

# Introduction to the Gerritsen Subject Series - English Language Titles

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## General Introduction

The publication of *The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs* is a major scholarly event in the evolution of women's history. Until recently interest in women's history has been limited. What scholarship there was in the field consisted for the most part of biographies of famous women and histories of the woman suffrage movement. Recently, historians have broadened their interest in women's history and have begun to investigate the social conditions of women's lives. Consequently, women's history has become an integral part of American and European social history.

With the expansion of the field, historians have begun to seek out a wider variety of sources for their research. For example, they have uncovered club records to learn about women's organizational activities, examined popular health and hygiene literature to understand the historical issues regarding women's health, and delved into advice books on childrearing and home management to learn more about woman's role within the family. Unfortunately, the material has been scattered, often uncatalogued, and generally not easily accessible to researchers.

The publication of the Gerritsen Collection is a significant breakthrough for historians of women. It represents a major collection of materials on women's history which will be readily accessible to researchers through libraries.

The collection is noteworthy for its size, scope, and diversity. It contains substantial material relating to women's experiences in the public arena, as well as a wealth of material dealing with all aspects of women's lives within the home. It is within the home that most women have spent the majority of their lives and consequently it is here that many historians have begun to focus their attention. Women's history and history of the family have developed together and fed each other. Consequently, much of the material in the Gerritsen Collection signals an advance in the history of the family as well. In fact, the collection is a major contribution to social history in general and symbolizes the emergence of women's history as an integral part of it.

## Bibliography

Bibliographies share either authorship, publisher, subject matter, or a particular point of view. They list certain information, including authorship, publisher, number of editions, dates of issues, etc. and often contain short annotations-which give descriptive information on the subject matter.

Bibliographies are invaluable to the scholar. They facilitate all phases of his or her research and are especially useful in the initial search for materials. For this reason, the bibliography section of the Gerritsen Collection will be of particular interest to historians. For example, the *Catalogue of the Galatea Collection ... of the Boston Public Library* (A 318.1) is a bibliography of its 1100-volume collection on women's history. The American Association of University Women's bibliography of titles on higher education for women (A 62.1) is a valuable compilation of materials on related topics, including co-education, occupations for college women, and the health of college women. The bibliography by Chase Woodhouse (A 3188 and A 3189) on occupations for college women supplements the A.A.U.W. bibliography with titles from the early decades of the twentieth century. Though the titles in this section are few, they compile a large body of material and uncover many obscure or lost titles.

## History and Social Condition

The history and social condition category is the most general one in the Gerritsen Collection. This section includes material which examines woman's relationship to her culture and to her historic period. Much of the material in this section includes writings on the lives of women in other countries, and thereby provides opportunities for interesting cross-cultural comparisons. Ethel Higginbottom's ... *Close-Up Views of India's Womanhood* (A 1255) is a good example of the material on women in other societies. This category also includes overviews of the history of women or of particular groups of people. *The Social Position of Woman in Different Periods of History* by Jacob Helfenstein (B 1224) and *The Hebrew Family* by Earle Cross (A 623) are good examples. Also in this section are analyses of woman's political, social and economic status. A good example is *The Woman of To-morrow* (A 3133).

Another major topic in this category concerns marriage, home and motherhood. The home and family have been defined as women's domain. While it has been men's responsibility to venture forth into the world to work, women have been assigned the role of maintaining the home-cooking, cleaning, sewing, etc. Beyond these domestic tasks, however, women's central role in the family has been that of wife and mother. As wives women were to provide their husbands with a warm, safe environment to which they could retreat from the aggressive, dog-eat-dog world outside. As mothers, women were responsible for childbearing, and most importantly, for their children's education.

In the mid-nineteenth century, women's responsibilities in the family culminated in a cult of true womanhood which defined women's role of wife and mother as the natural extension of women's biological capacity to reproduce. Simultaneously, a genre of literature appeared to educate women in the ways of fulfilling their responsibilities of wife and mother.

Selections from the Gerritsen Collection in this category, such as Mary Mason's *The Young Housewife's Counsellor and Friend* (A 1872.1), provided women with advice on caring for their families and managing their households. Others such as Robert West's *A Father's Letters to His Daughter* (A 3078.1)

romanticized these responsibilities and idealized true womanhood. Similarly, William Alcott's series of books to women on wifehood, motherhood, and domesticity seem to cover all the areas of concern to women in their role as center of the family. While these advice books were most popular in the last half of the nineteenth century, they continued to be read and new ones were written well into the twentieth century.

