



Book Reviews

Just Advocacy? Women's Human Rights, Transnational Feminisms, and the Politics of Representation. Edited by Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. 2005. 310 pp. \$24.94.

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The transnational dimensions of women's rights are an important emerging area of analysis. *Just Advocacy?* provides timely and critical insights into this area of study. This edited book is unique in that it applies a cultural lens to the study of political questions relating to rights, transnationalism, and representation, questions which are conventionally conceived through legal, institutional, or social movement theories. The critical feminist stance of the authors draws out the complex and often contradictory nature of human rights—especially as they relate to the operation of gender and to women's lives—and conceives of both feminism and transnationalism in diverse ways.

A major focus of the book is on the way rights discourse, and the activists who shape this discourse, are constructed through culture. The cultural forms considered include literature (Leigh Gilmore, Chapter 4; Arabella Lyon, Chapter 7); the press (Introduction; Susan Koshy, Chapter 3; Lyon, Chapter 7); video (Wendy Hesford, Chapter 6) and education (Jill Blackmore, Chapter 10). Together these chapters emphasize the role of culture as a repository for human rights; they suggest that through an analysis of cultural forms, it is possible to find a deep and nuanced account of the meaning of human rights in daily life that is not always possible in a more conventional treatment of human rights. Gilmore's chapter on the use of autobiography to explore the trauma of rights violations demonstrates this point very well. As her discussion illustrates, personal testimonials, such as autobiography, memoirs, and

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essays, provide an extrajudicial means for truth telling, providing witness to violations, and seeking justice for injuries. Similarly, Sidonie Smith's chapter on the experiences of Korean women narrating their stories of sexual servitude during World War II illustrates how powerful culture can be as a medium for exploring human rights violations.

An advantage of the cultural approach to women's human rights is that it allows for a critical assessment of the notion of rights, including their universality. Many chapters in the book demonstrate clearly the double-edged nature of human rights as they apply to transnational gender issues. While on the one hand, the discourse of human rights provide a common language for feminists to speak to one another across cultures, on the other, "rights speak" can establish hierarchies among feminists, as well as frame certain women as "victims" and others as "saviors." This tension is particularly well highlighted in Smith's account of Korean women narrating their stories in the United States and in Amy Farrell and Patrice McDermott's description of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) and U.S.-based feminists. In telling their stories of surviving brutal regimes, these women have been able to find a ready audience in their feminist counterparts in the United States. In doing so, however, they have also found themselves cast as victims and often stripped of their agency. Hesford's chapter on global sex work further reinforces the point of how easily human rights discourse, especially around gender issues, can slide into the language of victimization.

While most of the chapters are wary of the emancipatory and universal claims made by some human rights advocates, an underlying theme of the book is that it is nevertheless necessary and important for feminists to engage with and use human rights discourse in order to make it more relevant to women's lives. Madhavi Sunder draws out this point in her chapter about the work of the feminist rights network, Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), which operates through cultural communities to challenge religious fundamentalism. Activists working through WLUML have pushed to ensure that human rights are reconceived so that they address all so-called private matters, including religion and culture, in ways that enable women to participate in the framing of these matters. Similarly, Mary Margaret Fonow argues in her chapter that with more careful attention to the different position of women across economies and their varied experiences of globalization, human rights discourse can be used as a tool for developing transnational female worker solidarity.

Various aspects of this book will satisfy some readers but be a source of frustration for others. First, the editors deliberately leave some of the key terms—including transnationalism, feminism, and representation—undefined or only loosely so. With authors coming from multidisciplinary backgrounds, this means that these terms are understood and applied very differently throughout the book. While there are some advantages in not imposing strict interpretations of these terms, it does contribute to a sense of disconnection between some of the chapters. Another issue, again stemming from the multidisciplinary approaches used, relates to the application of different methodologies. Many of the chapters focus on textual interpretations rather than empirical investigations of sources. While this will sit comfortably with cultural studies scholars, it may be a source of frustration for those coming from a social science background who prefer to see arguments supported by concrete data. Those chapters employing social science methods, such as those by Fonow, Lyon on missing women and the U.S. press, and Meredith Raimondo on gender and sexuality at the United Nations, were for me some of the more persuasive in the book.

