

WOMEN at the CENTER

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

Issue 36, Fall 2019

Inside Story+ From a Student's Perspective

*Contributed by Sonia Fillipon,
T '20, Public Policy Intern*

This summer, I participated in a Story+ project through the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute, sponsored by the Bingham and Hartman Centers. Through an online interactive exhibit, our project documented the turbulent relationship among women within and depicted by the advertising industry and feminist movements in the mid-20th century.

Our team spent the first month immersed in the archives, exploring print advertisements, feminist pamphlets, company files, correspondence and more. As a first-time archival researcher, this process was



**Virginia Slims ad, 1971,
from the Richard Pollay
Tobacco Industry
Promotion Collection**

both exciting and daunting, full of uncertainty as well as unexpected discoveries. We dedicated the second month to building our website and curating materials from the Hartman and Bingham Centers into digital exhibits. We divided our site into three sub-exhibits focusing on the intersection of the representation of women in advertising with themes of employment, motherhood, and technology.

I was particularly fascinated by how demographic and social change associated with the growing number of women in the workforce and the women's liberation movement was reflected and co-opted by advertisements.

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Profiles in Research: Kathy Acker, A Punk Female Divine

*Contributed by Chiara Amoretti, Ph.D.
candidate, University of Bristol, U.K.*

After receiving a Mary Lily Research Grant, I travelled to Duke University to conduct research for my doctoral dissertation, a study on modern and contemporary women writers and the creation of a female divine. My project focuses on three authors, including Kathy Acker, so I was excited to have the opportunity to consult the Kathy Acker Papers housed here at the Rubenstein Library. The collection includes notebooks, drafts, typescripts, annotations, correspondence and much more. My research goal was to find any

evidence that Acker engaged with religion and religious discourse or texts, but more importantly how she engaged with these. To better understand her fragmented use of such works, I wanted to see how Acker had originally inserted them into her texts.

In order to do this, I studied the many notebooks containing Acker's drafts for her novels and other unpublished material. Her drafts amazed me, not just for the evidence of relentless work and self-editing that she put her writing through, but especially for the many different uses of heterodox religious language that appear

(Continued on page 2)

Exploring Art and Architecture
Art, Art History, and Visual Studies

HIV & AIDS in Literature and Culture
Writing 101

Introduction to the Writing of Poetry
English

The Value of Love: Global Perspectives on Economies of Care
Bass Connections and Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies

Women and Western Medicine
Writing 101

Women in the Economy
Economics

Women in Visual Arts
Art, Art History, and Visual Studies

I tracked the evolution of women in advertising over the course of several decades: from the “pathological housewives” and sex objects of the ’60s to the “superwoman” of the ’70s and ’80s. I was struck by how slow advertisers were to pick up on cultural and demographic shifts among American women. When women were presented outside of sexualized and housewife tropes, they were often cast in new stereotypes, representing little more than superficial change. The most prevalent stereotype, typified by the 1973 Enjoli perfume ads, and dubbed by advertising critic Jean Kilbourne as “superwoman,” established unrealistic standards for women to

effortlessly excel in the workplace while still serving their families at home--despite the institutionalized and socially engrained obstacles stacked against them.

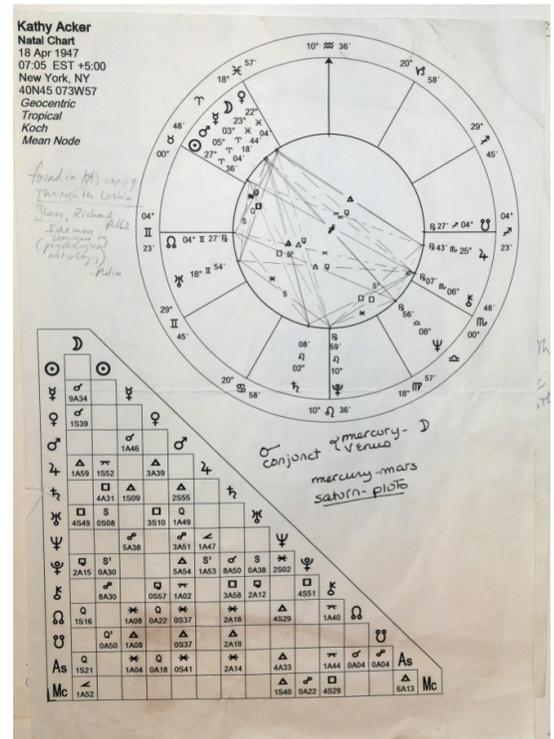
One of the highlights of this project was bringing the archives to life through interviews with Dr. Jean Kilbourne and Caroline Bien, two women who have worked extensively around advertising, and whose papers are held by the library. Having the opportunity to interact directly with women with such immense experience and depth of knowledge in the field of women and advertising was both informative for our project and personally rewarding.

