt me. And this is a good thing.

If nothing else, now I at least have a better idea about when to use “that” and when to use “which.”

Ashley Hartman Annis

...& THE SENIOR EDITOR

“I enjoy the work. I think I may even be good at it, and I’d love to pursue it more in the future.”

That’s my stunning student editorial intern speaking. Her introduction above warms my “senior” heart. I’ve edited Feminist Collections for more than 15 years, and I worked elsewhere in editing and publishing for the 15 before that. Over the years I’ve come to realize that I myself am good at it, and that it can be extremely meaningful and rewarding — and even feminist, although, like my intern, I am not always exactly sure what that means.

This year, one of the most meaningful, rewarding, and, yes, feminist parts of my work has been mentoring two student interns from the Department of Gender & Women’s Studies.

I’ll have more to say in another issue about Jamie Lilburn, the stellar history major (with GWS certificate) who fact-checked for and wrote an article about the Wisconsin Women Making History project. The focus this time is on Ashley Hartman Annis, whose enthusiasm and aptitude for learning about all of FC’s editorial processes has delighted, challenged, and inspired me.

Let me be clear: Ashley is good at it — very, very good. When she has followed me in editing a review, she has raised important questions and contributed valuable insights. When she has taken the lead in editing a piece, her work has been astute, her queries to writers both respectful and articulate. The authors whose writing she has edited so far have been very pleased with her work; no doubt they’ll also be happy to know she’s staying on as my editorial assistant during her final undergraduate year at the UW–Madison.

I have deeply enjoyed introducing Ashley to the craft of editing, talking about everything from serial commas to diplomatic author-querying to feminist theory, and having someone with whom to share my fascination with language issues many would find impossibly nerdy.

Yes, here’s to feminist (writing and) editing, and here’s to the Winter–Spring issue of Feminist Collections. Be sure to check out the seven book reviews within, some of them by graduate students in our GWS master’s program. Are you a subscriber yet? If not, what are you waiting for? (See page 25.)

JoAnne Lehman
Janet L. Freedman’s book on feminist consciousness-raising (CR) groups is ultimately about the power of personal storytelling among women in safe and supportive spaces. Both listening to a story and telling one’s own are acts of courage that, as CR groups have shown, may lead to personal growth and a richer understanding of and empathy for others. In six information-packed chapters, Freedman celebrates all that the CR experience can be and shares what the groups have meant in her life.

“Consciousness-raising was the gateway to activism,” Freedman writes early in the first chapter (p. 16); she continues a bit later, “Involvement in a CR group made it impossible for me NOT to become an activist” (p. 17).

The way Freedman weaves together her own CR experiences with other women’s memories of CR is one of the most compelling aspects of this work. It is clear that the material is close to her, and some of her interviewees are members of a group she has belonged to since 1984, but she reaches far beyond her own experiences and those of her network. The book is complemented by an impressive list of sources, including both fiction and non-fiction. This meshing of research and personal enthusiasm gives the book a special magic.

Freedman sets out to trace “the origins, principles, and enormous impact of consciousness-raising,” while also calling for a renewal of CR (p. 1). She begins with providing a historical review of CR from the 1960s and 1970s, in Chapter 1 (“Consciousness-Raising: The Mother Lode”) and also includes some practical information on length of meetings, how to start a group, and possible topics groups could discuss. Readers interested in starting a group may find additional “starter” discussion questions in other chapters helpful.

Chapter 2 (“Right Livelihood: Working as a Feminist”) focuses on working women and economic issues and the collective activism that can be ignited when women talk about struggles in the workplace.

Chapter 3 (“Only Connect: Technology, Consciousness-Raising and Feminist Activism”) looks at both the “promises and perils” of the internet and technology as they relate to feminist activism (p. 53). Freedman explores a wide range of topics here, including sexism in online gaming, cyberfeminism, blogging, and the easy access of feminist materials and websites.

Although Freedman gives many examples of the positive impact technology makes on feminism, she writes, “I’ve answered the question posed at the start of this chapter — ‘can technology offer a new and perhaps even more powerful model for achieving feminist social transformation?’ — with


The Power of the Personal: Keeping Consciousness-Raising Alive

by Stacy Russo

a resounding MAYBE” (p. 74). She doesn’t shy away from her contradictory beliefs about the internet’s impact on feminism.

In Chapter 4 (“I and We: Consciousness-Raising, Mutual Aid and Participatory Democracy”), Freedman explains that the personal and political are intertwined and that the feminist CR model contributes to a more productive, equal democracy. “I think the answer to a lack of participation in a democracy,” she writes, “is more democracy — authentic involvement in the shaping of organizations and institutions” (p. 96).

In the discussion in Chapter 5 (“Consciousness-Raising in the Classroom and Beyond”) of women’s studies programs and the classroom environment, Freedman reflects on the impact of her own experiences when she had the opportunity of merging “feminist theory and practice in daily experience” (p. 127). CR in the classroom, she believes, can help link theory and practice once the personal is valued.

The final chapter (“Spirited Woman”) moves the reader out of the physical world of technologies, politics, and the classroom, into the inner world, reflecting on the spiritual experiences that CR groups can provide. Quoting Barbara Eve Breitman, Freedman writes, “It was a presence that empowered and emboldened. It was creative and erotic. We felt filled with knowledge and vision. We experienced healing and were pointed toward justice. We sensed that collectively and in extended community with other women engaged in similar endeavors, we were giving birth to a new vitality, creative and conscious” (p. 131). She goes on to give examples of the power of CR groups in Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, Unitarian, and other religious settings.

Freedman concludes with optimism for the future of consciousness-raising groups: “I am heartened by the fact that the practice seems to be returning to this country” (p. 186).

Close to me in Los Angeles is a relatively new but flourishing organization called the Women’s Center for Creative Work (WCCW), founded in 2013. In addition to CR groups, it holds feminist storytelling events, women’s dinners, feminist book club meetings, and various other women-centered community events and workshops. As I read Reclaiming the Feminist Vision, it struck me that the WCCW is an example of the spirit and importance of CR that Freedman writes about. CR is very much alive today. Freedman’s work will be an excellent resource for those carrying it forward.

[Stacy Russo is an associate professor/librarian at Santa Ana College and the editor of Life as Activism: June Jordan’s Writings from The Progressive (Litwin Books). Her current project is Wildland: Interviews with Women from the 1970s/1980s Southern California Punk Rock Scene (Santa Monica Press, forthcoming).]
**Which Way Is Feminism Leaning? A Critique of Sandberg’s “Feminist Manifesto”**

by Ashley Hartman Annis


What do we mean when we say “feminist book,” “feminist film,” or “feminist organization”? In order to consider something feminist, do we simply require that a woman be in charge? If one woman reaches a position of power, is it a victory for all women?