Having said this, two of these empirical chapters included some basic errors. Lyon's conflation of human rights covenants and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and her claim that covenants are not law (p. 184) need to be clarified. The UDHR is not a covenant but a *declaration* and was thus only ever intended to be an aspirational document. On the other hand, such treaties as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) are, in fact, part of international law and can be enforced to the extent allowed by international law. A small but significant editing error occurs in Raimondo's chapter, which mistakenly marks the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women as occurring in 1996, not 1995.

A final point is that inadequate attention is given to the international human rights regime that has underpinned the development of the concept of human rights. Aside from the chapters by Raimondo and Fonow, the UN and its forums were not discussed in any detail. Given that the UN provides the arena for much feminist transnational action, it would have been useful to include a chapter that directly addressed this issue.

Despite minor concerns, I enjoyed the book and think it provides an interesting and innovative approach to conceiving the interaction among rights, gender, and transnationalism. It gives scholars and students of gender and politics a cultural perspective through which to better understand women's experiences of human rights in a globalized world.

Governing Codes: Gender, Metaphor, and Political Identity. By Karrin Vasby Anderson and Kristina Horn Sheeler. New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield. 2005. 241 pp. \$70.00 cloth, \$28.95 paper.

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Fortunately, in the last 20 years, the scholarship on women in politics has grown considerably, as have the number of women running for office, the number of women holding office, and thus the amount of data, artifacts, contexts, and situations to be analyzed. Karrin Vasby Anderson and Kristina Horn Sheeler, in *Governing Codes*, offer a solid, interesting, and insightful addition to this growing line of work. With the presentation of four intriguing case studies, the authors provide a rich and informative analysis from a revealing vantage point—the use of metaphor—to uncover what remains the frustrating and challenging language that four credible and politically astute women had to overcome, as well as some of the rhetorical strategies they successfully employed in doing so.

In *Governing Codes*, Anderson and Sheeler offer sound case studies that focus on four prominent female politicians: Ann Richards, Christine Todd Whitman, Hillary Clinton, and Elizabeth Dole. The authors seek to balance their study by party—two Democrats and two Republicans, as well as by experience: Two of the women were elected to their state's executive post (Richards, Whitman) and two women were spotlighted on the public stage as political spouses before moving successfully into the role of candidate in a nationally covered U.S. Senate race (Clinton, Dole).

The authors begin by building a framework that represents common, public sphere narratives about women, women as candidates, and women as officeholders. These common narratives include those of pioneer, puppet, hostess/beauty queen, and unruly woman. Although the development of these four lenses is well grounded and evidenced, one is left wondering if any positive narratives exist. Each common narrative is fundamentally detrimental, including the pioneer metaphor. Although that particular frame initially offers positive connotations, it also contains a selfish twist. For instance, the authors argue that a pioneer is a “trailblazer or groundbreaker,” one possessing “determination, practical wisdom, perseverance, and hard work” (p. 14), a politician who can relate to the

“‘common people, the forgotten man [sic]’” (p. 15). The authors clearly explain how this concept can quickly be transformed into a limiting narrative that delegitimizes the woman as a serious public leader, refuses her credibility as an able governing agent, and intimates that her presence in office is an anomaly rather than a position she deserves to hold. Indeed, the rationale for each lens offers progressive evidence of each narrative’s existence; however, the reader is left longing for certain additional explanation regarding the lenses chosen. First, further explanation could be offered as to whether or not other narratives have been present in the literature; the presence of these four frames used is certainly substantiated, but the possibility—or lack thereof—for other frames to be present is not addressed. Second, the potential for positive or productive application of the four identified frames is never mentioned or proposed; thus, the reader is not offered an understanding as to why positive connotation is not an option from these frames.

