

The Awakening

The Student Journal of the Women's Studies Program, Volume 22, Issue 2

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From the Editor: Women and Film

Women have been with movies from the beginning. The movies in the 1930s and 1940s used to have as many female stars as male stars, and they often matched wits on the screen, according to a 2003 *Times* article. The most successful film, in fact, was *Gone With the Wind* (1939) until *The Sound of Music* (1965) took over; both included strong female leads.

But women no longer share an equal place in film. Women now have fewer roles in the film industry. Movies generally show a male perspective because films are typically directed and written by males. According to the Web site <http://www.moviesbywomen.com/>, only 17 percent of all executive producers, producers, directors, writers, cinematographers, and editors working on the top 250 grossing films of 2002 were women. Twenty-two percent of the films released in 2002 employed no women directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers, or editors.

The lack of women working in the industry shows up in the films. Most protagonists are males, and the

ones that are females generally are in movies that target solely females. Martha M. Lauzen, on the Movies by Women website, analyzed 3,142 characters in the top 100 domestic grossing films released in 2002. She found that male characters outnumber female characters by more than two to one. Seventy-two percent of all characters were male, and 28 percent were female. Of clearly identifiable protagonists, 77 percent were male, 16 percent were female, 6 percent were an ensemble, and 1 percent were other characters like animals. Of course there were some female protagonists, but the majority of movies centered around male characters.

But festivals like the Athens Film Festival have been changing the rules. About 50 percent of the competition films were directed by females, said festival director Ruth Bradley. That is a major difference from the overall norm. The festival also included movies that dealt specifically with gender issues, like *Moolaadé*. There was a category of competition films labeled "Women," and gender issues were also present in categories like "Post-Colonial

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Realities,” “Politics and Struggle,” and “Queer Culture.” Even though women are a minority in studio films, the Athens Film Festival had a much more diverse representation.

But the Athens Film Festival values different types of films than major competitions like the Academy Awards, where films with strong female roles are often overlooked for more “masculine” films. The year that *Gladiator* took best picture (2000), for example, there were three nominated stories about strong women: *Chocolat*, *Erin Brokovich*, and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. But when things came to it, the guy flick won. That isn’t the first time a male film won over several female-oriented nominations. In 1986, *Platoon* won even though *A Room With a View*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, and *Children of a Lesser God* were in the running. The Oscar is very rarely given to female-oriented films. According to an article in *U.S. Catholic*, as of 2000, only 6 of the 73 best-picture films have been movies with strong female characters.

Of course, it isn’t a huge surprise that more male films get nominated because there are more men in The Academy. Except for the acting branch, which has about the same amount of men

and women, the Academy branches are male-dominated. There are few women in the directing branch, and some of the technical branches have no female members, according to the website, www.media-awareness.ca. And the lack of women in the Academy shows in the nominations. In the history of the Academy Awards, only three women have ever been nominated for best director: Lina Wertmüller for *Seven Beauties* in 1976; Jane Campion for *The Piano* in 1993; and Sofia Coppolla, who is the only one who won, for *Lost in Translation* in 2003.

Women used to have a more dominant role in film. Women directors have been there from the very start of film. But as woman have gained more and more rights in general, their roles in film have diminished. Recently, there has been a movement forward with more roles for women. There have also been more successful films that involve almost all strong female leads, including *Chicago* and *The Hours*. The Athens Film Festival is ahead of the game and offers more variety than studio films. It includes more female perspectives and more female voices. But not all is lost with the movie industry at large. There is hope that the rest of the movie industry will catch up.

Book Review: *Assata, an Autobiography*

By Katie Krancevic

The 1960s and ’70s were a time of extreme political and social unrest in the United States. Our country was involved in the Vietnam War, to be sure; but it’s the events and revolutions that took place within our borders that really shed light on that era. The story of Assata Shakur is a case in point.

The COINTELPRO program was instituted by the FBI and the CIA in the

mid-1950s. It began as a counter-intelligence program aimed at key figures in the radical movements of the era. COINTELPRO revolved around the surveillance of left-wing radicals, though senior officials claimed to have surveyed right-wing radicals as well. The goal was to make sure that opposition to our government did not get in the way of

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business. COINTELPRO was a government-sponsored conspiracy against the civil and human rights of all sorts of political activists, but, most particularly, African Americans. African American militants were assumed to be enemies of the state and were associated with communist challenges to democracy. As the egos of COINTELPRO's leaders grew, so did the program. While the program had officially been terminated by the 1970s, unofficially, it continued to flourish.

Assata Shakur was one of the prime targets of COINTELPRO. She was a black revolutionary, a member of the Black Panther Party. But that's not all: she was a woman. Throughout history, women have been subjected to gender discrimination. Women's rights have come a long way since then, but in the 1970s, the feminist movement was still in its infancy. To be a black woman, particularly a black woman revolutionary, was like sentencing yourself to political death. Assata's anti-racist political stance required bravery and courage. She knew that there were many people out there who did not agree with her and did not want to hear what she had to say, yet she stood for what she believed in. For this, she was targeted.

In 1973, Assata and two of her friends got stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike for a "faulty tail light." Routine stops made for bogus reasons were not uncommon at this time. (Unfortunately, they still occur in places where racial discrimination is present.) The encounter left two dead, one being a New Jersey state trooper, and Assata critically wounded. Assata was arrested for the murder of that state trooper almost before her wounds were even treated by a doctor.

It was later found that she had been a surveyed target since at least 1971.

Assata's autobiography is a personal and political account of her life. It is a heart-wrenching story detailing all of the atrocities committed not just against her but other revolutionaries as well. Assata's firsthand experience of our justice system will make your blood boil. Her story is intense. Her life is unenviable. Yet I feel that this is a book every person should be required to read. The barriers of race and gender are still strong forces in our world today. Widespread education about the ills of discrimination is almost non-existent, and the only way that we as a society will have a chance at furthering equality is through education.

