

## Book Reviews

### **Database: Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600–2000**

<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/was2>

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This collection is a joint imprint of the Center for the Historical Study of Women and Gender at the State University of New York, Binghamton, and Alexander Street Press of Alexandria, Virginia. The collection is edited by Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, both at the Center for the Historical Study of Women and Gender at the State University of New York at Binghamton. Sales and trial access to the collection are handled by Alexander Street. Contact [sales@alexanderstreet.com](mailto:sales@alexanderstreet.com) for more information.

This once-pioneering website has evolved under the aegis of its founders, Professors Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, into the largest and most useful database in US women's history. Far more comprehensive than any other website in the field, the WASM is not only the biggest, but far and away the best, using a method of organization that benefits students, teachers, and scholars alike. Continuing to grow at the rate of about 5000 new pages annually, the database is a premier resource in American history and teaching methodology, as well as the history of women in the United States.

The original conception of the project in 1997 at the State University of New York in Binghamton proved remarkably effective and is still the model today. Scholars and their students create Document Projects, which provide introductory material, primary sources, helpful web links, and a bibliography organized around a question in US women's history. To date, 90 of these Document Projects exist and six more are being added each year. Beginning with a useful overview project, 'What are Social Movements and What is Gendered about Women's Participation in Social Movements? A Sociological Perspective', the list ranges with a few early exceptions from the early nineteenth century to the late twentieth.

'How Did Lucretia Mott Combine Her Commitments to Antislavery and Women's Rights, 1840–1860?' brings the talents of Beverly Palmer, the editor of Mott's letters, and Carol Faulkner, writing a new Mott biography, to examine an aspect of the career of one of the most influential and under-studied early women's rights activists. The introductory essay argues that Mott's inclusive outlook, shaped

by her radical Quakerism, led her to see most contemporary reform movements as one concerted effort for human rights. Providing 15 of Mott's letters, a biographical dictionary identifying every person mentioned, and a variety of useful web links, this Document Project sheds light on an important question while providing scholars and students with previously inaccessible primary documents.

'How and Why Did the Guerrilla Girls Alter the Art World Establishment in New York City, 1985–1995?' sites this subversive, influential group of feminist artists and critics within the Women's Liberation Movement and the art scene of the day. It provides a number of their consciousness-raising posters as well as photographs of these radicals who chose anonymity behind their gorilla masks. It also contains links to, amongst others, the Guerilla Girls' website and the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

New Document Projects are published in online issues of the WASM scholarly journal. Volume 13, no. 1, March 2009 included 'How Did Women's Anti-Slavery Fiction Contribute to Debates about Gender, Slavery and Abolition, 1828–1856?', 'How Did American and Japanese Gender Hierarchies Shape Japanese Women's Participation in the Transnational WCTU Movement in the 1880s?', and a Document Archive of the Progressive Era reformer Elizabeth Glendower Evans. All Document Projects and Document Archives are accessible through the well-designed Browse features of the database, which enable one to search chronologically, biographically, by subject, text, keyword, or movement.

These features alone would make for an invaluable scholarly resource, but in addition, the database now incorporates both Harvard's *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* and the US Commission on the Status of Women database, about 90,000 pages documenting women's issues across the nation between 1961 and the present. Currently WASM is working on 'Women's International Agendas, 1840–2000', an immense project providing a digital archive of internationalism in US women's activism. Most importantly, the sensible, user-friendly organization of WASM makes working with this tremendous body of material easy. As the helpful introduction, 'Navigating Women and Social Movements', states, there is no single 'best way' to use this database, since purposes will differ. I plunged in by researching Ernestine Rose, an early women's rights activist. Her birthplace and date, place of death and date, gender, nationality, ancestry, race, religion, and occupation were all given. Her organizational affiliations with women's organizations and 26 speeches and letters, originally published in women's rights convention proceedings and Stanton, Anthony and Gage's *History of Woman Suffrage* were provided, as were the full citations of the sources for these works.

Like any intellectual endeavor, the WASM site has its limits. Rose's marriage, motherhood, places she lived, and even her one book, *In Defense of Atheism*, are not listed. Her institutional affiliations to atheist groups she belonged to in the USA and Britain are not mentioned, perhaps because they did not constitute a social movement. But the quality of the entries is very high and gives a rich starting point for further work.

Although WASM is billed as extending from 1600 to 2000, it is strongest in the twentieth century. Its quality, scope and utility make me hope that it will soon be extended

to do as thorough a job on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. This invaluable resource is the jewel in the crown of women's history websites. Its progenitors and contributors are to be congratulated for providing a model in a new medium.

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### **Behind Enemy Lines. Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War**

JULIETTE PATTINSON

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007

Pp. xv + 236. £55.00. ISBN 978 0 7190 7569 8

The Special Operations Executive (SOE) was designed to engage in sabotage and subversion and the focus of this book is the agents who operated in Occupied France building resistance, planting and conducting sabotage missions, and acting as wireless operators, liaison agents or couriers. Interestingly, the SOE was not supposed to recruit French nationals as these were directed to work for de Gaulle, so the organisation sought to identify and engage individuals with enough French to allow them to survive in wartime France in the hope that they would succeed in passing unnoticed by the Germans. Some 480 of these agents were sent to France during the war and made a significant contribution to augmenting and facilitating the Resistance. While only 39 of the 480 agents were women, the focus of popular memory through filmic and other representations has been more on the contribution of women than of men.

Pattinson sets out to reread the experiences of these SOE agents through the lens of gender with a view to analysing how notions of masculinity and femininity shaped their participation in war. For example, she charts the gendered nature of recruitment and explores the gender assumptions embedded in their training programme which, unsurprisingly, was often discriminatory. While men normally emerged as 'leaders', women found that they were expected to perform on a par with them as far as physical training was concerned and often struggled to do so. By presenting facts like these, and in particular, through her exploration of action in the field, Pattinson brings to light many fascinating details relating to how these agents experienced these operations in gender terms. Her discussion of how women acted as wireless operators and couriers, activities to which they were considered best suited, suggests important comparisons with the vibrant body of work which exists on women in the French Resistance, much of which is now available in English. Using their work on notions of resistance and on the role of women in clandestine organisations, feminist scholars of France have elaborated important theoretical arguments relating to gender and war. Pattinson is extremely well placed to engage fully with these debates by mobilising this SOE material.