

NEW REFERENCE WORKS IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

ANCIENT WOMEN

Sharon L. James & Sheila Dillon, eds., *A COMPANION TO WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. (Blackwell companions to the ancient world.) 656p. bibl. index. \$199.95, ISBN 978-1405192842.

Reviewed by *Connie L. Phelps*

In 1975, Sarah Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*¹ broke ground in the study of women in the ancient world, pulling much relevant information together in one book for the first time. This new volume in Blackwell's *Companions to the Ancient World* series ambitiously sets out "to draw together, in a methodologically self-conscious way, the advances in scholarship since Pomeroy" (p. 1).

Most of what is known about women in antiquity comes from texts or from visual/material evidence (e.g. vases, statues, burial sites). This interdisciplinary collection presents essays on both of those aspects. The editors themselves represent both aspects of the field, with James coming from the textual aspect and Dillon from the visual.

The volume contains thirty-nine essays, some by well-established scholars whose names will be easily recognized by those familiar with the field of women in antiquity, and some by newer scholars. Some of the authors call into question conventional beliefs, and all raise questions about interpreting the available evidence. Because much of the evidence comes from the

citizen or elite classes, the essays mostly focus on these groups.

The volume is divided into five parts, in roughly chronological order, beginning with prehistory and concluding with late antiquity/Christianity. Each of the parts begins with a case study focusing on a single piece of evidence. Part I, "Women Outside Athens and Rome," covers the very earliest periods, including chapters on women in ancient Mesopotamia, women in ancient Egypt, Etruscan women, Minoan and Mycenaean women, and women in Homer. In Part II, "The Archaic and Classical Periods," the eleven essays include "Women and Law," "Women and Medicine," "Approaches to Reading Attic Vases," "Women and Roman Religion." Part III, "Women in a Cosmopolitan World: The Hellenistic and Late Republican Periods" contains ten essays as wide-ranging as "Female Portraiture in the Hellenistic Period" and "Jewish Women: Texts and Contexts." Part IV, "The Beginnings of Empire," the shortest section, has five chapters, including "Women in Augustan Rome" and "Early Imperial Female Portraiture." The eight essays in Part V, "From Empire to Christianity," include "Women in Roman Britain," "Public Roles for Women in the Cities of the Latin West," and "Becoming Christian."

According to the introduction, this volume should be useful to a "wide range of readers, from advanced undergraduates to established scholars." Some of the essays do require familiarity with the subject, while others are more accessible to a less-prepared reader. For example, Maria A. Liston's essay, "Reading the Bones: Interpreting the

Skeletal Evidence for Women's Lives in Ancient Greece," assumes that the reader has no specialized knowledge and addresses questions that arise frequently in class lectures on the subject.

The volume is well documented with sixty pages of references. In addition, each essay has recommended further readings. There is an index of women as well as a subject index. Maps and black-and-white photos are also included. Unfortunately, the pages with maps are unnumbered and untitled, but it is easy to figure out what the maps are from the table of contents.

Note

1. Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books), 1975.

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CONTRACEPTION

Aharon W. Zorea, *BIRTH CONTROL*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood, 2012. (Health and medical issues today.) 216p. index. bibl. \$58.00, ISBN 978-0313362545; e-book, ISBN 978-6613523426.

Reviewed by *Erica Carlson Nicol*

Greenwood's *Health and Medical Issues Today* series offers one-stop informational resources on controversial

areas of health care. In this new volume, however, author Aharon Zorea, although he strives to consider a variety of perspectives, reveals an underlying conservative Catholic viewpoint that is especially disappointing in what purports to be a balanced presentation of differing views on birth control's history and controversies.

The book is divided into three sections: the first discusses the history of birth control in the United States; the second looks at modern controversies surrounding birth control; and the third comprises six appendices containing a selection of primary documents, mostly in excerpted form, that serve as helpful background information on the history and policy treated in the earlier sections of the book.

Section I is a serviceable overview of the history of birth control in the United States. Little time and attention are paid to the earliest forms of birth control, and no indigenous Americans are mentioned at all, but well-known players in early United States movements for and against birth control — Thomas Malthus, Richard Comstock, and Margaret Sanger — are well covered. The chapter on post-1945 birth control policy gives a clear and concise overview of policies and changes from the Eisenhower administration through the Reagan administration, and one of the real strengths of the book lies in Zorea's clear and insightful discussions of the roles and input of the Catholic Church.