Within each case study, the authors mine the media coverage of these women, primarily from their time in office as governor, or from their status as political spouses to their U.S. Senate candidacies. The authors illustrate not only how each of the four narratives was applied to the women, but also how the women themselves strategically used language to overcome the predominant frame(s) and fought to develop a salient, defining frame of their own. In the instance of Richards, the authors argue that Richards embraced the frame of hostess, exploiting it within the political context of her governorship through visibility and relationship building. They argue that Whitman, on the other hand, was able to overcome certain developed narratives by “confound[ing] . . . the ‘double bind’” (p. 86).

Research on the Clinton case study clearly offers much data to investigate for narratives. The authors identify how Clinton herself at times readily and directly invoked opportunities for application of the frames (e.g., see their discussion of her “cookies and tea” comment). Regardless, in the cases of both Clinton and Dole, the authors demonstrate how consistently the press sought to define each woman through the use of outdated, inhibiting stereotypes that were merely audience attention getters as opposed to newsworthy items. One is left wondering about the sheer amount of time each campaign must have had to spend on developing rhetorical strategies to overcome the challenges presented by the media’s sensational, self-serving, and insubstantial coverage.

At times, the authors overstep in their analysis. While they succeed in substantiating the women’s strategic rhetorical choices through evidence

such as speech texts, it is risky to offer the same weight to quotations in newspapers as illustrations of the women building their own frames. In today's media environment, candidates and officeholders try to exercise control over how they are quoted in the media, as well as the slant and substance of the story itself, but ultimately, personnel at those media outlets have control over the rhetorical choices and how they are presented. Thus, we as scholars cannot justify giving full credit to the candidate or officeholder for published quotations or applaud them for their rhetorical intent just by its appearance alone. Certainly, we can tentatively credit them for their language choices, but we must recognize that in many instances, it was by good fortune that the reporter picked up the comment and quoted it.

Governing Codes is an interesting and engaging analysis that is at times both intriguing and shocking—shocking in its revelation of the type of media coverage of female politicians that persists in contemporary times. One would have hoped that by now, such exploitation of stereotypes would have been eliminated by a responsible media; the evidence here suggests that such hopes are dashed. This book clearly illustrates how imperative it is that we unveil the frequent, detrimental use of age-old stereotypes. It provides the basis for a clear understanding of the contemporary constructs that give rise to women's credible voices and respect their contributions to the public good, as opposed to the rigid, outdated narratives that are nurtured through the mass media. When used in the news coverage of female political candidates and officials, the four metaphors and their various incarnations are, arguably, easy for a media consumer to understand and process. The case studies in this book, however, illuminate an ugliness that a truly responsible and respectful media simply should not produce.

Eight Women Philosophers: Theory, Politics, and Feminism. By Jane Duran. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 2006. 308 pp. \$64.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

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Searching for evidence of women's presence in the canon of philosophy, I found that the Cambridge Companion Series, an extensive and prestigious set of 110 volumes offering the "most convenient and acces-

sible guides to the major philosophers available” (from their Website), has only two such volumes devoted to women philosophers. *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* was published in 2000, *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir* in 2003. Jane Duran, in contrast, has found eight women philosophers to study (seven in addition to Beauvoir), and her book offers a rich introduction to important themes in the work of Hildegard of Bingen, Anne Conway, Mary Astell, Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill, Edith Stein, Simone Weil, and Simone de Beauvoir.

Feminist scholarship engaged with the history of philosophy has proceeded on at least three fronts in the past two decades. First, there has been an effort to examine what were said to be universal categories, to unearth gendered thinking, and to critique the canon of male philosophers from a feminist perspective. As part of this scholarship, feminists have exposed the masculinity of many of philosophy’s categories, and noted that even when women are absent from male theorizing, their absence speaks volumes about gendered assumptions. Second, feminists have been keen to add women to the canon of philosophy, rediscovering the work of women philosophers, some of whom were famous in their own day but ignored by subsequent generations (such as Mary Astell), some of whom were overshadowed by their male philosophical counterparts (such as Harriet Taylor Mill in her partnership with John Stewart Mill), and some of whom may not have claimed their work to be categorized as philosophy (such as Simone de Beauvoir). And third, feminists have sought to discover whether there is anything different that women contribute to philosophy, because of their exclusion from male intellectual endeavors, their status as the Other, or some inherent difference in thought patterns or epistemology.