## Education and Professional Training

Education has always been deemed an essential ingredient in upward mobility. For oppressed groups, in particular, it has been seen as the key to success. Women as a group have been no exception.

Historically, the education of women has been a controversial issue. In preindustrial society, it was only the women of the upper classes who had access to any sort of education. Generally, their education was directed toward developing them as proper ladies. More emphasis was placed on learning French, piano, needlepoint, etc. than on learning mathematics, Latin and history.

The early nineteenth century began to witness the demand by women for schools of their own, and during the second half of the century women began to open their own academies and colleges. Despite the rapid progress in this movement for women's education, there were many who opposed it. Opponents argued that mental activity was dangerous to women's physical health. Furthermore, they feared that education would attract women away from their homes and thereby threaten the stability of society.

The Gerritsen Collection contains excellent examples of all aspects of women's education from Emma Willard's early plea in *A Plan for Improving Female Education* (A 3110) and Edward Clarke's popular book, *Sex in Education* (A 540), which argued that intellectual activity was dangerous to women's physical health, to the defense of women's higher education by nineteenth century feminists, such as Julia Ward Howe's *Sex and Education* (A 1319) and Helen Starrett's discussion of the problems college-educated women often faced in *After College, What?* (A 2723). In this category falls a wide range of titles, both wellknown and obscure, on the history of education for women.

## Women and Employment

While the proper place for women has always been defined as the home, in reality most women throughout history have worked. In pre-industrial society they cooked, cleaned, raised produce, managed the dairy, etc. With the advent of industrialism, women were the first people to enter the factories.

The material in this category falls essentially into two subdivisions, women in industry and women in the professions. Most women who have worked have done so out of necessity, to supplement what their husbands brought home or because they were single or widowed. These women generally worked at low-level industrial jobs which required little or no skill and for which they received low wages.

The titles in this category cover a variety of issues relevant to these women, ranging from Horace Haines' discussion of Utah's minimum wage law for females (A 1142) and the Consumer's League of New York's pamphlet *The Forty Eight Hour Law* (A 581) to Grace Pugh's survey of women workers in *Working Women and Children in Pennsylvania* (A 2288).

In contrast to women working for wages are women working in the professions. Teaching and nursing have historically been professions filled by women. In addition, women have been physicians, business women, lawyers, writers, etc. The literature here on professional women, such as *Medical Women in Tenements* by Mary Damon (A 643) and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs' collection of data on professional women (A 1993), illuminate the issues unique to women working in the professions.

Also included in the general category of work are books and pamphlets which advised women on ways to earn a living. This material varied from offering vocational advice, as in Eleanor Martin's *Vocations for the Trained Woman* (A 1852), to Ross Breniser's instructions in *Home Work for Women* (A 359), on how to turn domestic tasks into marketable skills. The large selection of titles in this general category illustrates that work has always been central to women's lives.

## Feminism

Feminism, as defined in the dictionary, is the doctrine advocating equal rights for women with men in regard to political, economic, and social status. There was no place for feminism in pre-industrial society. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, however, the first signs of feminism began to appear in Europe. It grew essentially out of an age when respect for the natural rights of mankind prevailed in theory in Europe and America. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (A 3151) was the first significant feminist publication, serving as a model for subsequent treatises on women's rights.

Feminism made its appearance in the United States in 1848 at the first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The movement expanded in the United States, England, and other countries throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. It culminated in the United States with the winning of suffrage for women in 1920. Its energy dissipated thereafter and feminism lay dormant for several decades until it re-emerged in the 1960's.

The Gerritsen Collection has materials in this section that are unique and exciting. Included, for example, are the reports and proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, as well as those of subsequent conventions in Worcester, Akron, and New York. There are also writings of leading feminists, for example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (A 2718). Thomas Smith's *The Woman Question* (A 2669) contains essays by prominent feminists, including Ellen Key and Havelock Ellis.

One also finds more obscure but equally important works on the subject. Helen Moody's *The Unquiet Sex* (A 1979) describes the "new" woman for a popular audience and John Martin's *Feminism, Its*

*Fallacies and Follies* (A 1854) presents the feminist and anti-feminist perspectives on the woman question.