Section II, which addresses a broad range of controversies surrounding birth control, is where the author's conservative point of view most visibly shows itself. For example, in his chapter on consumer protection, Zorea notes that, "Regardless of the rhetorical confidence, the truth remains that

there are always side effects from birth control" (p.73), but he spends very little time on medical advances that have led to safer and more effective contraceptives. This omission is especially noticeable as the book is part of a series focused on health and medical issues. In his chapter on government policy, Zorea writes that "[g]overnment-sponsored family-planning programs almost always target the poor" (p. 92), although nowhere in the book is there a discussion of the limitations to contraceptive access faced by women in lower-income groups. These two examples are not isolated; most of the main concerns Zorea raises throughout the book reveal an authorial ambivalence toward birth control.

The conservative viewpoint informing *Birth Control* should make anyone cautious of using it as single, balanced source for information on birth control, but it is highly readable and provides a perspective on birth control seldom seen in academic discourse. If it is read in conjunction with other histories, such as Linda Gordon's *Moral Property of Women*,¹ it may spark valuable conversations and useful debate.

Note

1. Linda Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

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FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Mary McClintock Fulkerson & Sheila Briggs, eds., *THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 600p. bibl. ill. map. index. \$150.00, ISBN 978-0199273881.

Reviewed by Susan Bennett White

Feminist theology was one of several new theologies that began in the 1960s through participation in social movements seeking radical change...The awareness that feminists were working in other religious traditions...led to Christian feminist theology's embrace of inter-religious dialogue and recognition of women of other faiths and post-traditional forms of feminist spirituality. (p. 1)

This *Handbook*...acknowledges the reflection of women on religion beyond the global North and its forms of Christianity, and has therefore chosen globalization as its central theme, as the foremost characteristic of the context in which we do feminist theology today. (p. 2)

Contributors to this volume constitute a formidable panel that represents, most broadly, both the world's religions and the feminist lens. They bring to this task impeccable credentials that include numerous and weighty publications and affiliations at a number of the world's preeminent schools of theology and religion. In twenty-six chapters organized into

three sections, they present a discursive analysis of the many facets of feminist theology and the globalized world that is its context.

Section I, "Feminist Theology at the Crossroads," looks at worldwide communication today enabled by modern technology, and yet strained by different views of what is divine among those engaged in such conversations. Section II, "Changing Contexts," explores, in twelve chapters, particular aspects of the geopolitical context of different global regions. For example, the concluding chapter of this section, "Feminism, Inc.: Globalization and North American Feminist Theologies," has thin religious content, and instead explores what is postulated to be an unethical practice in which corporate America hires feminist scholars to help them create policies to keep their women executives, but then further enslaves lower-level women in these companies. A solution is postulated that "the next generation of ministers and religious scholars can help... these [executive] women sustain and extend their 'work of care'" (p. 341).

The third section, "Changing Contents," looks at the various religious traditions that make up a global theological framework. It looks for traditional commonality and yet also connections to the everyday world, finally turning to a new amalgamation of technology and ritual tradition, where it is postulated that "religious forms now achieve a universal reach... and a ritual's power extends indefinitely across all space..." (p. 558).

This is a true scholarly work, replete with precise and multisyllabic language, with each chapter anchored by long accompanying lists of notes, works cited, and suggestions for further reading. It is exhaustive in its treatment of the complex intersections of feminism, globalizations, and the many

faces of the divine as shown among the world's religions, both formal and folkloric. However, this *Handbook* is not encyclopedic; there are not chapters of uniform organization explaining feminist aspects of first one and then the next theological tradition, and even "globalization" appears in myriad aspects as a highlight and a context rather than as a consistent construct. Even so, among the dozen or so titles dealing with feminist theology that have been published in the last decade, *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology* is highly recommended for theological collections in research libraries, and for the library of any institution beyond the secondary level where theology by any name is taught.

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MARGINALIZED WOMEN

Paula K. Lundberg-Love, Kevin L. Nadal, & Michele A. Paludi, eds., **WOMEN AND MENTAL DISORDERS**. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012. (Women's psychology series.) 4 vols. 815p. \$215.00, ISBN 978-0313393198.

Reviewed by Emily Lawrence

The face of a different woman appears on the cover of each of the four volumes of *Women and Mental Disorders*. These four individual women vary in terms of age, ethnic background, and emotional expression, and they are in a sense emblematic of the inclusive, feminist lens through which the editors and authors of this set view their subject matter.