Duran engages with the latter two projects in attempting to place women in the canon, as well as to discover what might be different about the contribution that women make. She is careful to examine each thinker’s contribution to philosophical debates on ontology and metaphysics, to place each thinker’s work in her own historical context, to discuss the relevant philosophical and historical debates as well as thinkers (especially other women thinkers) with whom the philosopher engaged, and finally, to search for any relevance that the thinker’s work may have for feminist theories of knowledge and third wave feminist concerns. Not surprisingly, this approach works better for some of the thinkers than for others. Because Duran so diligently sticks to this pattern, first looking at philosophical contributions, then context, and finally femi-

nism, the rich and varied differences in style, approaches, and contributions distinct to each thinker are less highlighted than are the comparisons among the thinkers.

As an introduction to each thinker's work, this book is a valuable and useful resource. I can imagine using it successfully as a complementary text in my *Women Political Thinkers* course, for example, where I have students read the work of Astell, Wollstonecraft, Arendt, and Beauvoir. Undergraduate students would appreciate Duran's structured argument, her strict comparisons, and her clear style of writing. As she points out in the preface to the work, each chapter on each individual thinker (comprising eight central chapters) can be read alone. The introduction and conclusion to the book attempt to carve out more general questions and comparisons about the importance of gender categories and philosophical categories within historical periods.

As a feminist scholar hoping for a more probing analysis of each thinker's work as well as what women philosophers contribute to the canon, I often found Duran's book frustrating. The author says in the conclusion that "exclusion, in terms of numbers and activity, is not the only force driving the categorization of 'women.' There is ample reason to believe that there are differences in thought patterns, and the work that we have done here tends to bear this out" (p. 262). While there is scattered evidence for this conclusion in the book, the implications of these "differences in thought patterns," and whether they relate to something more than "exclusion," remain significantly undertheorized. How do these women understand themselves, if they do, as distinctly women philosophers? Do they theorize their embodiment, their potential for freedom, their engagement with others in the world in ways that undermine or destabilize philosophy's categories of truth, knowledge, and the self? I would have liked to see Duran engage these questions of embodiment, alternative interactions between self and other, and the impact of material conditions in the lives of each woman philosopher. These are the questions that male philosophers tend not to take on explicitly, although feminist theorists have pointed to each of these issues as underlying and implicit themes in the work of many canonical male thinkers. Though Duran looks for links to "feminist epistemology" and relevance for third wave feminism in each thinker's work, the themes are at one and the same time too forced and too vague to make any significant comparisons on philosophical questions such as the ones I suggest here.

These criticisms, however, are slight in comparison to the contribution of the book. This work offers a wealth of material on each thinker,

links each of them up with the historical currents of her time, and asks each to contribute to contemporary feminist debates. In a book whose thinkers span more than 900 years and for which the scholarly literature is vast and unwieldy, Duran's organization of the material and her headway toward restoring the voices of these women to canonical as well as feminist debates are remarkable.

The U.S. Women's Movement in Global Perspective. Edited by Lee Ann Banaszak. Rowman & Littlefield. 2006. 272 pp. \$72.00 cloth, \$27.95 paper.

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Despite its considerable successes, the U.S. women's movement has frequently been seen as a disappointment from a global perspective. For instance, in their analysis of global women's movements' influence on the major multinationals, Robert O'Brien and colleagues state that "in the case of the US women's movement, even though it is the largest and most powerful women's movement in the world, its focus is squarely domestic, not international" (*Contesting Global Governance*, 2000, p. 53). Similarly, in a chapter in the current volume, Joyce Gelb points out that, although the United States has been a standard-bearer in regard to gender equity policy, a "politics of insularity" has sometimes prevented the movement from achieving new gains (p. 177).

