

RICHARDS, Jill. (2020). *The Fury Archives: Female Citizenship, Human Rights, and the International Avant-Gardes*. Columbia University Press.

The main purpose of Jill Richard's *The Fury Archives: Female Citizenship, Human Rights, and the International Avant-Gardes* is to reconsider the preeminent viewpoint of the women's rights movement, also known as *first-wave feminism*. Viewing feminist history in waves tends to focus on the gains and losses of each period; this way of making the history of feminism considers suffrage as a monolithic impulse for first wave feminism. Jill Richards strays from this narration of first-wave feminism; instead, she revisits archives with the goal of portraying women's rights movements across their daily practices and tactics to change the world.

First-wave feminism coincides with the debates across the institutionalization of human rights, where women and queer identities jeopardized the building categories of human and citizen. At the same time, the avant-garde movements were rising across the Atlantic. In contrast to the belief that avant-garde artists were not involved in political movements, in each chapter Richards shows avant-garde Dadaist and surrealist artists who took part in antigovernment movements and meetings, such as Til Bruhman and Leonora Carrington; United Nations experts, like Paulette Nardal, and birth control reformist Hannah Höch.

Thus, the author shows how the women's rights movements and the avant-gardes were connected by a reciprocal and influential relationship.

Jill Richards uses the term *long middle*, a time-span resuming the texture of daily life feminist actions, practices, and tactics, as a perspective exhibiting this ongoing process of the women involved, their struggles, and their different intention, without focusing on the final demands or accomplishments. The long middle as an historical period extends from the Enlightenment to the Cold War. Although this concept loses the opportunity to narrate the history due to the natural excitement of focusing on the winnings, the author finds the way to transmit the emotions in the daily actions of the women movement's struggles.

The book has three parts and an epilogue; each part has two chapters. Both chapters of the first part revolve around positive liberties. This part shows the paradox of the woman as a political subject who participates in political struggles and debates, can be imprisoned, but is not recognized as a citizen. By virtue of the avant-garde imagination, the characteristic of inhumanity for women can be reinterpreted as a possibility to create other forms of legal personhood, as the author reads the collages of Ernest Charles Appert in the first chapter, given that

they represent the plasticity of women in the public sphere without being acknowledged as subjects of rights. In each chapter Richards illustrates the long middle with the archives selected: in chapter one, the play *Fire's Daughters*, by Ina Césaire, transmits a sense of constant uniformity due to the housework background than accompanies the narration and the debates that four women have before the Martinique's Southern Insurrection. Also, Richards emphasizes the prologue of the play, where an offstage monotone voice reads the name and gives a description of each of the accused insurgents. Although the actual reading does not itself transmit sympathy or mourning, as a narration through gains or losses would, it is interpreted by Richards as a tactic of memorial that changes the passive paper of the spectator to make him think about the names in a meta-discursive level. This uniformity and even monotony of the movement is displayed with archives whose function is answering to the question *How do you tell a story about a revolution that isn't over yet?* Jill Richards describes suffrage autobiographies, the column in the newspaper *Votes for Women*, and Rebecca West's *The Sentinel* to narrate a revolution in the now, across riots, arrests, escapes, strikes, one after another with no end, because they did not even know the outcome as we know it today.

In turn, the second part of the book, "The Reproductive Atlantic", develops across negative liberties, which are the prohibitions made by the government, especially in the topic of birth control and the regulation of sexuality. However, Jill Richards shows how the women's rights movements were not conceiving these liberties as individual rights in the domestic or national sphere, but as a transatlantic collective reproductive justice

with a lineage of antiracist organizing. The long middle texture of repetition emerges in chapter three, where the author analyzes the Civil Rights Congress petition to the United Nations in 1951, *We Charge Genocide*, as an archive of international reproductive politics. *We Charge Genocide* is a large documentation with details of crimes at the federal, state, and municipal levels against Black people. Richards points out that the number of names and details is unwieldy for the reader, as at one point the crimes begin to blur. The result is an aggregate which shows the racial violence as a threat to the whole humanity.

The third part of the book, "Convergences in Institutional Humans Rights", focuses on the context of the institutionalization of human rights amid the post-World War II regulation of family in chapter 5, and the discussions in the development of the United Nations in chapter 6. In this part, the long middle texture is well developed using the chance Dadaist perspective. In chapter 5 Jill Richards follows a series of joint productions of Claude Cahun's portraits made by herself and her partner, Marcel Moore, from the 1920s until Cahun's death in 1954. Reading these portraits as a series tells a narrative about a life as it is lived, while it is lived. While the chance perspective in the avant-garde movement was used as a utopian way of freedom, Richards interprets chance in Cahun's art as a domain of constraint. Although Claude Cahun appears in these portraits in a variety of costumes, makeups, and stages, which allows Cahun's transitions between gender and post humanity, what is noticeable across this narrative is a limited freedom, a freedom characterized by the constant gains and losses of creating new subjectivities narrowed by the systems of power

which determinate them. In her attempt to show daily life, in chapter 6 Jill Richards focuses on a small window of the bureaucracy during the creation of the United Nations, namely the Non-Self-Governing Territories Committee. Again, this committee shows the paradox of the category of human rights created on the basis of the division between civilized nations and uncivilized territories. By zooming in on this committee, the author emphasizes the ongoing practices of organizations between unequal persons. As an example, Richards presents the figure of Paulette Nardal, the first woman of color serving the Committee of Non-Self Governing Territories, a Négritude author, founder of the Women's Rally Association, and editor of the black feminist journal *Women in the City*. Paulette Nardal, and the associations in which she participated, promoted religious values such as the essentialization of women as caring subjects and natural family.

Jill Richards is aware that Paulette Nardal does not fit in the subjectivities of women presented across the book, and this is precisely why her archive has been selected to talk about the women right's movement in colonial Martinique. The first-wave feminism traditionality narrates across a representative regimen of Western secular resistance, hiding cultural and even religious traditions. This narrative opposes the individual agency against collective and traditional wills. Jill Richards presents *Woman in the City* as a collective effort of housewives to access to the public sphere.

A profusely illustrated book, *The Fury Archives* of Jill Richards is a contribution to three fields of knowledge: humans rights, feminism, and critical cultural studies. For humans rights scholars this

book challenges the creation of the institutional category of humanity because it shows the paradoxical exclusions of women, queer identities, Black communities, and the population of colonized territories, and the organized resistance that this collective held against the estate. Also, this book confronts the traditional perspective of first-generation human rights as individual rights by presenting women's rights movements with wider aspiration about the category of human, citizen, citizenship, as well as reproductive justice as a transatlantic demand. For feminist studies, it is an attractive book because it offers another way to look at the feminist history focusing on the ongoing process of the struggles, which allows to observe the variety of conflicts and subjectivities involved. Jill Richards debunks the representative regimen of first-wave feminist women as upper-class Europeans only concerned with the gain of the suffrage, by presenting women and queer artist/activist from different classes and origins, such as Berlin, Harlem, Martinique, Paris, Mexico. For critical cultural studies, above all, she offers a methodology to revisit archives with a different point of view. Also, she presents a methodology to analyze miscellaneous archives as journals, list of names, meeting minutes, birth control manuals, prison medical logs, as well as autobiographies, novels, self-portraits, collages, and so on. Finally, this book is relevant for the debate about the relationship between art and activism, by presenting how the avant-garde imagination allows artists to conceive other possible worlds.

*Denisse Gómez-Retana*