The titles of the four volumes in this set are (1) *Understanding Women's Unique Life Experiences*; (2) *Roots in Abuse, Crime, and Sexual Victimization*; (3) *Women and Common Mental Disorders*; and (4) *Treatments and Research*. Topics covered within each volume are diverse, yet each volume constitutes a cohesive unit. Volume III, for instance, includes chapters dealing with adolescent cutting, borderline personality disorder, and the causal role of self-silencing in depression.

There is a distinct progression in the set, with the first two volumes focusing largely on socially situating the subject and the latter two dealing more heavily with the diagnosis, details, and treatment of specific conditions in varying contexts. It is important to note, however, that the latter two volumes also incorporate many of the social concerns introduced in the earlier installments; research is richly contextualized and socially conscious. The organization of content underscores the fact that this is not a purely descriptive or clinical set of books. Rather, its editors have made a concentrated effort to curate a collection that undermines hegemonic and patriarchal narratives about women's mental health. A substantial part of this effort involves calling attention to the androcentric, ethnocentric, heterosexist, and ableist views and behaviors that facilitate women's oppression. The authors consistently pay special attention to the social factors and biases that bear on women's experiences of the world, while frequently emphasizing the importance of intersectionality, or the ways in which multiple social designations interact with and inform one another. The editors and authors of *Women and Mental Disorders* understand that women are extraordinarily varied, and that a collection such as this one must aim to acknowledge the diversity of women's lived experiences

if it is to be useful (and successfully avoid gender essentialism).

The editors state in their introduction to the set that their goal is to “stimulate additional research agendas on women and mental disorders and mental health that make all women central, not marginal” (p. xxv). The set is not, then, intended to be a comprehensive resource or an end in itself. Instead, it is the beginning of a complex and worthwhile conversation, an ongoing project that seeks to cultivate open-mindedness, feminist perspectives, socially responsible and phenomenological research, and an end to the androcentric practices that marginalize women and thus do harm to their health.

[Emily Lawrence is a recent M.L.S. graduate of the University of Maryland, where she specialized in information and diverse populations.]

POLITICAL WOMEN

Doris Weatherford, *WOMEN IN AMERICAN POLITICS: HISTORY AND MILESTONES*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2012. 582p. 2 vols. indexes. \$225.00. ISBN 978-1608710072.

Reviewed by Rachel Bicicchi

The annual “Mindset List,” compiled at Beloit College and designed to capture the knowledge and attitudes of each incoming freshman class, included a reference to women in politics this year: “For most of their lives, maintaining relations between the U.S. and the rest of the world has been a woman’s job in the State Department.”¹ For those of us older than eighteen, however, it is easy to remember a time when Secretary of State had never been a women’s job, and what a milestone

it was when Madeline Albright first stepped into the position in 1996.

This volume, as the title suggests, focuses on these milestones, or “firsts” as they might popularly be called, for women in American political history. Nineteen chapters cover women’s participation in a wide variety of political roles, across all branches and levels of government. While information on female governors, Congressional representatives, and Supreme Court justices is readily available from a variety of sources, a concise history of women’s participation in other government roles can be difficult to locate. Author Weatherford, who has penned a variety of reference books about women in politics, has addressed this gap with a variety of chapters on women in state politics, as mayors, as cabinet officials, as judges in the lower courts, and even as party leaders and as convention delegates. One chapter looks at female officeholders prior to the ratification of the nineteenth amendment in 1920.

Every chapter except the last contains a narrative history, followed by extended biographies of two or three women who were discussed in the chapter, as well as suggestions for further reading. A variety of images, tables, and sidebars lend support to the narrative. The final chapter reorganizes much of the material from the previous chapters into state-by-state summaries.

The volume is focused primarily on formal political structures and participation; thus, there is little emphasis, outside of the two chapters on interest groups and political action committees (PACs), on women’s participation in sociopolitical groups or in politically influenced fields such as education or business.

There is little to criticize here, although the previously mentioned chapters on interest groups and PACs contain website links, addresses, and

phone numbers — information that tends to date the items in a collection rapidly. The 2012 election cycle will have further dated the volume, as more women will have entered and left office. However, this should not dissuade many libraries from acquiring this otherwise excellent volume.

Note

1. Tom McBride & Ron Nief, “The Mindset List: 2016 List,” <http://www.beloit.edu/mindset/2016/>.

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RADICAL WOMEN

Paul Buchanan, *RADICAL FEMINISTS: A GUIDE TO AN AMERICAN SUBCULTURE*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011. (Guides to subcultures and countercultures.) 169p. gloss. bibl. index. \$35.00, ISBN 978-1598843569.