The answers to these questions impact the real, lived experiences of women as well as people in other marginalized populations. Two vastly different perspectives can be found in the books *Lean In*, by Sheryl Sandberg, and *Lean Out*, by Dawn Foster. Although both authors claim a feminist label, there are significant differences in their beliefs and approaches as they look at inequality and attempt to create change. *Lean In* argues for more women in positions of power in order to create trickle-down equality, while *Lean Out* calls for a complete overhaul of the current economic and political system. The juxtaposition of these perspectives shows how the feminist label can be used not only to represent opposing agendas but also to turn feminism into a watered-down, depoliticized commodity.

The experience of reading *Lean In*, by billionaire Sheryl Sandberg, felt nothing like reading a feminist text. In her introduction, though, Sandberg tries on the label, saying, “This book is not a memoir, although I have included stories about my life. It is not a self-help book, although I offer advice in that area. It is not a feminist manifesto — okay, it is sort of a feminist manifesto” (p. 11). She then spends more than 400 pages in the *For Graduates* edition explaining her belief that when individual women overcome internal barriers — fear of leadership, for instance, and low self-esteem — and rise to the top of major companies and corporations, women everywhere will experience these benefits, and equality will be achieved.

Sandberg tells her readers that women must learn to “sit at the table” — a phrase she pulls from the personal experience of sitting against the wall during important meetings instead of at the table with the bosses and leaders — and assert their ideas and needs in the corporate business world. She also constantly refers to the “Leadership Ambition Gap,” a concept backed by study after study showing that women are less likely to agree with such statements as “I aspire to a leadership role in whatever field I ultimately work” and therefore less likely to gain power in companies and corporations. (Although I don’t doubt the truthfulness of these studies, I would be interested to learn what these women do aspire to become and why a leadership role is undesirable, as perhaps it has nothing to do with their self-esteem.)

Although she devotes whole chapters to such catchy-sounding concepts,
Sandberg never explains exactly how they can be used to address the realities of patriarchy, racism, classism, ableism, or heterosexism. Her assumption seems to be that the only problems faced by women are their own fears and self-esteem issues. She even advises a “fake it until you feel it” approach, encouraging women to be nice, be pleasant, and smile, since doing so can help a woman more easily reach her career goals as well as strengthen her marriage. She almost acknowledges the absurdity of this position, but sticks to her advice, saying, “I know it is not a perfect answer but a means to a desirable end...My hope, of course, is that we won’t have to play by these archaic rules forever” (p. 61).

What Sandberg doesn’t mention, as she reveals personal tales of success and completely sidesteps the question of privilege, is that her approach to equality and her advice to women leave capitalism neatly intact and fail to address the institutional barriers that create and sustain many of the inequalities she claims to fight. Every now and then she seems to get close, tip-toeing for a brief moment at the edge of something important. She gives a slight nod, for instance, to such issues as unfair maternity and paternity leave policies in the U.S., the lack of income replacement for new mothers, and the difficulties of childcare, but she promptly backs off, shutting out any possible critique of the system in which she is so entrenched. During these moments I felt myself reading faster, asking, “Is she really going to go there?” But the answer was always, “No, she’s not.”

Regardless of Sandberg’s level of awareness, her advice to women is deeply flawed, her feminism is corporate and harmful, and Dawn Foster, author of Lean Out, knows it. In her small but mighty response to Lean In, Foster raises a middle finger to Sandberg and the capitalist market she supports and effectively takes down Sandberg’s airy message:

[It is] far harder to write a chirpy feature about [working-class feminism] because, like most aspects of working-class life, it becomes enmeshed in many other axes of oppression: class, disability, age, region, race, education all bind together to affect a person’s life chances. (p. 65)

Foster discusses the ways corporations like Dove and people like Sandberg co-opt feminism by watering down the message and potency of a movement about collective rights and equality. She points out the dangers of corporate feminism, individual feminism, and branded feminism, explaining that the attainment of leadership positions by individual women does not necessarily lead to better lives for women everywhere.

In one of her most powerful chapters, titled “Trickle-Down Feminism,” Foster looks at such women as Theresa May and Margaret Thatcher, who did not use their political power to ensure women’s empowerment and safety, but instead overlooked the abuse of women and supported legislation that disproportionately hurt them:
[T]he fact of [Margaret Thatcher's] power and her gender emboldens 1% of feminists to claim her as a feminist icon, purely by virtue of her sex and in spite of the fact she was clearly not an advocate of women's social and economic empowerment. There is no intrinsic tendency for women to support other women when competing class and power interests offer far more fruitful personal rewards. (p. 53)

Although Sandberg hasn’t directly influenced policy in the ways, for instance, that Thatcher has, it’s easy to see the connections: these are individual women in positions of power who are labeled feminist simply because of their gender, despite the reality that they are actually hurting the feminist movement.

If Sandberg never called her book a “feminist manifesto,” if it wasn’t on the New York Times bestseller list for weeks, and if she didn’t have a hashtag used by Beyoncé, Serena Williams, and Gwyneth Paltrow, we could all have shrugged this off and moved on with our lives. But those things did happen. As feminist students, teachers, and activists, we need to engage with who is considered a feminist icon, and why. The combination of Lean In and Lean Out is not only interesting to discuss in a feminist classroom, but also necessary for us all to wrestle with at a gut level if we want to strengthen and educate future feminist leaders.

Despite the emotional distress of reading Lean In in its entirety, I am thankful for the gender and women’s studies class in which the updated graduates’ edition of the book was required reading. I certainly wouldn’t have picked it up on my own, but I realize the importance of grappling with and critiquing a text that, because of its mainstream popularity, needs to be addressed by feminist students and teachers.

The trick here is to see Sandberg’s Lean In for what it really is: a self-help model; a brand; a well-timed speech, book, and website that can lead people to believe they are supporting equality and feminism when, in reality, they are supporting the very things feminism tries to work against. “Leaning in” may work for a few individuals, but the success and resulting benefits of a few will not magically transfer to the rest of the world’s women. Instead, if we follow Dawn Foster and lean out — away from capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and individualism — feminism can do the work it needs to do and reach toward equality, even if we decide not to sit at the big boss table.

[Ashley Hartman Annis is a student, working on her B.A. in gender and women’s studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and a teacher, offering classes on menstrual cycle charting for health and hormone-free birth control. In her spare time she knits socks, walks her big fluffy dog, and watches Battlestar Galactica with her partner, Sam.]
This collection of essays opens with a salient quotation from Gerda Lerner, a late luminary of UW–Madison and the field of women’s history: “My commitment to women’s history came out of my life, not out of my head” (p. 1). Lerner’s words are a crucial reminder of the continuing importance of women’s history, especially in light of recent assaults against reproductive rights — attacks that depend on the erasure of women’s voices, autonomy, and history. Her words also invoke the radical potential of women’s history to uproot hegemonic historiographical methods.