One might expect that a book titled *The U.S. Women's Movement in Global Perspective* might respond to such charges with evidence on how some organizations within the U.S. movement have contributed to international conferences on behalf of women; have supported women suffering atrocities in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Rwanda; and have lobbied at the United Nations for international normative standards on behalf of women's universal rights. Such is not the case.

What the book does instead is to bring together a valuable collection about the U.S. movement and to provide a series of explicit or implicit comparisons of the American movement with those from five other countries. An equal number of political scientists and sociologists describe the U.S. movement over time and compare it with case studies of women's movements in Chile, Russia, Japan, England, and Ireland. Surprisingly, an interesting chapter on "African American Gendered Repertoires" by Belinda Robnett is cast with these comparative chapters on national move-

ments. That the chapters are more comparable than can usually be expected in an edited volume is due to the use of a familiar conceptual framework from the social movement literature that emphasizes resources and mobilizing structures, political opportunities, and “the world of ideation: identity, culture, discourse, and framing” (p. 15).

Lee Ann Banaszak’s introduction sets out this framework as it applies to the U.S. women’s movement in a useful section, including several pages on “international opportunities.” She goes on to draw conclusions from the subsequent chapters, notably: 1) The three concepts are interdependent; 2) cultural norms are important in their influence on the timing of social movements’ emergence; 3) within movements, divisions can be masked and give a sense of unrealistic continuity; 4) social movements are path dependent; and 5) movements can only be understood by examining activism at multiple levels.

The first half of the volume begins with Jo Freeman’s classic 1973 article from the *American Journal of Sociology* on the origins of women’s liberation (second wave), which points to the importance of “co-optable networks.” This is followed by Nancy Whittier’s analysis of the transition from the second wave to the third wave of the radical wing of the U.S. movement. The remaining chapters in this half offer important insights regarding the failed campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment and the operation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) at both the national and local levels.

The second half of the book is strikingly different. In each of these chapters, there is clear evidence of the way in which the movements in the different countries are in some way dependent on global feminism. For instance, Lisa Baldez and Celeste Montoya Kirk found that in Chile under the dictatorship of Pinochet (1973–89), the military’s severest repression was directed at men whose labor unions and political parties were demobilized. The surprising consequence was the mobilization of women, in international organizations and in domestic organizations, many of which were funded from abroad. Participation in regional and international conferences strengthened women’s understanding of feminism and gave them the courage to resist a climate of fear. Carol Nechemias found that in Russia, although the global women’s movement played a significant role in spreading and sustaining feminist ideas and activities, the kitchen table, as well as domesticity, had represented an island of freedom to both men and women for 70 years, not a symbol of constraint and missed opportunities for women as viewed in the West. For Japan, Gelb describes a “politics of externality” in which international

standards of gender equity have been used by feminists to exert pressure on a reluctant government. Despite extensive mobilization by housewives, working women's groups, and labor unions, feminists in Japan face a backlash associated with declining birth and marriage rates. In the last of these chapters, Deana Rohlinger and David Meyer finish with a more direct approach to the question of transnational influences by examining the framing of abortion access in England, Ireland, and the United States. They find that international organizations may try to coordinate and provide resources to national organizations, and the greater the contact between the two, the greater the influence. However, state policies and national political cultures still "dominate the field on which activists struggle" (p. 213).

Banaszak's concluding chapter is brief. She focuses first on the mobilization and divisions within the U.S. movement and then goes on to consider "The U.S. Movement in the Global Community." Here, she draws on the chapters in the last half of the book to note that U.S. feminist action "clearly brings resources and allies to feminist movements overseas" (p. 221), although this aid sometimes comes at a considerable price. A more systematic analysis of how this is done and by whom will await another volume.