

# WOMEN at the CENTER

Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture  
David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

Issue 34, Fall 2018

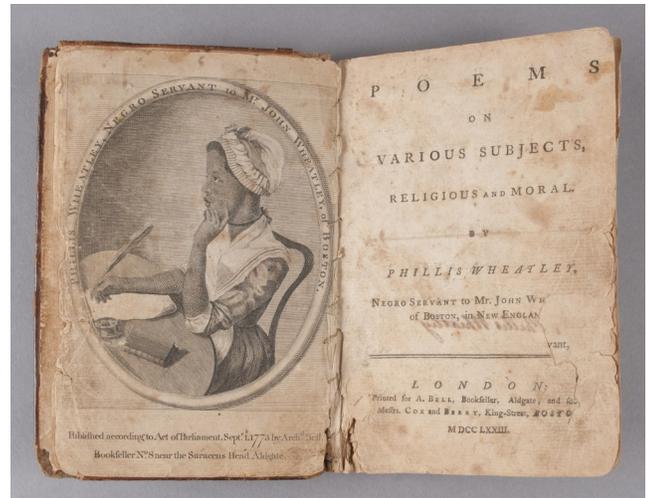
## “Five Hundred Years of Women’s Work: The Lisa Unger Baskin Collection” on Exhibit

An exhibition of nearly 240 works from the collection, “500 Years of Women’s Work: The Lisa Unger Baskin Collection,” introduces Baskin’s collection to the public for the first time. It will be accompanied by a full-color catalogue designed by Miko McGinty and Rita Jules.

The exhibition will open in the Rubenstein Library on February 27, 2019, with a public event, “A Conversation with Lisa Unger Baskin.” On April 15 and 16 the Rubenstein Library will host a symposium to celebrate the exhibition and collection. Anthropologist, museum director, and college president Dr. Johnnetta Cole will deliver a keynote address. Presenters, who will explore the social history significance of the Baskin Collection, will offer perspectives from a range of disciplines, from micro-history and economics to cultural and visual studies, Afrofuturism, science and technology studies, critical theory, and gender and sexuality studies. They will include scholars such as Courtney Baker, Britt Rusert, Thomas Robisheaux, Genna Miller, and Fiona Brideoake.

Prior to its arrival at Duke University, this had been a private collection accessible only to the fortunate students and scholars invited to visit Lisa Baskin’s library. This exhibition and accompanying catalogue provide a first glimpse of the diversity and depth of the collection, revealing the lives of women both famous and forgotten and paying tribute to their accomplishments.

After the Duke exhibition concludes on



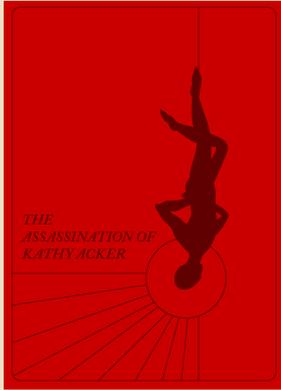
***Poems on various subjects, religious and moral by Phillis Wheatley, Negro servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston, in New England. London: Printed for A. Bell, bookseller, Aldgate, and sold by Messrs. Cox and Berry, King-Street, Boston, MDCCLXXIII [1773].***

June 15, 2019, it will travel to New York City, opening at the Grolier Club on December 10, 2019 and closing on February 8, 2020. On January 21, 2020 a symposium at the Grolier Club organized by the Rubenstein Library will celebrate the collection and exhibition. This gathering will explore women’s contributions to book collecting and book history. Speakers at this symposium represent a constellation of professions, from rare book and manuscript sellers to book designers, artists, art historians, curators, and librarians. They will include Elizabeth Cumming, Ann Gordon, Liz Denlinger, Peter Stallybrass, and others. Dr. Nell Irvin Painter, artist and renowned scholar of African American history, will provide the keynote.

### Inside this issue:

- Five Hundred Years of Women’s Work 1
- Two New Scrap-books on Women and Health 2
- Sinister Wisdom Comes Home to Durham 2
- Collection Highlight 2
- Profiles in Research: Molly Brookfield 3
- Fall Instruction 3
- Save the Dates: Exhibits and Events 4

## Collection Highlight



### Guillotine chapbooks and broadsides, 2012-2018

A complete set of hand-bound chapbooks and broadsides produced by the press of New York-based author, editor, and publisher Sarah McCarry. The chapbook series focuses on speculative fiction and radical nonfiction, especially work that is explicitly queer, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial. *The Assassination of Kathy Acker* by Matias Viegner is pictured above.