The volume’s introduction, by editors Nadell and Haulman, provides a fascinating overview of the field of women’s history, as well as the challenges and limitations of using a nebulous category like “women” as a category of historical analysis. It would be easy and wholly unfair to criticize the book’s scope for being too broad: the work presents women’s and gender history as one of many lenses through which historiography — described in Wikipedia as “the study of the methodology of historians in developing history as an academic discipline” — can be viewed.

As someone who lasted barely two undergraduate semesters as a classics major and never took a course on historiography, I found Making Women’s Histories generous and accessible in its approach to the field. The language is clean and concise across the ten essays, yet never feels pedantic or reductive. I also appreciated that the book is divided into three sections: “Imagining New Histories: Late-Twentieth Century Trajectories,” “Engendering National and Nationalist Projects,” and “Exploring Transnational Approaches.” Each of the aptly titled sections offers the perfect amount of reading for an undergraduate discussion section or an afternoon of studying and reflection.

The essays examine disparate epochs and geographic regions, from the development of the field of African women’s history in the 1960s to the postcolonial era in India. The juxtaposition of subject matter reinforces the viability of a transnational feminist lens. Each essay, even as it addresses specific topics and research questions, deftly moves among other historical subjects and asks larger methodological questions. Cristina Zaccarini’s “Gender, Health, and U.S.–China Relations,” for instance, points out that even while Christian missionaries to China in the early twentieth century tended to view Chinese women as victims in need of modernization, the women missionaries often rejected Western medicine in favor of traditional — and female — Chinese medicine practices. Chinese medicine thus became an unexpected space in which women exchanged expertise and services as well as ideas about women’s rights and cultural expectations surrounding gender.

I was especially compelled by Ari-anne Chertock’s essay, “Gender and the Politics of Exceptionalism in the Writing of British Women’s History.” Chertock analyzes British writers’ use of “women worthies” — an ancient genre of writing that singled out extraordinary women like Cleopatra and Elizabeth I as inherently different from other women — to ask serious questions about women’s rights and national identity. Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, such feminist historians as Natalie Zemon Davis favored populist history over the study of women worthies (p. 117). This essay created a generative moment for me — and Making Women’s Histories was full of such moments. The sense of possibility in each of the essays is infectious.

When I finished reading Making Women’s Histories, I had gleaned an overview of the history and current challenges of women’s history, as well as a reading list of further resources and scholars. I’d filled the margins of my copy with more questions. I wondered where queer and trans women could fit into a transnational feminist history, and whether women’s history’s approaches to distilling gender in various contexts could be applied to women’s sexuality. I could go on, but will leave you with the skinny: Making Women’s Histories is an invaluable guide for undergraduate and graduate students with varying levels of experience in history, gender and feminist studies, and historiography.

Note


[Madeline (“Maddy”) Court is a graduate student in the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her academic interests unfold at the intersections of 1990s lesbian print culture, New Age spirituality, and women’s music festivals.]
CONSIDERING HOUSEWORK: AN UNEVEN ANTHOLOGY

by Beverly Gordon

I grew up in the 1950s and came of age in the heady consciousness-raising phase of second-wave feminism. I was acutely aware of expected gender roles, and it was a given that my partners and I would share housework. My scholarship focused on issues related to “background history” and the often-trivialized realities of the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, I still struggled through the years with inconsistencies — push-pulls between my ideals, preferences, and experiences. So it was exciting recently to encounter a volume devoted to attitudes about housework. *Home Sweat Home: Perspectives on Housework & Modern Relationships* was not completely satisfying. Editors Elizabeth Patton and Mimi Choi explain that the anthology began with a session at the Popular/American Culture Association conference in 2012. Previously unacquainted academics from different fields — English, media/communications, gender and women’s studies — responded to a call for papers and bonded over their common interest. The resulting essays are uneven, but they approach the topic from a refreshing variety of starting points. Their discussions, which range from the vision of domestic technology expressed in the political discourse of the 1960s “Kitchen Debates” to analysis of housework depicted in the animated film *The Incredibles*, leave strong impressions. Ultimately, however, they are about images rather than underlying reasons and issues. While the editors’ objective was “to wrest and make visible the awkward issues from the margins” and “enlarge the discourse” about housework (p. xv), it is unclear how that expansion is taking place. As they plaintively conclude, “we may feel not very far from” Betty Friedan’s 1963 articulation of the discontented housewife in *The Feminine Mystique*. “Will it take another fifty years to really resolve the issue of housework?” (p. xxii).

Many of the essays demonstrate that the idealized domestic image (a “home-cooked meal and an attractive maternal figure” [p. xv]) still persists, despite the prevalence of dual-income households. Why is that image so tenacious? The editors argue that the prevalent attitude about housework — that it is “invisible, marginalized and devalued” — can be traced to the Industrial Revolution (pp. xiv–xv), when concepts of work and home were bifurcated for the first time. The scope of *Home Sweat Home* purportedly extends from the Victorian era to the present. None of the essays actually covers anything before the twentieth century, but the well-written introduction provides some important historical context. Unfortunately, neither the editors nor the contributors consider why this industrial-era model would endure in our post-industrial, post-modern society.

One of the weaknesses of the book is that housework is never defined or delimited. Often it is the physical labor of taking care of the house that is considered, but sometimes the term is conflated with the idea of homemaker (this was a Victorian construct — a homemaker was not the laborer, but the moral and emotional “light of the home”). Nicola Goc’s “Snapshot Photography, Women’s Domestic Work, and the ‘Kodak Moment,’ 1910s–1960s,” for example, argues that with the availability of inexpensive cameras, photography became part of women’s domestic work. They acted as family historians, who documented and memorialized
homey scenes. This fascinating, compellingly illustrated essay tells us much about the construction of meaning, but it is not about household drudgery or an endless task like dishwashing.

Childcare/childrearing is similarly subsumed into housework in some, but not all, of the essays. In what seems a particular outlier, “Kuaer ‘Home’ in Ang Lee’s The Wedding Banquet,” Gust Yep and Ryan Lescure look at concepts of home in the light of queer theory and transnational sensibility. In doing domestic work, the authors argue, the gay hero of the film takes on qualities of the feminized realm. They are not primarily concerned with housework, in other words, but with gender identity.

Kristi Branham’s excellent essay, “Hung Out to Dry: Laundry Advertising and the American Woman, 1890–1920,” traces the cultural tension between external laundry services and the idea that washing should be done in individual homes. Branham does distinguish between housecleaning and homemaking, but her primary focus is a “road not taken” in terms of labor history rather than housework itself. She concludes, “sending laundry back to the home enshrined an ideal of American Womanhood that isolated women and solidified the ideal of the nuclear family for the twentieth century” (p. 23).