sites.duke.edu/womenandadvertising/exhibits/women-in-advertising

Profiles in Research *continued from page 1*

therein. I was particularly struck to find one of her notebooks containing a discussion of her cancer treatment, in an extended metaphor, as a Shamanic initiation rite. This seems to highlight the spiritual significance, for Acker, of her choice of alternative medicine, and a way to reclaim her lived experience in response to her diagnosis.

The archive also illuminated my understanding of Acker’s fascination with parareligious activities and discourses. Her interest in astrology, which her published work hints at, takes on deeper meaning after seeing the natal charts of herself, and other people in her life, that Acker consulted. This shows her attachment to diverse forms of spiritual meaning-making, especially towards the end of her life. My visit to the Kathy Acker Papers has been invaluable for my research, revealing many unexpected ways in which Acker devised her own spiritual narrative experimentation.



“Natal Charts,” Kathy Acker Papers

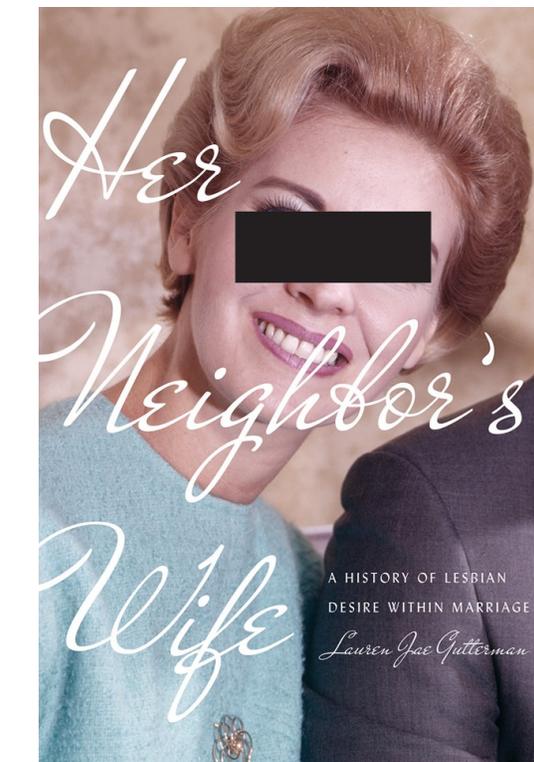
Featured on the Devil’s Tale Blog: blogs.library.duke.edu/rubenstein

Her Neighbor's Wife: New in Print

In the Spring 2014 issue of *Women at the Center*, Dr. Lauren Jae Gutterman shared a preview of her research supported by a 2013 Mary Lily Research Travel Grant. At that time she was developing a book manuscript about the personal experiences and public representation of wives who desired women between 1945 and 1985. Her new book, *Her Neighbor's Wife: A History of Lesbian Desire Within Marriage* was published by University of Pennsylvania Press in November 2019.

In her previous article she wrote, “Historians are aware of the fact that unprecedented numbers of married women began to recognize their same-sex desires—often through their participation in the feminist movement—and leave their marriages for new lesbian lives in the 1970s. The details of this transition, however, are typically glossed over in oral histories and memoirs that conform to strict script of oppressive marriages and liberating lesbian love.”