Reviewed by Beth Huang

Although the infamous bra burnings at the 1968 Miss America Pageant never happened, the mythical act continues to influence the modern-day perception of the radical and antagonistic feminist protester. *Radical Feminists: A Guide to an American Subculture* does little to debunk this caricature. The title suggests a focus on radical feminism while the text provides an overview of Second Wave feminism and the U.S. women’s liberation movement that broadly addresses both mainstream liberal and radical feminist

movements. Furthermore, Buchanan identifies overarching questions of women's liberation and discusses how answers to these questions based on varying political ideologies and tactical approaches led to the fractionalization of the movement.

Radical Feminists opens with a "Historical Overview" to contextualize the Second Wave U.S. women's liberation movement in the history of earlier political movements, including abolition, Women's Suffrage, American Radical Left and Labor movements of the early twentieth century, and the New Left. In five subsequent chapters, Buchanan addresses the principal components of Second Wave Feminism: main documents and publications, dominant organizations, major protests and events, key issues, and mainstream political action and legislative legacy. A glossary, biographical sketches of prominent radical feminists, and excerpts of primary documents of Second Wave radical feminism follow the five core chapters.

The theme of factionalism between radical feminists and liberal feminists, often rooted in differences in tactics and strategy, recurs throughout *Radical Feminists*. Buchanan subtly favors the institutionalized approach of mainstream feminists over the grassroots direct-action tactics of many more ideologically radical groups. For example, he praises the mainstream National Organization for Women's campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment, but focuses on the antagonistic, "absolute, dogmatic, and disruptive" nature of the radical lesbian-feminist Furies Collective. This perceived favoritism may simply arise from the book's structure. Chapters on grassroots direct action and organizations of radical feminists precede the chapter describing the issues of the U.S. women's liberation movement. Therefore, the descriptions

of various direct actions and radical groups seem to lack context that enriches the chapter focused on mainstream political action.

Overall, *Radical Feminists* may appeal to undergraduate students in introductory-level history and gender and women's studies courses. This work operates as a tertiary source, and beginning researchers may use it, particularly its biographical sketches and excerpts from primary documents, as a resource and jumping-off point to get to more scholarly sources. Furthermore, beginners should be aware of the author's subtle bias toward liberal Second Wave feminists when using this overview.

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TRANSGENDER EDUCATION

Nicholas M. Teich, *TRANSGENDER 101: A SIMPLE GUIDE TO A COMPLEX ISSUE*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. 188p. index. pap., \$20.00, ISBN 978-0231157131.

Reviewed by Nancy M. Lewis

To better understand the viewpoints and experiences of people different from ourselves, we need to be educated about their perspectives. At the same time, it is not the responsibility of those individuals to educate the rest of us. Thus the availability of knowledgeable, readable texts is vital.

Nicholas Teich has provided such a text in *Transgender 101*. Teich, who identifies as transgender, is a licensed social worker and the founder of Camp Aranútiq, a summer camp for transgender youth. He has, in this book, put together a comprehensive overview of information, covering the basic concepts (and issues surrounding

these concepts) of gender orientation, coming out, transition, history, mental health controversies, discrimination, and different transgender categories. While all the information is helpful and up-to-date, his overview of the *DSM-5* controversy provides the clearest seen to date. Also very helpful are the glossary, resource guide, and bibliography at the end of the work.

This is not the first such publication, and mention must be made of Joanne Herman's *Transgender Explained for Those Who Are Not* (2009), which is very similar. But there are some differences, with *Transgender 101* including more historical context and taking a more detached, as opposed to an autobiographical, approach to the subject.

While this title is not a reference book, there are several reference publications that do provide good overviews on transgender topics: *The Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America* (2003); the *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Queer Culture* (2006); the *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender* (2007); and *LGBTQ America Today* (2009). These titles are all recommended for an academic reference collection.

But I strongly recommend this title, perhaps along with Herman's *Transgender Explained*, for libraries at post-secondary institutions of all types. This work transcends disciplines, and provides knowledge that all who live in today's world should have.

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WOMEN READING

Nanci Milone Hill, *READING WOMEN: A BOOK CLUB GUIDE FOR WOMEN'S FICTION*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO/Libraries Unlimited, 2012. 236p. bibl. index. \$35.00, ISBN 978-1591588023.

Reviewed by Carol A. Leibiger

Public library director Nanci Malone Hill begins her book club guide with a declaration of love for women's fiction and women's reading groups as the *raison d'être* for this work. Its purpose is to suggest works of women's fiction and offer tips for their use in book club discussions.