Kristi Rowan Humphreys’s “Supernatural Housework: Magic and Domesticity in 1960s Television” is an original look at post-war attitudes. She examines three sitcoms — Bewitched, I Dream of Jeannie, and The Addams Family — arguing that the heroines conformed to social norms by choosing to be housewives, but overcame the boredom and drudgery of the job by using magical abilities to get their tasks done. Sadly, this took them only so far. In the first season of Bewitched, for example, Samantha was shown doing housework in 90% of the episodes, but using magic only 30% of the time. Although audiences had, by this time, rejected the image of the perfect housewife embodied by June Cleaver (in Leave It to Beaver, 1957–1963), they were effectively placated by a supernatural heroine.

Andrea Krafft’s essay on portrayals of housework in American science fiction comes to a related conclusion: that we need to be superhuman to meet the domestic ideal. Other Home Sweat Home essays consider British children’s fantasy literature, ranging from Alice in Wonderland to Harry Potter; the division of housework or perceptions of male and female roles in more contemporary television series (one essay focuses on shows with polygamous households, where multiple wives have even more work); and the fact that housework was not included in later versions of the explicitly feminist production Free to Be You and Me.

The sample used in some of the essays is very small (e.g., one or two TV programs), which raises questions about their representativeness. And while I appreciate that some authors try to address issues of race and class, it is at times a bit forced. Nancy Bressler analyzes several sitcoms, categorizing their subjects according to class, and concludes that traditional gender roles were more pervasive in lower-class households. That is interesting, but we must remember that all the sitcoms were probably written by the same (type of) people, who may have been operating according to their own stereotypes.

In her discussion of housework portrayed in polygamous marriages, Rita Jones offers concise observations that might have served as an introductory framework (or perhaps a conclusion) for the entire book. For one thing, she argues that childcare is often included in the category of housework because the tasks are not compartmentalized and are done simultaneously. Her more general statement about the devaluation of housework provides a cogent summary of underlying associations: “[H]ousework, when performed by women family members, without pay and as part of family obligations, is incompatible with American understandings of ‘work’ and not worthy of public recognition” (p. 226). More of this kind of searching for “whys” might have given more meaning to the discussion of images and truly enlarged the discourse.

[Bevery Gordon is Professor Emeritus in the Design Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her books include The Saturated World: Aesthetic Meaning, Domestic Objects, Women’s Lives, 1890–1940.]
In Chapter 1, Oaks explores the social, religious, and moral motivations behind safe haven laws and examines how community advocates often see their work as saving the lives of babies. Oaks carefully explains that although safe haven laws and their advocates are not, in and of themselves, wrong in their motivations, they do fail to recognize the real problems underlying the infant abandonment they are trying to stop.

Chapter 2 deals with public education around safe haven laws, providing an analysis of the media created to inform people about the uses of the laws. The media messages, which are commonly disseminated in high schools, target certain populations and cultural ideas about motherhood and overwhelmingly center on the scared, confused teen mother. Oaks examines how these advertisements portray certain types of mothers as “at risk” or “undesirable,” further reinforcing stereotypes about what a mother “should” look like, as well as the notion that individuals who don’t fit the stereotype should harness their “maternal love” by relinquishing a newborn they are supposedly unfit to care for.

Chapter 3 looks at how the laws are actually practiced. In contrast to the advertisements about safe haven laws, which tend to portray mothers who use the laws as a certain type of person, the mothers who choose to relinquish their infants often come from a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences. This chapter also challenges the assumption that those who know about the safe haven laws will successfully use them, and it cites as evidence individual anecdotes of infant relinquishment that do not comply with safe haven laws. These anecdotes challenge the notion that safe haven laws are easy to invoke, a claim asserted by the educational advertisements and community advocates alike. Other anecdotes show that even when an infant is safely relinquished, legal consequences for the relinquishing mother depend on social circumstances not addressed by the laws. Relinquishing mothers who improperly use the laws are much more likely to face legal action if they...
are of low socioeconomic status or have little education, despite the good intentions of their relinquishment.

Chapter 4 takes an in-depth look at the value of the infants relinquished under safe haven laws and the social factors that create the value. Removing an infant from an “unfit” but loving mother, and placing it with new, loving, adoptive parents who can provide a life that the biological mother could not, creates a happy story to advertise. The underlying philosophy of adoption — the creation of happy families — is fulfilled by these stories. Meanwhile, the social circumstances that lead to infant abandonment are obscured, and the adopting families are left to make assumptions about the mothers who relinquished their children.

The true success of this book lies in its structure. Although each chapter deals with a distinctly different facet of safe haven laws, they are all clearly connected to reproductive justice, and the book remains cohesive despite the wide variety of topics. Anyone interested in further exploration of these issues will benefit from Oaks’s rich research and will find plentiful but brief in-text references that are also expanded into an extensive bibliography at the back of the book. By varying the sources of material and methods of analysis, Oaks covers the full range of complex issues that inform these safe haven laws, and, by tying those issues to reproductive justice, she allows for further exploration by scholars and activists of health, family policy, and gender alike.

The only drawback of such varied and comprehensive topics is the lack of deep analysis that can result. A few areas of the book could benefit from clearer connections between the evidence Oaks lays out and the theories of reproductive justice she mentions. But this is a minor complaint, especially considering the sheer number of sources cited. Giving Up Baby only scratches the surface of a topic to propel a curious reader to investigate even further the issues of reproductive justice Oaks raises.

Giving Up Baby serves as a firm foundation for future inquiry into the politics, both formal and informal, of safe haven laws through the lens of reproductive justice. Oaks’s skillful consolidation of research into streamlined and easy-to-understand chapters effectively illustrates the complex and intertwined nature of politics, culture, race, class, and gender in these laws.

Any scholar or activist with an interest in the mechanisms behind seemingly well-intentioned but ill-thought-out family policy interventions should explore Oaks’s analysis of these issues and their deep connection with reproductive justice.

[Rae Moors is a master’s degree candidate in gender and women’s studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her research centers on the intersections of gender, folklore, and politics. She’s interested primarily in the way folklore is constructed, circulated, and resignified through theories of care, affect, and play, and in how these affect the social politics of the family, health, and relationships.]

Miriam Greenwald
[F]ood sovereignty and the movement for the protection of seeds as common goods, and as world heritage, includes the right of peoples to self-determination — to decide how to distribute and manage, from this day on, the water and the land that is sown and harvested and provides food — in other words, how to organize and maintain the food chain, which allows the subsistence of human beings, just as that of other species, but also the maintenance of knowledge, community, identity, and culture. (p. 347)

Globally, agriculture and food production systems have been hijacked by a handful of agrochemical companies, and an agro-industrial complex has stripped farmers of their autonomy, dignity, and livelihoods through processes of genetic engineering, seed patenting, homogenization, and mechanization. Meanwhile, the environment suffers from poor soil management, deforestation, and drought.

Communities are awakening, however, to the lie that the high yields of monoculture are the answer to food scarcity. “This pivotal moment might best be expressed as a release from the failing premise of lack,” write Frances and Anna Lappé in this anthology’s first chapter, “lack of both ‘goods and goodness’ — the view that there is not enough food and energy, nor enough positive human capacities — to a very different starting point: an ecologically, evidence-based premise of possibility” (p. 4).

