

emerging gaga feminist approach. As gaga feminism is more “speculative” than prescriptive, the book focuses more on potential forms for social and political transformation as opposed to ends, including: embracing childishness, resisting the traditional marriage models (including gay marriage), and creating new approaches to family and kinship. In order to make these arguments, Halberstam utilizes a cultural archive that consists of recent romantic comedies and, similar to their other recent book *The Queer Art of Failure*, children’s movies and television. Halberstam also draws on personal experiences, both within the academy and from their private life including their role as a parent.

As intended, *Gaga Feminism* is a quick, light read, perhaps best described as guilty pleasure beach reading for the queer theory inclined. The book is commendable for broaching “of the moment” issues in less clichéd ways, for example, finding meaning behind the Lady Gaga phenomena as opposed to dismissing her as a Madonna derivative, or, acknowledging the long-term and far-reaching implications of Occupy and related movements instead of pronouncing them short-lived and inconsequential. Although many of arguments are not highly original (indeed, many are identical to those made in their previous book), do have a talent for weaving recent theoretical trends into a clear and cohesive narrative. Halberstam also brings an enthusiasm and positivity to their writing that is often absent in queer and feminist theory.

The promise of gaga feminism, however, often feels disingenuous the book focus on what gaga feminism is or what it can be without demonstrating what gaga feminism can do. If Halberstam structured their book this way intentionally as a reflection of their “quasi-academic” aims, they

have not given their readers enough credit. The book is a quick read, but it is also not as accessible as intended because Halberstam often relies on anecdotal evidence from academia (including extended descriptions of two conferences and a veiled critique of an unnamed anthropologist) that would lack relevance for those reading from outside the academy. The high degree in content-overlap from their last book, however, makes the book less compelling for those within the academy who are already familiar with Halberstam’s work. As a result, *Gaga Feminism* is largely a fun read, but it is definitely not a “must read” unless you haven’t read anything else by Halberstam recently and need a quick refresher.

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COLD WAR COMFORTS: CANADIAN WOMEN, CHILD SAFETY, AND GLOBAL INSECURITY

Tarah Brookfield
Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University
Press, 2012

**REVIEWED BY CARALEE
DAIGLE HAU**

Cold War Comforts is an engaging study of Canadian women’s domestic and international activism in the early Cold War period. Brookfield successfully argues that between the end of

the Second World War and the Vietnam War, Canadian women utilized the twin concepts of maternalism (as either literal or symbolic mothers) and internationalism to engage with the policy-making process surrounding children’s safety and welfare. In the early post-Second World War years, Cold War tensions created an urgent sense that women needed to prepare for a potential nuclear war, through civil defence and potentially investing in a home fallout shelter. *Cold War Comforts* examines how, as the nature of the conflict altered and the realities of a potential nuclear conflict became clearer, women’s activism shifted from wanting to protect their families from the effects of nuclear war, to demanding, through disarmament and peace activism, that war never happen. In her study, Brookfield divides the subject into two parts: domestic and international, and examines Canadian women’s involvement in the United Nations, through such organizations as the United Nations Association and UNICEF, foster parenting plans, activism during the Vietnam War, and international adoption. Brookfield convincingly maintains that their responsibilities and roles as mothers and Canadian citizens spurred these women on and made it possible for them to engage with child safety.

Although this study is thoroughly researched and well-executed, there are two relatively minor issues with which Brookfield might have engaged in more depth. In chapter two she uses some American-made civil defence materials, such as *Duck and Cover* featuring Bert the Turtle, to demonstrate Canadians’ engagement with civil defence planning. However, there is little discussion of how American-made materials were used in Canada, nor does she distinguish in a meaningful way between Canadian and American materials. While this may seem a minor issue, her main argument circles around how Cana-

dian women were acting from a keen awareness of their status as Canadian citizens and mothers. Did Canadian women view themselves differently from American? Were civil defence measures in Canada different in any real way from those in the United States? If not, how might that change her overall approach? She does engage with this concept of a unique Canadian identity elsewhere in the book. When discussing Canadian women's reactions to the war in Vietnam she stresses that protest came from frustration that the Canadian government was acting against its international reputation as a peacekeeper. Since this internationalism is a key pillar of her argument, Brookfield needs to equally apply this attention to the word's meaning throughout her study.

In addition, since Cold War tensions and undercurrents are a key part of the setting of this story, a more thorough discussion of their effect on women in this period would be useful. When discussing women's activism, for example, during the height of civil service purges of suspected subversives, Brookfield briefly mentions that these women's status as mothers, interested only in safeguarding their children, protected them from accusations of communism. Indeed, the founders of Voice of Women deliberately stressed their roles as mothers interested only in peace, in order to be able to continue their work without suffering the same sort of censure as more radical groups. Therefore, the argument about the maternal nature of the work of these early activists needs clarification through a more thorough analysis of their self-presentation as maternal figures. What language did these women use in literature and correspondence? How did that self-conscious presentation change as second-wave feminism and women's liberation movements became prominent in the 1960s? Though the connection between motherhood and

protection from the state security apparatus is linked in Brookfield's study, a more in-depth discussion would strengthen the argument.

These minor issues aside, this is overall an impressive examination of women's activism in the Cold War years. It is thorough, well-researched, and clearly written. While individual parts of the text, such as the material on civil defence, do not break new ground, this work shines by bringing together various histories of women's activism in one work. The exploration of the real, lived experiences of children both in Canada and abroad is nicely complemented by her examination of the symbolic child. Brookfield excellently demonstrates how concern over children became another front of the Cold War. In this sense, Brookfield's is a significant contribution to the growing body of literature which is expanding our understanding of the far-reaching effects of the Cold War.

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RETHINKING PROFESSIONALISM: WOMEN AND ART IN CANADA, 1850-1970

Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson, Eds.
Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY MICHELLE GEWURTZ

Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850 – 1970 is, surprisingly, the first collection of

scholarly essays to focus on women, art, and history in Canada from multiple vantage points. Especially noteworthy is the volume's focus on historical work produced by women working in a variety of disciplines ranging from painting and photography to architecture and traditional handicrafts. As the editors Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson note in their preface, in Canada there is a gap in scholarship when it comes to critically engaged studies of women's cultural production. This is the context for this publication, organized by the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, a collaborative endeavour based at Concordia University involving a wide range of scholars.

This volume, which is the outcome of the Initiative's inaugural conference held in 2008, attests to the importance of a collaborative ethos that has yielded the rich variety of perspectives showcased here. The other framing device employed by both editors and authors is the issue of professionalism. While the editors acknowledge professionalism as a synthetic art historical framework, it is an atypical one used here to explore new understandings and perspectives stemming from the study of women as cultural producers. Organized into four sections that cover professionalization in the arts, careers for women, and the limits of professionalism for women, the volume opens with an introductory essay by Kristina Huneault that explores the relationship and limitations between women, art, and professionalism. She draws attention to the idea of professionalism itself and interrogates its role as a critical concept. Noting the pitfalls of privileging "professional" practice that can further marginalize women in the writing of art's histories, Huneault's study addresses the historiographical and methodological implications of professionalism as an analytic device