In her brief introductory chapter, Hill explains how she came to her own definition of "mainstream women's fiction" as fiction "that is almost always written by, for, and about women," "deals with issues important in women's lives," and whose resolution makes women stronger people (p. xiii). In the main chapter, "Ninety Titles for Discussion," she provides two to three pages of coverage for each of her selected titles. Every entry contains the following parts: an author biography, plot summary of about five sentences, publication date, length, geographical setting, time period, series notes, subject descriptors, appeal points, discussion questions (focused on the relevant novel and also applying it to readers' lives), the URL of the author's website, availability of a reader's guide, and "read-alikes" (with author, title, and points of similarity, e.g., theme, setting, pacing, humor, etc. listed). A second chapter, "Twenty-Four Additional Women's Fiction, Chicklit, and Romance Titles to Consider for Discussion," offers much briefer entries (authors' names, titles, publication dates, and brief synopses) describing further works that might also interest women's

fiction book clubs. Appendices provide resources for book groups (questions for discussion and [mostly online] reader and book group resources). The book concludes with indices to help readers locate books by subject, author, title, and geographical setting.

Hill's recommendations are predominantly romance or "chicklit" novels published within the last ten years, and she provides much information about her chosen authors and books. Comparing the entries, one wonders where this information was obtained, as there are no sources listed, and some entries, particularly the author biographies, vary in length and degree of completeness. This work could have been more carefully edited; the entries contain typographical errors ("Grace is the married other of three," [p. 53]), odd formulations ("retired Jewish folk" [p. 23]), and questions that exclude certain potential participants. For instance, "Have you ever been invited to an ex-boyfriend's wedding?" (p. 80) seems to exclude all but heterosexual women.

Both selection of included works and lack of inclusiveness are issues of concern. Hill provides no selection criteria for the main entries, the "read-alikes," or the chapter of additional titles. Given that women's reading groups tend to be white and middle-class,¹ the books selected for inclusion do little to move such women out of their "comfort zones," reinforcing both participants' social identities and the sociocultural order with its inherent inequalities, as they include few titles by women of color, immigrant women, or LGBT writers. Additionally, Hill relegates authors like Amy Tan, Laura Esquivel, Louise Erdrich, and Rita Mae Brown to "read-alike" status. Such limited content might make this work appropriate for women's reading groups or fields of study dealing with popular literature. However, its usefulness is

limited for women's and gender studies programs or for reading groups seeking multicultural content that transcends class distinctions.

Note

1. Elizabeth Long, *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. xiii–xiv.

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WRITING WOMEN

Tiffany K. Wayne, ed., *FEMINIST WRITINGS FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE MODERN WORLD: A GLOBAL SOURCE-BOOK AND HISTORY*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood/ABC-CLIO, 2011. 2 vols. 718p. bibl. \$189.00, ISBN 978-0313345807.

Reviewed by Jeanne Armstrong

This is a reasonably comprehensive and global collection of commentary about and excerpts from 203 documents about women's roles, rights, and issues, written over four millennia, primarily by women and from a broad range of "feminist" perspectives. The excerpts are arranged in chronological order, beginning with poems from ancient Sumer, circa 2350 B.C.E., by Enheduanna, and culminating with the general objectives of AWARE (the Association of Women for Action and Research, "the most prominent feminist nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Singapore," p. 680), as stated in AWARE's 2009 constitution.

Editor Tiffany K. Wayne, an independent scholar formerly affiliated with the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Stanford, intends for this work to serve as a recovery of “women’s voices, agency and resistance . . . [and] to open up discussions about feminisms many histories” (p. xliv). Many of the texts are written by authors from the United States and Western Europe, but Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, Western and Northern Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia, Latin American and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, North America (in addition to the authors from the U.S., one contributor is from Canada), Southeast Asia and India, and the “United Nations/International” are all represented. Fiction is not included, but there is some academic theory as well as poetry, autobiography, political, historical, social/cultural essays, and proclamations. More than a hundred scholars from around the world, “historians, sociologists, literary and cultural theorists, religious scholars, writers and activists” (p. xlv), contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the represented documents.