The essays in Seed Sovereignty, Food Security are written by women deeply engaged in the fight against genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the corporate takeover of global food systems. Edited by Vandana Shiva — a scientist and activist and the founder of Navdanya, a movement to protect biodiversity and native seeds in India — the volume includes the diverse voices of scientists, seed savers, mothers, and scholars. Beyond being an anthology of women’s writings, the work is feminist in that it honors women’s involvement in “renewing a food system that is better aligned with the ecological processes of the Earth’s renewal, the laws of human rights and social justice, and the means through which our bodies stay well and healthy” (p. vii). It also illustrates — perhaps most poignantly in an essay written by Winona LaDuke — how domination by patriarchal structures links the degradation of the earth’s fertility and the subjugation of women.

The anthology is divided into three sections: “International: Reflections on the Broken Paradigm,” “Global North,” and “Global South.” The significance of this division is that, in general, people in the Southern Hemisphere experience the ill effects of industrial monoculture more acutely than people living in developed Northern countries — particularly the United States and Western Europe. With the exception of Southern Europe, which makes up part of the Mediterranean Vavilov Center, the rest of the industrialized world is relatively unimportant as a source of crop genetic diversity. All the other important Vavilov Centers are in the developing world, referred to as the Global South. The problems of conserving crop genetic diversity are therefore geographically problems of the developing world, though, of course, its erosion concerns the whole of humanity. (p. 298)

The first section of the book provides a general overview of the problems (real and potential) that we face as consumers of GMOs. The scientific community is at odds as to whether consumption of GMOs leads to poor health outcomes. Controversial figure Stephanie Seneff attempts to draw a link, in her essay, between a rise in autism diagnoses and the increased use of Roundup brand herbicides on soy and corn. Unfortunately, Seneff’s argument relies on flawed logic — that correlation equals causation — and no original research. It is impossible not to compare the piece to the now debunked study connecting childhood vaccinations to autism.
Another contentious figure, geneticist Mae-Wan Ho, writes that “the greatest danger of genetic modification is that it is misguided by the ideology of genetic determinism” when, in fact, “there is an intrinsic cross-talk between an organism and its environment at all levels, with feed-forward and feed-back cycles swirling through the epigenetic and metabolic networks of molecular interactions that mark and change genes as the organism goes about living, their effects reverberating down the generations” (p. 108). This science might seem sound, but Ho wanders into a grey area when she makes claims about GMOs’ inherent hazards and links to deaths and illness. Her evidence, which is primarily anecdotal, is pulled from her own research and other studies published by the Institute of Science in Society — an interest group concerned with the unethical use of biotechnology (co-founded and directed by Ho) that has been widely criticized for promoting pseudoscience.

This anthology’s real power is in the essays and case studies presented in the second (“Global North”) and third (“Global South”) sections. Here there is less speculation about the potential hazards of GMOs and more evidence of the tangible, negative impacts of corporate agricultural giants on communities, culture, and the environment. Susanne Gura shows how restrictive policies and hybridization in Europe have dramatically limited the genetic diversity in seed markets dominated by chemical corporations and are leading to the disappearance of open-pollinated varieties. Instead of producing their own seeds, farmers have to purchase expensive “inputs” from seed and agricultural product companies, and the debt they accrue as a result can lead to farm liquidations and even farmer suicides. Tiphaine Burban points to France, where the farmer’s role has dramatically shifted in relationship to the rise of the commercial seed sector, resulting in a “complete overhaul for peasants, who, in this race for technology, lost their seeds and their autonomy. The very nature of their activity changed. From peasants they became farmers, agricultural exploiters, and now agri-managers. In the process, they also became simple seed users” (p. 134).

In “The Untold American Revolution: Seed in the U.S.,” Debbie Barker, international director for the Center for Food Safety, presents a useful history of agriculture policy. From the agrarianism practiced by Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, through the Morrill Land Grant College Act and Hatch Act in the nineteenth century, to the Plant Patent Act of 1930 and the emergence of agricultural biotechnology in the late twentieth century, farming in the United States has shifted from an act of independence to a practice regulated by private corporations — Monsanto being one of the largest players. Barker states that “the companies seem to derive the largest slice of the proverbial American pie as they use the technology and research, much of it paid for by U.S. citizen tax dollars, to generate private profit” (p. 192). Farmers are bound by contract to purchase patented seeds, and they operate under the looming threat of property investigation. And as farmers’ costs increase, government subsidies decrease. The high cost of farming means fewer people choose it as a profession, and that results in fewer American people knowing how their food is produced.

On the other hand, there are pockets of people who envision sustainable alternatives. Many of the movements to revive sustainable agriculture and protect native lands are being led by North American indigenous cultures. Suzanne Foote writes about the Ta S’ina Tokahey Foundation, a nonprofit founded to improve living conditions on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The foundation promotes economic self-sufficiency, healthy food choices, and tradition through organic farming and seed-saving based on traditional Lakota models.

Winona LaDuke draws attention to indigenous women who battle government-perpetuated mining megaprojects — such as in the Canadian tar
sands — that appropriate indigenous resources, militarize communities, drain intellectual capital, and destabilize long-term health. She illustrates how this “Colonization Model” directly relates to violence against women: “Add to this the proposition of man camps and the degradation and victimization of Native women with the energy boom. That is why we resist them. They have no consent, either for our bodies or for our ecosystems. It is no stretch to say that this predator economics targets our lands, and our very bodies” (p. 228).

In the mid-twentieth century, Nobel Peace Prize recipient Norman Borlaug led the introduction of research, development, and technology-transfer initiatives to the Global South (primarily Asia and South America) to eradicate food scarcity and starvation. This so-called Green Revolution replaced traditional farming practices and sustainable, open-pollinated seed varieties with high-yield varieties, hybrids, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides. As a result, farmers lost their autonomy and communities suffered the economic weight and environmental impact of big agribusiness. Monoculture replaced biodiversity, and in choosing macroeconomic growth, governments became handmaidens to the private interests of giant agribusinesses based in North America and Europe.

As in the North, resistance to short-sighted industrial processes in the South is community-based, sustainable, rooted in traditional practices, and led by women. Farida Akhter draws attention to Bangladesh, where “[a]t least three thousand farmers in nineteen districts” practice “Nayakrishi Andolon” (New Agricultural Movement), which is based on collective activity and information sharing. This movement rejects chemical inputs and reinforces good soil management practices, mixed cropping, and crop rotation. “In all farming households,” Akhter says, “women have taken the lead as key players as they preserve seeds, and have formed the Nayakrishi Seed Network (NSN) in a systematic attempt to involve women at different levels. The NSN builds on the farming household, the focal point for in situ and ex situ conversation” (pp. 270–271).