An important part of the feminist movement was the development of women's organizations and clubs. In colonial days women came together in groups at quilting bees, while in the early years of industrialization they formed mite societies to raise money for their churches. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of large numbers of women's clubs. Women formed clubs for all sorts of reasons, ranging from selfculture and personal uplift to unionization and social reform. These clubs continued to proliferate at such a rate that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was a genuine woman's club movement in the United States, Jane Croly's *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America* (A 618) is the classic social history of this movement.

The titles on this topic in the Gerritsen Collection range from literature on some of the largest and most influential women's organizations, such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the National Women's Trade Union League of America, and the National Council of Women of Canada, to literature of smaller, local organizations, such as the New York Association of Working Girls' Societies and the Girls Trade Education League of Boston. Alice Winter's *The Business of Being a Club Woman* (A 3134) and Kate Roberts' *The Club Woman's Handybook of Programs and Club Management* (A 2403) are good examples of the literature advising women on club activities, club management, etc.

## Physiology of Women

At the root of woman's oppression throughout history lies her female physiology. Woman's biological capacity to reproduce and her inability to control it until very recently, has meant that most women have spent the reproductive years of their lives at home childrearing and childbearing. In addition, constant childbearing was dangerous and often destroyed women's health permanently, while the inability of medical science to offer accurate diagnoses and reliable cures meant that women often suffered endlessly from female-specific diseases for which they can now usually seek helpful medical treatment. Hence, it is not surprising that many women were weak and sickly and that many people defined this as natural to womanhood. Others, however, insisted that women should be healthy and strong and that it was the realities of their lives, not an inherited pathological constitution which explained their ill-health. By the mid-nineteenth century popular health books began to appear advising women on how to stay healthy. *The American Lady's Medical Pocket-book* (A 66.1) and Catherine Beecher's *Letters to the People on Health and Happiness* (A 198.1) are excellent examples of the popular literature directed at the issue of women's health.

Among other interesting topics included in this category are those centering around the issue of work and health. Margaret Welch's *Is Newspaper Work Healthful for Woman?* (A 3073), and the pamphlet *Protection of the Health and Motherhood of the Working Women of Illinois* (A 2280) are good examples.

## Psychology of Women

With the advent of psychology towards the end of the nineteenth century, people began to show interest in the psychology of woman, and to the literature on women's bodies was added literature on women's mental state as well. Florence Tuttle's *The Awakening of Woman* (A 2879) and Laura Hansson's *Studies in the Psychology of Woman* (A 1171.4) attempt to present psychological interpretations of woman and her social position.

The relations between the sexes were influential on the emotions and mental state of women. While men stand alone, women stand with men. For most women throughout history their identity and social status have come from the men in their lives, usually their fathers and then their husbands. Consequently, much of the writings on women have discussed them in relation to men. Most interaction between men and women has occurred within the private sphere of the home rather than in the world outside. The literature on the relations between the sexes in the Gerritsen Collection reflects this and focuses primarily on the relationship of women and men to each other as marriage partners and as sexual partners.

Works like Cecil Chapman's *Marriage and Divorce* (B 511) focus on the inequities between women and men in marriage and argue for changes such as liberalized divorce laws. Others such as Sarah Grand's *The Modern Man and Maid* (A 1079.7) offer advice to women and men on the character traits to seek in a marital partner. The U.S. Bureau of the Census provides data on marriage and divorce in the United States from 1867 through 1906 (A 2905).

Also included are sociological and historical studies of the institution of marriage which allow for cultural and historical comparisons. In addition, there are selections focusing more specifically on women and men's sexual relationships. Eliza Duffey's *Relations of the Sexes* (A 743) and Iwan Bloch's *The Sexual Life of Our Times* (B 290.1) offer two uniquely different approaches to sexuality, the former from the perspective of a nineteenth century feminist, the latter from that of a twentieth century German physician. Overall, these selections are particularly interesting because they reflect social attitudes toward the private aspects of women's and men's lives.

## Biography and Autobiography

Though women as a group have historically been treated as unequal to men, individual women have always managed to assert themselves and to accomplish great deeds. Regardless of historical periods or cultural circumstances, every nation has had its share of influential women to whom it points with pride.