Wayne identifies feminism, or “feminisme,” as a term first used in France in the 1890s, although debates about women’s rights and roles reach back to the fifteenth century. She explains this book’s usage of feminism as a “consciousness that informs a variety of rights movements, social justice efforts and individual awakenings around the world throughout time” and which recognizes that not all women are powerless in patriarchies although “all cultures are patriarchal” (p. xliii). Wayne argues that feminism can’t be dismissed as simply Western and bourgeois, because it appears in different forms in various “specific historical and national contexts” (p. xlii). She also does not pretend to take a neutral or objective stance on the significance of feminism

as a solution to women’s ongoing oppression. She makes a strong statement about the ongoing issues and problems faced by women worldwide:

No nation or culture is exempt from violence against women and rape; many women . . . lack access to affordable and accessible birth control and reproductive information, girls are systematically denied education; in other areas and traditions, women are prevented from leaving the house or engaging in paid work; in the most repressive situations, women and girls are maimed or killed for religious and social transgressions. (p. xlii)

The chronological arrangement of the documents seems appropriate, since this clusters together documents from specific historical feminist and civil rights movements, such as the suffrage movement or the French revolutionary period. Each entry has a biographical note, the document or excerpt, analysis of the text, critical response, and impact and legacy, followed by a “suggested reading” list.

Examples of entries include poetry by Sappho (600 B.C.E.), Yeshe Tsogyal (Tibetan Buddhist, c. 800), and Sor Juana de la Cruz (Mexico, 1692); three documents by women involved in the French Revolution; Margaret Sanger’s “The Case for Birth Control,” 1924; and an excerpt from the 2005 book on female genital mutilation in Europe by Waris Dirie, a model originally from Somalia.

For the Margaret Sanger entry, the biographical section explains her fight for access to contraception in the United States: founding the American Birth Control League and then Planned Parenthood and opening the first “physician-staffed birth control clinic”

(p. 478). The analysis section explains how Sanger shifted her emphasis from on the benefits of birth control for the working class to the benefits for all social classes.

The critical response section of this entry discusses criticism of Sanger initially by physicians, which later decreased when she partnered with medical professionals; criticism by intellectuals that the “white race” would be “outnumbered by minority races”; and the Roman Catholic attack against birth control on moral grounds. In the “impact and legacy” section, commentator Christy Jo Snider describes the role Sanger had in changing birth control from an “illegal and unrecognized medical issue to becoming a standard component of health care services” and in establishing Planned Parenthood as an ongoing advocate for and provider of access to birth control (p. 481).

In addition to the chronological entries, *Feminist Writing from Ancient Times to the Modern World* has an index, a list of entries by region, a topic finder, and a comprehensive bibliography. The topic finder is organized into several broad topics: education and writing; human rights; marriage and motherhood; political and legal rights; race and racism; religion and spirituality; sexuality; and work and economics. Background information on the editor and the contributors is also provided.

This resource is useful for students at the high school and university level as well as for users of public libraries, especially those who need to identify feminist texts on certain topics, from a specific country or region, or created in a particular era/century. The supplementary information interprets the feminist texts and discusses the reception and legacy of the texts, which should be helpful for students in deciding the significance of a specific text within the broad context of feminism in certain periods or countries. Despite

some limitations on what could be included in an anthology that attempts to be so globally comprehensive, this two-volume work should be acquired by most libraries from public to academic, since it has unique coverage of feminist narratives created over four millennia and from around the world.

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Lia Van Gemert et al., eds., **WOMEN'S WRITING FROM THE LOW COUNTRIES, 1200–1875: A BILINGUAL ANTHOLOGY**. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2010. 624p. bibl. index. pap., \$39.50, ISBN 978-9089641298.

Reviewed by Mara M. J. Egherman

Hailed as “the first of its kind” by the publisher, this wide-ranging anthology presents fifty works written by women of the middle ages, early modern, Renaissance, and following periods, up through the late nineteenth century, all residing in what are now The Netherlands and Belgium. The designation “Low Countries,” signifying the low-lying delta of the Rhine, Scheldt, and Meuse rivers, is the proper way to describe this region, because of the “shifting [historical] political boundaries that go with it,” according to Jane Fenolhet, professor of Dutch studies at University College London.¹ Works are presented in chronological order, some translated here for the first time and several in new translations. This reference work, together with its companion volume covering the years 1880–2010,² is a definitive contribution to the field, presenting clear evidence that “there is a serious body

of work in Dutch by women writers spanning the entire history of Dutch literature.”³

Twelve scholars and translators contributed to this project, making it an immense international undertaking. Historian Merry Wiesner-Hanks of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, who herself has a long list of publications in this genre,⁴ summarizes the volume as “stretching from the visions of the late medieval mystics through the prison testaments of sixteenth-century Anabaptist martyrs to the pamphleteers and novelists of the growing urban bourgeoisie. The fresh translations and engaging introductions demonstrate the ways that women in the Low Countries shaped the intellectual and cultural developments of their eras” (quoted on back cover).