## Two New Scrapbooks on Women and Health

The Sallie Bingham Center recently acquired two fascinating new scrapbooks related to women's health, one celebrating an important professional achievement and the other documenting one woman's experience of her hysterectomy.

In collaboration with the John Hope Franklin Research Center and the History of Medicine Collection, we have acquired a scrapbook created by Florence Gaynor, who was the first African American woman to head a major municipal hospital, as well as the first black woman to lead a major teaching hospital. When she first applied to the nursing school at Jersey City Medical Center after graduating high school at 15, she was told that African Americans weren't allowed. To support her family, she instead took a job at a doll factory, but persisted in her aspiration to become a nurse, applying to the nursing school at Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx, receiving her R.N. in 1946.

In February 1971, Gaynor was appointed executive director of Harlem's Sydenham Hospital, and in August 1972 she was appointed the chief administrator of Newark, New Jersey's Martland Hospital of the State Medical School, the largest hospital in New Jersey at the time. This scrapbook cele-

brates those appointments and the support she received from her community. There are nearly 150 congratulatory letters, notes, cards and telegrams.

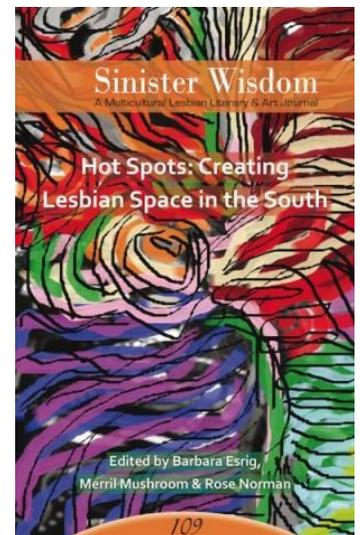
While many letters are from fellow hospital administrators, a number are from African American organizations such as Utility Club, Inc., the Jersey City NAACP, Emanuel Baptist Church of Long Island, and the Metropolitan Committee of 100, Inc. The common thread is the pride felt by many at this important accomplishment.

In collaboration with the History of Medicine Collection, we purchased the Ada Ruth Slater Scrapbook, 1947, Dallas, TX. This piece documents Ms. Slater's experience of having a hysterectomy, including correspondence and mounted mementos, such as the canceled check paying the surgeon, her insurance card, and a *Saturday Evening Post* article from June 1947 on the utility of the hysterectomy—"This is the operation that has done so very much to keep women—usually in their early forties—from becoming known as 'ailing females.'" The candid nature of the letters and the humor in many of them offer a snapshot of this particular experience not commonly documented in such detail.

## Sinister Wisdom Comes Home to Durham

On Thursday, September 29, over 100 people gathered at the Regulator Bookshop on Ninth Street in Durham to celebrate the release of the latest issue of *Sinister Wisdom*, "Hot Spots: Creating Lesbian Space in the South."

The line-up of local speakers featured a number of friends of the Bingham Center, including Mandy Carter, Mab Segrest, Nancy Blood, Laurel Ferejohn, Laurie Fuchs, Sherri Zann Rosenthal, Jaye Vaughan, Lynn Hicks, Dale Wolf, Lucy Harris, and Babs Brown. *Sinister Wisdom* is a multicultural lesbian literary and art journal, founded in 1976 by Catherine Nicholson and Harriett Desmoines, who served as editors for the first five years of publication.



# “Why Are You Constantly Harassing Us on the Street?”

## Profiles in Research: Molly Brookfield

*Contributed by Molly Brookfield, a Ph.D. candidate in the departments of History and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan. She is writing a dissertation about the history of sexual harassment in public places in the United States. Her research at the Sallie Bingham Center was funded with a Mary Lily Research Grant.*

Imagine you are a young woman walking down the street on a sunny summer day in New York City. The sidewalk is crowded with people and you are thinking about the day ahead. You're so absorbed in your thoughts that the shouted remark from a fellow passer-by jolts you unpleasantly back to your surroundings. The remark comes from a man who is also hurrying down the sidewalk. Maybe he shouts, “Looking good, honey!” or “How's it going, sweetheart?” The specifics of the remark aren't what's important; it's enough to know that he's tried to grab your attention in a loud and public way that has startled you and forced you to acknowledge his presence. Annoyed, you turn to face the man, reach into your bag, and grab hold of a stack of cards you've had made for this occasion. You hand a card to the catcaller, and his eyebrows arch as he reads the first lines: “Brother, I feel insulted and oppressed by your comment. You and men like you make it unpleasant and difficult for all of us women, including your mothers, sisters and daughters, to leave our houses alone. Why are you constantly harassing us on the street?”