The Gerritsen Collection contains a large selection of biographies and autobiographies of famous women throughout history. For example, Anna Gordon's *The Life of Frances E. Willard* (A 1069) provides an intimate biography of the founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union; and Helen Dyer's biography of Pandita Ramabai (A 766) records the life of a leader in the struggle for women's education in India.

Women have always looked with pride on the accomplishments of other women. They have seen these accomplishments as evidence of women's equality with men and as justification for their demands for equal rights. Perhaps this motivated the books they often wrote of biographical sketches of accomplished women. Phebe Hanaford's *Daughters of America* (A 1168) and Cornelia Love's *Famous Women of Yesterday and Today* (A 1760) are excellent examples of this genre.

## Opinions, Satires, Anecdotes, Aphorisms

Woman has historically been a subject which has provoked all sorts of opinions. Men have seen women as separate and different from themselves and hence worthy of study and comment. Women, living within a society that defines them as such, have written treatises about themselves.

People express their opinions in different ways. Some write serious dissertations, others make their point through satire, while still others rely on proverbs to express their ideas.

The Opinions section of the Gerritsen Collection is small, for the most part because material that might have been categorized here could be listed under a more specific heading. Nevertheless, there are some very interesting selections in this category. Laurens Maynard's *Women and Other Enigmas* (A 1891), is filled with witticisms and satire which express contemporary social attitudes towards women and their relationships with men. William Clark's *Woman and Her Wits* (A 544) is a collection of proverbs on woman, love and beauty. Lucy Aikin's *Epistles on Women* (B 34) is a collection of poems reflecting the sentiment that there are no human traits which are exclusively masculine or exclusively feminine.

Despite the diversity of expression in this part of the collection, the materials all reveal attitudes about women's status and proper social role.

## Political and Social Reform

Women have quite often been at the forefront of agitation for political and social reform. Perhaps because they have borne so many of society's inequities, they have understood the need for change. For example, women were actively involved in the anti-slavery and the temperance movements in the United States. Catherine Beecher's *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism* (A 1983) advises women of their duty to fight for the abolition of slavery, while Frances Willard's *Woman and Temperance* (A 3112.1) recounts the history of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and of women's leadership in the movement to abolish liquor.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century through World War I, suffrage was the cause which attracted the most attention among women, and there are many titles dealing with suffrage in this division of the Gerritsen Collection. The writings of Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the National American Women's Suffrage Association, for example, explain the arguments and strategies of the suffrage movement just prior to its success. William Bowditch's *Woman Suffrage, a Right Not a Privilege* (A

334) is an example of a male supporter of the cause. The reports of meetings of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in London deal with the early movement for the franchise of women in England (B 2042), while the *The Anti-Suffrage Essays by Massachusetts Women* (A 86) provides examples of the sentiments of those opposed to women voting.

Also included in this category is material dealing with women's philanthropic and social work. Examples are *More Than the Vote* (A 1672) by Robert Leigh and *The Relation of Women To Municipal Reform* (A 2016) by Mary Mumford.

Another topical area of interest in this section is the legal status of women. Woman's legal status is a valuable barometer of her position in a given society. One of the largest obstacles to women's emancipation has been the legal system which has historically upheld one set of laws for women and another for men. Throughout history women have fought to change those laws which have legalized and institutionalized their inequality. Their efforts have been concentrated in two general areas, the laws affecting women's political status and the laws determining their social position.

The Gerritsen Collection material on legal status parallels this dual focus and contains literature dealing with women's legal position vis-a-vis her role as a citizen and her role as wife and mother. *The Legal and Political Status of Women in the United States* (A 3129) by Jennie Wilson, and *The Comparison of Political and Civil Rights of Men and Women* (A 1359) by the Inter American Commission of Women are excellent examples of that body of literature concerned with the laws defining women's political and civic position in society. Richard Kathren's *Let's Civilize the Marriage Laws* (A 1469) and Annie Porritt's *Laws Affecting Women and Children in the Suffrage and Non-Suffrage States* (A 2253) illustrate the concern with the laws affecting women and divorce, custody of children, married women's property right, etc. Other books on women's legal status provide historical overviews of the laws relating to women, from ancient times up to the twentieth century. Ann Chapman's *The Status of Women Under the English Law* (B 510), for example, reviews women's legal status in England from the eleventh century through the early twentieth. As a body, the literature in this category helps to illustrate the ways in which the legal system has controlled and simultaneously reflected women's position in society.