The literary entries are described overall in two introductory chapters that further divide the time period roughly at the Reformation, into the periods 1200–1575 and 1575–1875, and contextualize the writings in history and literature. More than fifty authors are represented in the poems, letters, confessions, treatises on education and other topics, autobiographical writings, religious essays, political writings, and arguments for women's recognition and justice for women.⁵ It is noted that one poem, by Margaretha Verboom, serves as literary criticism (rarely penned by women until later periods) of a famous male author, illustrating the feminist spirit that exists in a fair number of other entries as well: “Verboom uses both withering irony and strong arguments from the Bible and literary theory to demolish Vondel's views” (p. 48).

All of the entries, which appear in both Dutch and English on facing pages, are well written by energetic scholars in the field. Notes explain particular poetic references for clarity (see,

for example, p. 293). This volume is a partial revision and expansion of the 1997 *Met en zonder lauwerkrans, Schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550–1850 van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar (With and Without Laurels, Dutch and Flemish Women Writers 1550–1850: from Anna Bijns to Elise van Calcar)*. The editors “revised 41 of the entries from that volume, incorporating work that has appeared since 1997,” and sometimes included new texts (p. 17). All accompanying material, including preface and introductory notes with each entry, is in English only. Black-and-white reproductions of fragments of original texts dot the volume, giving the work somewhat the feel of a primary source archive. Indeed, for undergraduates this is a mine of original source material with which to begin research. Questions in the commentaries spur further investigation. A bibliography that includes “library collections frequently cited” and “electronic resources for Dutch women's literature” (p. 576), as well as separate lists of primary sources (p. 577) and secondary sources (p. 582), will be very valuable to the advanced researcher. Two indexes, one of names and subjects (p. 598) and one of titles and first lines (p. 612), are further helpful tools.

All of the entries are authored by women; a number of them have women as their subject as well. One poem about church bells in Brussels has lines about missions to other women, such as impoverished women and “sinful” women (p. 273). In another, a poet asserts that it is a woman's particular place to describe the Trojan War, which was fought over a woman (p. 305). The editors note the many declarations of longing between women and speculate as to the nature of it, whether deep friendship or lesbian love (see, for example, p. 54).

The Church and literacy were tightly bound for many centuries in Europe, and thus there is much discussion of religion in the book. While many other nations were either Catholic or Protestant by the mid-seventeenth century, the Dutch Republic was tolerant of several faiths (p. 39). Women's religious writing represented a variety of spiritual perspectives. One pair of women, one Catholic and one Protestant, wrote dueling poems to each other during the winter of 1662–1663, each trying to out-flatter the other (p. 286).

This paperbound volume may be purchased by itself, or as part of a set that includes the companion volume covering the years 1850–2010.⁶ Either way, this work is a bargain for any academic library supporting coursework in women's history, European history, intellectual history, history of education, and history of reading. Students and scholars of women's literature and European literature will find it valuable. Libraries affiliated with interdisciplinary women and gender studies departments and programs would benefit from this title, which represents women writers from all (literate) walks of life. For academic or public communities with any connection to Dutch or Flemish culture, this book is essential. Finally, selections might be drawn from this volume for a survey course on world literature.

Societal support for women writers in the Low Countries ebbed and flowed with the political tides during the centuries represented in this work. *Women's Writing from the Low Countries, 1200–1875* offers a new and important treasury of women's lives and writing to ensure that they are remembered. This collected canon may well inspire future writers.

Notes

1. Jane Fenolhet, "Review: (International?) Literary History and Women's Writing," *Journal of Dutch Literature*, v. 2, no. 1 (2011), <http://dpc.uba.uva.nl/jdl/vol02/nr01/art07>.

2. Jacqueline Bel & Thomas Vaessens, *Women's Writing from the Low Countries, 1880–2010: An Anthology* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

3. Fenolhet, paragraph 3.

4. These include *The Renaissance and Reformation: A History in Documents* (2012), *Gender in History: Global Perspectives* (2011), and *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (2008).

5. All fifty works are listed in the book's table of contents on the publisher's website, as of this writing: <http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/W/bo11349033.html>.

6. The companion volume is reviewed by Stacy Russo next in this reference-review column.

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Jacqueline Bel & Thomas Vaessens, eds., *WOMEN'S WRITING FROM THE LOW COUNTRIES, 1880–2010: AN ANTHOLOGY*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2010. 263p. bibl. pap., \$39.50, ISBN 978-9089641939.