While reviewing materials from the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance and from the papers of Kate Millett, Robin Morgan, and Minnie Bruce Pratt, she found evidence of the complexities women during this time period had to navigate. She found Minnie Bruce Pratt’s private and published writings to be particularly poignant as they documented her experiences as a married mother who began a relationship with another woman. Gutterman writes, “Though Pratt did ultimately divorce, the emotional and intellectual struggles documented in her journals undermine any no-

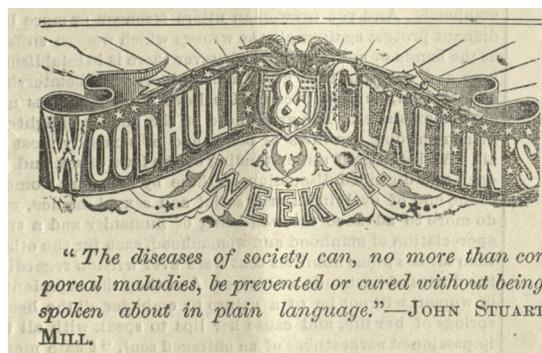


Her Neighbor's Wife: A History of Lesbian Desire Within Marriage (2019)

tion that the transition from wife to out lesbian was simple or inevitable.”

Through the Bingham Center’s Mary Lily Research Travel Grant program we meet a wide range of researchers and see the beginning of many intriguing projects. Though the publishing process can be long, it is rewarding to see new works published based on research on our archival collections.

Dr. Gutterman is currently an Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin and co-host of the podcast “Sexing History.”



Collections Highlight

Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly. New York: Feb. 1873–June 1876. (40 issues)

Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly was a radical, woman-run newspaper that became one of America’s most notorious publications during the second half of the 19th century. Victoria Woodhull (1838–1927) and her sister Tennessee Claflin (1845–1923) founded the newspaper in 1870.

The *Weekly* covered a wide array of topics ranging from women’s suffrage, sexual education, spiritualism, feminism, vegetarianism, anti-clericalism, and communism, to free love. The sisters also founded the first woman-run brokerage firm on Wall Street, and Woodhull became the first woman nominated to run for president of the U.S.

Duke is the only institution in the Southeast with listed holdings of this publication.

Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly, March 6, 1875

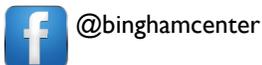
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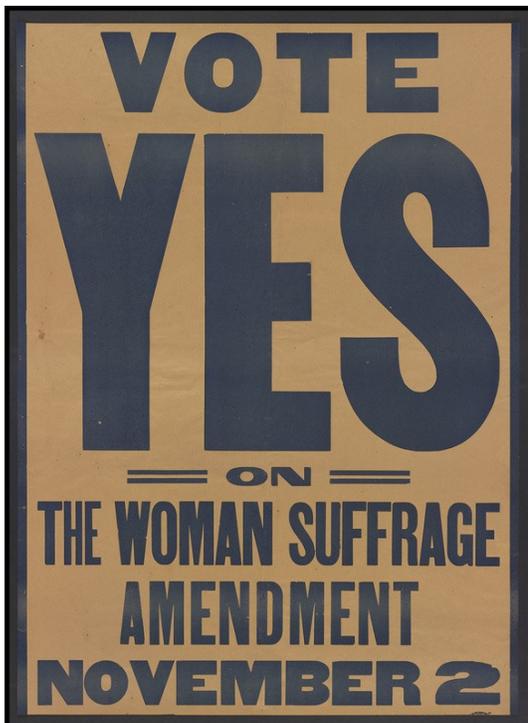
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Vote Yes poster, [Empire State Campaign Committee,
c. 1915] from the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection

One Hundred Years of Women's Suffrage

The year 2020 is the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment granting suffrage for white women in the United States. The activist struggle for the legal right to vote in the U.S. and the U.K. is well represented in the exhibition *Five Hundred Years of Women's Work: The Lisa Unger Baskin Collection*. This exhibit will be on display at the Grolier Club in New York from December 11, 2019 through February 8, 2020.

Copies of the exhibit catalog are available for purchase through Oak Knoll Books: bit.ly/LUBcatalog.

Grolier Club, New York, NY

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|---------------------------------|--|
| December 11, 2019 | Exhibit Reception |
| Dec. 11, 2019
– Feb. 8, 2020 | Exhibition open to the public |
| January 21, 2020 | Symposium on Women in the Book Arts
Keynote by Dr. Nell Irvin Painter |

Online Exhibit and Event Details: bit.ly/LUBexhibit