Ana de Ita focuses on Mexico, the place where maize historically originated and diversified. Here, state-sanctioned introduction of proprietary hybrid seeds and chemical herbicides has endangered many of the traditional varieties vital to indigenous diet and ritual. With women at the vanguard, rural communities are working to preserve the traditional farming technique in Mesoamerica, milpa, which has been adapted to diverse climates, practices crop rotation, and protects wild plants, aromatics, and medicinals. Patricia Flores takes us to Peru, where a grassroots organization called the National Association of Ecological Producers of Peru promotes agroecology and capacity-building, with women responsible for seeds at the family and community levels. The organization’s activism contributed to a moratorium on GMO seeds imposed by the Peruvian government. Throughout Latin America, sumac causai, a traditional understanding of living in harmony with nature is being used as a framework for rebelling against “the neo-colonization of the corporate-driven global economy” (p. 348).

Seed Sovereignty, Food Security is an effective activist work, even if it is not an appropriate source for scientific information about GMOs and their safety. It presents instances of environmental and social injustice, raises a rallying cry to action, and provides examples of resistance to corporate monoculture. It also places women at the forefront of efforts to preserve biodiversity and the health, traditions, and autonomy of communities around the world.

Note

1. Vavilov Centers are “crop genetic diversity hotspots” (p. 297) named after the Russian scientist who discovered eight of them.

[Anna Pinks received her M.L.I.S. from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is the collections services librarian at Greensboro College.]
STRIVING FOR CLARITY: A COMPLICATED COMPARISON BETWEEN JUDAIISM & ISLAM MADE CLEAR

by Nicole Rudisill

Both Judaism and Islam have long traditions of religious scholars (usually men) debating the meaning of sacred texts and arguing over the application of religious laws” (p. 3). This sly remark at the beginning of Gender in Judaism and Islam, about men typically being the ones to debate the intricacies of Judaism and Islam, sets the stage for the entire collection of essays. Although one male scholar (Hamid Dabashi) numbers among the contributors, the rest of the collection is produced by prominent female scholars of gender, religion, law, culture, and more. Editors Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet and Beth S. Wenger focus on these voices, declaring that it is time for women’s analyses of religion to be taken as seriously as men’s.

The essays in this anthology are grouped under four overarching themes: “Comparative Perspectives” (Part I), “Limits of Biology: Bodily Purity and Religiosity” (Part II), “Crimes of Passion” (Part III), and “Cultural Depictions of Jewish and Muslim Women” (Part IV). Each part is prefaced with a brief synopsis, written by the editors, which ties the essays together and also provides simple summaries for readers as they progress throughout the book. Although each part offers deep insights into very specific aspects of Judaism, Islam, or both, the most interesting parts are I and IV because of their accessibility to readers and connection with everyday life.

The two essays of Part I (“Jewish and Muslim Feminist Theologies in Dialogue: Discourses of Difference,” by Susannah Heschel, and “Jewish and Islamic Legal Traditions: Diffusions of Law,” by Amira Sonbol) waste no time putting the religions in conversation with one another. Heschel pushes to explore the parallels between past and present Judaism and Islam writing, “using its treatment of women as evidence, Judaism was denigrated as ‘oriental’ and ‘primitive,’ placing Jewish feminists in a difficult position, similar to the one Muslim feminists in the United States and Europe face today” (p. 21). Although both Heschel and Sonbol write for those with some background on Jewish and Islamic traditions, their writing is fluid, easy to read, and engaging, offering useful and captivating perspectives for readers at all levels of scholarship.

Parts II and III, while interesting, did not captivate my attention as much because of the more academic writing style and subject matter. Part II (“Limits of Biology: Bodily Purity and Religiosity”) includes essays by Marion Katz, Charlotte Elishva Fonrobert, and Soraya Tremayne that address power relations in Islamic and Jewish culture relating to the body and sexuality. Katz’s essay, “Scholarly versus Women’s Authority in the Islamic Law of Menstrual Purity,” is perhaps the most straightforward example of traditional gender studies, untangling the struggle between male religious scholars and women for authority over the female body. Fonrobert (“Gender Duality and Its Subversions in Rabbinic Law”) and Tremayne (“Gender and Reproductive Technologies in Shia Iran”), on the other hand, push the conversation temporally, first taking readers to the past to discuss rabbinic law on “those considered neither men nor women, but a combination of both,” and then bringing them back to the present to discuss infertility, reproductive technology, and gender roles as seen today in Iran (p. 71). Kashani-Sabet and Wenger sum up this section wonderfully by saying, “For women, who have traditionally been defined in Islamic and Jewish cultures by their reproductive roles, the ability to exert control over their bodies and to delineate their social position independent of their biological functions remains an ongoing challenge” (p. 72).

Part III, “Crimes of Passion,” includes the works of Lori Lefkovitz, Catherine Warrick, and Lisa Fishbayn Joffe, who come together to explore how writers of religious texts could not account for the ways society would change over time. They also discuss how the origins and evolutions of Islamic and Jewish religious texts are intertwined with legal texts. The essays parse through the ways that “in both cultures, men and women are subject to multiple, often contradictory, layers of legal control in their lives” (p. 153). Perhaps the best of the three essays in this section is Warrick’s piece on honor killings, a topic often discussed, debated, and theorized in today’s East-West divided world. Warrick concludes,
That honor killings still find some accommodation in Arab legal systems is evidence not of the fundamental “Islamic-ness” of these systems, but of the power of cultural claims; where cultural authenticity is at issue, as in the postcolonial states, then the state has a tactical interest in making use of cultural elements to bolster its own legitimacy. (p. 198)

Warrick examines this “power of cultural claims,” showing how the authenticity of norms is rooted in power relationships, not stagnant objectivity, and created by “whoever has the authority to proclaim what is ‘authentic’” (p. 199).

Part IV (“Cultural Depictions of Jewish and Muslim Women”) consists of three sparkling essays: by Andrea Siegel (“A Literary Perspective: Domestic Violence, the ‘Woman Question,’ and the ‘Arab Question’ in Early Zionism”), Orit Bashkin (“An Autobiographical Perspective: Schools, Jails, and Cemeteries in Shoshanna Levy’s Life Story”), and Hamid Dabashi (“An Artistic Perspective: The Woman of Bahram Beizai’s Cinema”). The essays in this section are some of the most compelling and immediately accessible, exploring everyday experiences of Jewish and Islamic cultures and delving into analysis of literature, autobiography, and cinema. Although Siegel, Bashkin, and Dabashi use specific case studies the average reader may not be familiar with, they still convey the usefulness of their studies for all readers.

While this collection of essays is most useful for those with some background on the topics, it will also appeal to scholars hoping to expand their knowledge on many different aspects of Judaism and Islam. The essays do a great job of bridging ideas of the past with those of the present, making this volume valuable for scholars of history and current cultural trends as well as for researchers in anthropology, sociology, women’s health, media studies, Middle East studies, religious studies, legal studies, literary studies, and more. All of these topics are addressed throughout the essays, and the authors often incorporate more than one discipline in a chapter.