Reviewed by Stacy Russo

This reference work provides an impressive example of how much of the rich world of women's literature still remains to be discovered. Bel and Vaessens have assembled biographical portraits of and quoted excerpts from fifty women writers, with the goal of offering "an impression of the vitality of modern Dutch and Flemish literature as a whole" (p. 13). Mixed in with "canonical and forgotten figures" are best-selling writers, poets, and political commentators who demonstrate the "great dynamism and diversity" of the region. The editors explain that their "aim was to show the wide variety of roles played by female authors in the last hundred and fifty years, in literature and as public intellectuals, in social debate" (p. 13).

The fifty biographical portraits are arranged in chronological order, beginning with Virginie Loveling (1836–1923), who is "regarded as an intellectual prodigy" (p. 19), and concluding with Naima El Bezaz (1974–), who is described as "by far the best-known writer of Moroccan extraction in the Netherlands" (p. 243). The biographies are, on average, three to four pages long, and most include a picture of the writer. The individual contributors who wrote the biographies are named, but the book provides no further information about them.

Many of the entries offer some information about the women writers' personal lives, but the main focus is, as it should be, on these women's writing, and many entries include excerpts

from the writer's work. The brief title of each portrait provides a statement about the woman's life and work. Some of these titles offer a clear introduction, while others are more mysterious and require reading the whole entry for context. For example, Carry van Brugen (1881–1932) is described in a straightforward manner in her entry's title as a "Modernist Philosopher and Questing Opponent of Dogmatism," whereas the title for Doeschka Meijsing (1947–) is considerably more vague: "Death, Loss, Betrayal."

Of course, these short biographical portraits are limited. They are like appetizers, providing just enough to intrigue readers to go beyond the book to discover more. Supplemental material follows the entries, including a "Concise List of Works Quoted" and a secondary bibliography. Librarians at colleges and universities that offer courses in Dutch literature will surely want to add this title. Others will want to determine whether a reference work on women writers from this region will meet the curricular needs of students in literature and women's studies courses at their institutions.

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WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Sylvia Engdahl, ed., *THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT*. Detroit, MI: Greenhaven Press, a part of Gale Cengage Learning, 2012. (Perspectives on modern world history.) 218p. bibl. index. \$42.45, ISBN 978-0737757903.

Reviewed by Nancy Nyland

The movement for women's equality cannot possibly be summed up

in 218 pages, but this volume does a creditable job of covering the most important events, mainly in the United States from the 1960s forward. Recognizable names like Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem are included, but other major activists during the same time period, such as Bella Abzug, are barely mentioned.

The story of the movement is told in the activists' own words through original documents, essays and personal narratives, beginning with the Statement of Purpose of the National Organization for Women (NOW) when it was formed in 1966. Historic documents include 1970 Congressional testimony by Gloria Steinem and a Shirley Chisholm speech to Congress in 1969 arguing for the enactment of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Beloit College's "Mindset List" points out that for the class of 2016, women "have always piloted war planes and space shuttles."¹ These students will benefit from the introduction and first two chapters, which explain the status of women in previous decades, reviewing the movement toward equality from the beginning of the twentieth century and providing context for the subsequent chapters. College students who were born in 1994, twelve years after the time limit for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) expired, will find an overview of the ratification effort reprinted from the Library of Congress *American Memory*.

The global women's liberation movement is acknowledged by documents from the United Nations and UNESCO. One personal narrative recounts a visit with Swedish feminists in the 1970s who "believed they didn't need one [a liberation movement] since they were so far ahead of everyone else in the 'sex role' debate" (p. 131). The chapter on CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, in-

troduces students to the International Bill of Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women (CWS). Interestingly, it does not mention that the United States has not ratified CEDAW.

No overview of the movement would be complete without Phyllis Schlafly's 1970s argument against women's equality and the ERA (see her reprinted article beginning on p. 116). In their attempt to provide an equal number of voices against women's equality, the editors excerpted the writings of libertarian economist Murray Rothbard, who called activists "viragoes" (p. 84) and "harridans" and their male supporters "spineless" (p. 85.) Rothbard argued that women's lower wages can be accounted for by time taken away from careers to raise children; that "most women prefer to be homemakers" (p. 88); that the idea of equally shared housework and child rearing is "absurd" (p. 92); and that it is really men who are oppressed.

The general reading level is aimed at high school students. Such a very brief overview would be a starting point only for those with virtually no knowledge of the history of the women's liberation movement. College students should be consulting broader and deeper sources. Recommended for middle school/high school, but not for college-level students.

Note

1. See item 23 on the list at www.beloit.edu/mindset/2016.

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