This was the tactic taken by New York feminist Marigold Arnold in 1971. That summer, Arnold handed mimeographed cards to men who harassed her in the street and the Women's Health and Abortion Project published the full text in their newsletter—which is where I found it, while visiting the Sallie Bingham Center on a Mary Lily Research Grant. According to

her mimeographed card, Arnold wanted men who catcalled to know that they “interrupt . . . [women's] train of thought when we are walking alone, acting as though simply because you are a male we will be honored by your talking to us.” But Arnold was adamant, “We don't feel honored.” In distinctly 1970s-flavored rhetoric, Arnold's card declares, “The road of true liberation for all people is for each of us to struggle against oppressing our brothers and sisters. No more oppressive comments to women on the street.”

Arnold's mimeographed statement was just one way that New York women resisted sexual harassment on the street in the 1970s. The New York Radical Feminists (NYRF) had a Street Harassment Committee that held self-defense workshops. Women raised awareness of street harassment with poems, stories, and cartoons in the group's newsletter. In 1976, members organized a Women's Walk Against Rape, similar to the more recent Take Back the Night marches. When one of their members was harassed in Zabar's, a deli on Broadway, the NYRF even started a blacklist of New York businesses where male employees harassed women.

These documents illustrate that women have experienced sexual harassment in public places since at least the 1970s (and my dissertation will show it has been a problem for much longer). While the New York Radical Feminists did not completely succeed in eradicating street harassment, their work can be viewed as a precursor and inspiration to groups like Hollaback! or Stop Street Harassment, work that is increasingly relevant as we continue to grapple with the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in American society.

All materials cited here can be found in the New York Radical Feminists Records.

### Fall Instruction

#### American Culture Wars

English (Meredith College)

#### Building Feminist Worlds

Writing 101

#### Imperial Laboratories

History

#### Men, Women, and Sports

History

#### Photography and Anthropology

Writing

#### Sexual Health

Student-led course

#### Women and the Political Process

Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies

#### Women and Popular Culture

Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies

#### Women in the Economy

Economics

#### Zines

Communication Studies (UNC Chapel Hill)

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## Save the Dates for Five Hundred Years of Women's Work: the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection

Duke University Libraries, Durham, NC:

February 27, 2019 A Conversation with Lisa Unger Baskin  
Holsti-Anderson Room, Rubenstein Library

February 28–  
June 14, 2019 Exhibition open to the public

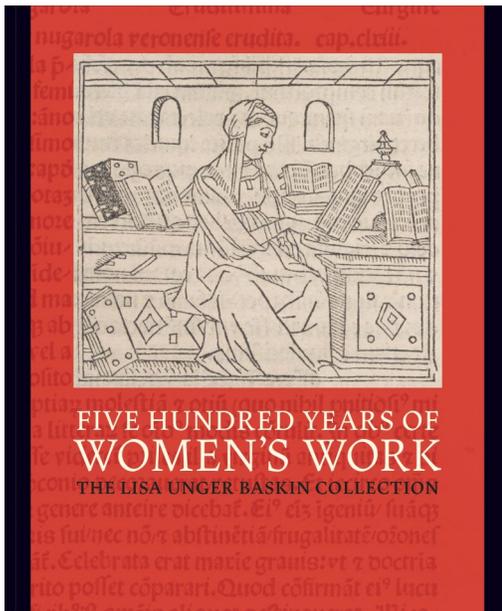
April 15–16, 2019 Symposium on Women Across the Disciplines  
Keynote by Dr. Johnnetta Cole

Grolier Club, New York, NY:

December 10, 2019 Exhibition Opening Reception

Dec 11, 2019 Exhibition open to the public  
– Feb 8, 2020

January 21, 2020 Symposium on Women in the Book Arts  
Keynote by Dr. Nell Irvin Painter



<http://bit.ly/LisaBaskin>