While clearly worded and intricately researched essays abound in Gender in Judaism and Islam, it would be difficult to use this volume as an introduction to these topics (with the only arguable exceptions being the first two essays). It will have the greatest impact on those who already have a basic to intermediate understanding of both religions and their respective customs, laws, and traditions. The book includes a glossary of terms, and a number of the essays themselves supply definitions, but some of those that do so feel oversimplified, and others remain difficult to access for those not already insiders in these cultures.

Gender in Judaism and Islam is a wonderful addition to a growing field of study and will be of great use to those looking to deepen their scholarship. This collection can help explain a wide variety of phenomena in Jewish and Islamic cultures relating to women and gender while providing valuable information to scholars, students, and the general public on this fascinating topic.

Nicole Rudisill is an M.A. candidate in gender and women’s studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her work focuses on affect, care, love, happiness, and goodness. She is also the family resources coordinator for the UW-Madison Campus Women’s Center and runs a feminist mentorship program for middle-school girls.
Feminist Visions
Films on Women & Gender

Our Partnership with GenCen

Three times a year, the Center for Gender in Global Context (GenCen) at Michigan State University gathers producers’ and distributors’ summaries, in GenCen’s Gendered Perspectives on International Development (GPID) Resource Bulletin, of selected audiovisual productions about global gender and women’s issues. We have partnered with GenCen to make information about those selections available to a wider audience.

The films summarized below, grouped by distributor and/or filmmaker, were showcased in the GPID Resource Bulletin’s Fall 2015 “Audiovisuals” column. To obtain a free copy of any issue of the bulletin, which also summarizes such useful resources as journal articles, books, and technical reports and lists upcoming conferences, grants, calls for papers, and study opportunities, contact GenCen at gencen@msu.edu.

Askold Kurov & Pavel Loparev

Children 404 (Deti 404)
2014, 76 minutes, Russia

Synopsis from Cinema Politica (www.cinemapolitica.org/film/children-404-0): “In 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin passed a bill forbidding the ‘promotion of nontraditional sexual relations to minors.’ LGBT youth, now defenseless against insults and intimidation under this ‘gay propaganda’ law, are considered sick, sinful and abnormal. Psychologists, teachers and even parents can be fined or imprisoned for supporting them. Forty-five Russian teens and tweens share their stories through anonymous interviews and video diaries. They detail their humiliations and discriminations, as well as their courageous stands against bullies. Their testimonies are collected online as the Children 404 project, named after the common ‘error 404 — page not found’ web message. The support group’s founder struggles within the system to bring public attention and empathy to the victims of this government-endorsed hate, while activist Pasha decides he must leave his homeland altogether if he hopes to find a boyfriend and lead a normal life. Has a new Stone Age arrived in Russia?”

Excerpt from “Hot Docs Review: Children 404,” by Jordan Adler, May 1, 2014 (thetfs.ca/2014/05/01/hot-docs-review-children-404): “Children 404 is a shocking film that begs to be seen. Directors Pavel Loparev and Askold Kurov follow a few of the teens into schools and film as students berate them. The intolerance is deeply unsettling to witness. Although several of the youths who agreed to be a part of the film have their faces blocked or are only heard in audio recordings, their stories are heartbreaking. It is brave for these teens to share their stories and daring for the filmmakers to try to capture them out in the open.”

Bower Bird Films/Palangi Productions

Love Marriage in Kabul
2014, 84 minutes, Australia & Afghanistan

Synopsis from film website: “Mahboba Rawi is a strong-willed Afghan-Australian woman who has dedicated her life to help orphans in Afghanistan. She is the founder of Mahboba’s Promise and a mother figure for thousands of orphans and widows currently supported by her programs. Abdul, one of these orphans, is in love with Fatemeh, the girl next door. The two have been exchanging romantic letters for almost a year and hope to marry each other one day. But Fatemeh’s father has other plans — he won’t let the marriage happen unless Mahboba pays him $10,000 or finds a wife for his eldest son who then can replace Fatemeh in taking care of the household. With nothing to Abdul’s name, the fate of the couple depends entirely on Mahboba’s ability to meet or negotiate the father’s terms. But Mahboba only has one month and limited resources.”
Fork Films (Gini Reticker)

The Trials of Spring
2015, 90 minutes (feature documentary), 45 minutes (short films)
www.trialssoftspring.com

Description from online press materials: “[A] major documentary event that chronicles the stories of nine women who played central roles in the Arab Spring uprisings and their aftermaths in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. It includes a feature-length documentary, six short films, articles by award-winning journalists, and a robust social media conversation about women and their unwavering quest for social justice and freedom.” Lesson plan for educators also available for free download (PDF).

Framework (Joey Boink & Sandeir Wirken)

Burden of Peace
2015, 76 minutes, Guatemala & Netherlands
www.burdenofpeace.com

Synopsis from film website: “[T]ells the impressive story of Claudia Paz y Paz, the first woman to lead the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Guatemala. The country that has been ravaged for years by a devastating civil war, in which nearly 200,000 Mayan Indians were systematically massacred, is today one of the most violent countries in the world. Claudia starts a frontal attack against corruption, drug gangs and impunity and does what everyone had hitherto held to be impossible: she arrests former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt on charges of genocide. His conviction becomes the first conviction of a former head of state for genocide in a national court in the world’s history.”

Guerilla Films (Iiris Härma)

Leaving Africa (Hyvästi Afrikka)
2015, 84 minutes (58-min. version also available), Uganda & Finland
www.guerillafilms.fi

Synopsis from producer's website: “Finnish Riitta and Ugandan Catherine have something in common: work, a shared home and a sense of humor. Riitta has been working in aid work in Uganda for more than 25 years, and soon it is time for her to retire and to return to Finland. Before that, Riitta and Catherine will invite religious leaders to a course in which they challenge the priests and the imams to a straightforward, taboo breaking discussion on women’s right to their bodies, sexuality and life. However, soon Riitta and Catherine will hear of serious allegations made against them. These allegations will jeopardize their entire life’s work…[A]n emotional film that depicts the empowerment of women and its impact on individuals, communities and global development.”

Hanfgarn & Ufer Filmproduktion (Ayat Najafi)

No Land’s Song
2014, 91 minutes, Iran, Germany & France
nolandssong.com/en

Synopsis from English version of film website: “In Iran, since the revolution of 1979, women are no longer allowed to sing in public as soloists — at least in front of men. Defying censorship and taboos, the young composer Sara Najafi is determined to organize an official concert for solo female singers. In order to support their fight, Sara and the Iranian singers, Parvin Namazi and Sayeh Sodeyfi, invite three female singers from Paris, Elise Caron, Jeanne Cherhal and Emel Mathlouthi, to join them in Tehran and collaborate on their musical project, re-opening a musical bridge between France and Iran. But are they going to succeed and finally be gathered in Tehran, sing freely, side-by-side, in front of a mixed audience and without restrictions, and to open a door towards a new freedom of female voice in Iran?”

Principle Pictures (Beth Murphy)

What Tomorrow Brings
2016, 90 minutes, Afghanistan & USA
www.principlepictures.com/what-tomorrow-brings

Synopsis from Principle’s website: “With unprecedented access, [this film] goes inside the very first girls’ school in one small Afghan village. Never before have fathers here allowed their daughters to be educated, and they aren’t sure they even want to now. From the school’s beginnings in 2009 to its first graduation in 2015, the film traces the interconnected stories of students, teachers, village elders, parents, and school founder Razia Jan. While the girls learn to read and write, their education goes far beyond the classroom to become lessons about tradition and time. They discover their school is the one place they can turn to understand the differences between the lives they were born into and the lives they dream of leading. And although remarkable changes happen when a community skeptical about girls’ education learns to embrace it, the threats that girls face — from forced marriage to Taliban attack — loom large. Filmmaker Beth Murphy embeds herself in this school and community for a most intimate look at what it really means to be a girl growing up in Afghanistan today.” Study guide for educators also available for free download (PDF).
**Feminist Visions**

**Radiator Film (Berit Madsen)**

**Sepideh—Reaching for the Stars**

2013, 90 minutes, Denmark & Iran

www.radiatorfilm.com/sepideh.html

A feature documentary by Berit Madsen. *Synopsis by Caroline Libresco, Sundance Film Festival:* "In a rural village far from Tehran, the night sky glows brilliantly, unimpeded by light pollution, and a teenage girl named Sepideh dreams of becoming a renowned astronomer. Lugging a telescope as tall as herself, Sepideh spends her nights stargazing, inspired by Anousheh Ansari, the first Iranian in space. But achieving such a lofty ambition is easier said than done for an Iranian girl. Her uncle threatens something rash if Sepideh persists in her unladylike behavior, and her widowed mother warns that she cannot pay for the necessary schooling. [Unfazed], Sepideh composes impassioned missives to Albert Einstein and keeps her eyes on the prize. Yet when she’s passed over for a university scholarship and suitors come knocking at the door, her determination is seriously tested. The camera is everywhere we want it to be in this magical documentary — charting the strained, yet devoted, relationship between daughter and mother and capturing unexpected moments that will change Sepideh’s life forever. Shots of breathtaking constellations are windows into Sepideh’s interior world and the vast universe that enthralls her."

**Taskovski Films (Chloe Ruthven)**

**Jungle Sisters**

2015, 80 minutes (50-min. version also available), India & UK

www.taskovskifilms.com/?film=jungle-sisters

*Synopsis from Taskovski’s website:* "In 2008 the Indian government launched an initiative to train 500 million of the rural poor to work in its growing industrial sector. Chloe Ruthven’s thought-provoking film tells the story of two village girls, Bhanu and Bhuntu, whose induction into the working world is overseen by Orlanda, Ruthven’s sister. Orlanda works with a company that places girls into textiles factories to produce clothes for corporate giants such as Gap. As Bhanu and Bhuntu travel to the city to take their places as part of India’s business-friendly future, the reality of life on the factory floor forces all three of them to face questions of social justice, family loyalty and the role of corporate responsibility."

**Women Make Movies (Joanna Lipper)**

**The Supreme Price**

2013, 75 minutes, Nigeria & USA

www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c881.shtml

*Synopsis from WMM online catalog:* “Director Joanna Lipper elegantly explores past and present as she tells the remarkable story of Hafsat Abiola, daughter of human rights heroine Kudirat Abiola and Nigeria’s President-elect M.K.O. Abiola, who won a historic vote in 1993 that promised to end years of military dictatorship. Shortly after the election, M.K.O. Abiola’s victory was annulled and he was arrested. While he was imprisoned, his wife Kudirat took over leadership of the pro-democracy movement, organizing strikes and rallies, winning international attention for the Nigerian struggle against human rights violations perpetrated by the military dictatorship. Because of this work, she too became a target, and was assassinated in 1996. In this riveting political thriller, the Abiola family’s intimate story unfolds against the epic backdrop of Nigeria’s evolution from independence in 1960, through the Biafran War, subsequent military dictatorships, and the tumultuous transition to civilian rule, through the present day, as Hafsat continues to face the challenge of transforming a corrupt culture of governance into a democracy capable of serving Nigeria’s most marginalized population: women.”
Periodical Notes

Special Issues/Thematic Sections

This column highlights special issues or thematic sections of journals that do not otherwise explicitly focus on gender or feminism.


Partial contents: “Women Musicians in British Silent Cinema Prior to 1930,” by Laraine Porter; “To Be a Woman: Female Labour and Memory in Documentary


Section editors: Ingrid van Biezen & Ekaterina R. Rashkova. Publisher: Routledge. ISSN: 0034-4893. Available electronically to licensed users through Taylor & Francis Online.


**SPRING: A JOURNAL OF ARCHETYPE & CULTURE**


Compiled by Ashley Hartman Annis
ITEMS OF NOTE

Thanks to the CAMPUS WOMEN’S CENTER (CWC), here at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, for donating more than a hundred books to the GWS Librarian’s Office in the process of making room for new titles in the CWC’s small lending library at 333 East Campus Mall. While we were picking up the books, we also picked up a copy of the CWC’s debut issue of INTERSECTIONS: A FEMINIST PUBLICATION. Here’s the magazine’s mission statement:

We are a feminist site of expression. We aim to amplify the voices of everyone in our community, through the INTERSECTIONS of your stories, experiences; your innovation, art; your values, beliefs. We are a crowdsourced publication. Our content remains untampered and organic — no editing, no censorship — in order to weave together a more holistic view of feminism. You provide the material; we provide the platform. Join our community; add to the conversation!

For more information, see win.wisc.edu/organization/campuswomenscenter or email cwc.intersections@gmail.com.

HEADMISTRESS PRESS (headmistresspress.blogspot.com) has been publishing books of poetry by lesbians since 2013. Its already impressive list of titles includes On Loving a Saudi Girl, by Carina Yun, I Carry My Mother, by Lesléa Newman, Heaven to Me, by Abe Louise Young, and 15 more. Our office is enjoying yet another product from Headmistress: LESBIAN POET TRADING CARDS! Three different sets are available: get them at squareup.com/store/headmistress-press.

The Debut Issue:
“Out of the Classroom and Into the World”

Miriam Greenwald
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**FROM CURLERS TO CHAINSAWS: WOMEN AND THEIR MACHINES.** Dyer, Joyce, Cognard-Black, Jennifer, and Walls, Elizabeth MacLeod, eds. Michigan State University Press, 2016.


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