Assata was an extremely unlucky political target, but our government still refuses to recognize her innocence. I was in the Athens Post Office on Stimson Avenue one week, and as I was glancing around the room, I saw a very disturbing sight: Assata's "wanted" poster was boldly hanging for all to see. To me, this was just one more piece of evidence that progress against discrimination has slowed to a trickle.

Through her autobiography, Assata led me to understand more about the society in which we live. I close by quoting a passage from the forward by Angela Davis: "As you follow [Assata's] life story, you will discover a compassionate human being with an unswerving commitment to justice that travels easily across racial and ethnic lines, in and out of prison and across oceans and time. She speaks to all of us."

-- Katie Krancevic is a junior magazine/broadcast major with an environmental science/psychology minor.

CD Review: Julie Doiron's *Goodnight Nobody* (Jagjaguwar Records)

By Katie Rife

The singer-songwriter genre will never die, no matter how badly some drum and bass aficionados might wish it. Because it's simpler than writing songs with an entire band, because it's more intimate — for any of the thousands of reasons that people write songs — albums featuring a girl (or boy), a guitar, and maybe a friend on snare continue to pour out of record labels' rosters. Most of these albums are highly forgettable. But *Goodnight Nobody*, the newest solo from former Eric's Trip bassist Julie Doiron, has made me remember the joys of staring at the ceiling and listening to Joan Baez sing "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright." However, *Goodnight Nobody*, unlike Baez's output, has a woozy, contemporary edge to its misery. Here's where I drop the term "sadcore." This album is consistently a downer, but it's also beautiful, simple, and heartfelt, making it sad like a bitterly cold morning, not sad like death.

As *Goodnight Nobody* is a shining example of the female singer-songwriter genre, there are going to be some inevitable comparisons to other women with the same style. Sometimes, as in "No Moneymakers," Doiron will perk up the ears of Mirah fans. Fans of alt-country goddesses Jolie Holland and Neko Case will hear echoes of these artists on *Goodnight Nobody*, though it has a noticeable lack of country's most noticeable characteristic, the twang, even on "Banjo," which is pretty much what it sounds like. The instrumentation on *Goodnight Nobody* is heavy on guitars like

spider webs, gently wrapping themselves around the songs. The rhythm section is used lightly on this album — not at all on some songs — and, as on "Some Blues," is mostly there to drive home the emotional point with a simple, driving beat. This attribute will be familiar to Cat Power fans, as will the ephemeral "Dance All Night" and its harmonies. It's near impossible to say which song is the standout on this album, but "The Songwriter" is where Doiron uses every instrumental tool in her arsenal, and I have to hold my breath until it's done.

All this simplicity would be boring without another element to hold *Goodnight Nobody* together, and the ache in Julie Doiron's voice is that element. "Last Night" is an emotional climax of the album. When she sings "Last night/ I held you in my arms and I started to cry," her talent for the melancholy turn of phrase becomes obvious. "When I Awoke" is another song where Doiron, by repeating a simple phrase ("When I awoke, you were long gone"), creates a comfortable spot where the listener can feel safe to cry, hold somebody close, or do nothing at all. Like I said, perfect.

-- Katie Rife is an OU junior majoring in video production, though she will soon be abandoning that program for a specialized studies degree. She likes noisy music, foreign films, and soba noodles. She doesn't like Hollywood.

Send us your articles, reviews, stories, poems and artwork.

Please limit written submissions to 500 words and make sure artwork is suitable for black and white print.

The Awakening carefully considers all submissions.

Send print submissions to the Women's Studies office at Lindley 004.

CD Review: Bjork's *Medulla* (Elektra)

By Katie Rife and Jessy Lancaster

Some musicians seem just like you or me, like you could go out and have a beer with them sometime. Not so with Bjork. She's eccentric, and talented enough that she could very well be from another plane of existence — or perhaps she's just reaping the benefits of artistic control. You can expect that she's going to try to defy our expectations. This is not to say that she doesn't have a distinct style; like Beck, she is one of the few who can change their musical template with every album and not get lost in the confusion.

Bjork's raging individuality makes her sound like a banshee to the uninitiated, and this chasm has not gotten any smaller with the release of her new album, *Medulla*. As in her last album, *Vespertine*, Bjork continues to move away from the electro-pop tracks that made her famous and towards the avant-garde. Maybe working with Matmos, creators of the infamous *A Chance to Cut is a Chance to Cure*, made entirely of sampled plastic surgery sounds, pointed Bjork on her current path. I say this because this latest album has a gimmick. Almost all the sounds on *Medulla* come from the human voice — Bjork's, other singers', those of choirs, beat boxers (most notably Rhazel of The Roots fame), and a Japanese guy known as "the Human Trombone."

On the one hand, without electronic beats to keep it on the ground, the melodic structure of this album is both lush and ethereal. When the choirs kick in, particularly behind a swelling chorus, *Medulla* lifts itself right off of the ground. This gives a cinematic, Ennio Morricone-meets-*The Wizard of Oz* feeling to tracks like "The Pleasure Is All Mine" and "Oceania." Another layered atmosphere is evident on "Submarine," which can be described as equal parts TV on the Radio's "Accident," and a big hit of nitrous oxide. And the official hymn of the Church of Bjork is "Sonnets/Unrealities XI."

On the other hand, if you don't appreciate IDM and Yoko Ono, you won't like the more abstract soundscapes, like "Miokivudags," that pepper *Medulla*. With "Oll Birtan," Bjork's vocals act as the underlying counter melody, accent notes, and primary melody, making up a song with little-to-no followable pattern. "Ancestors" has to be the most abstract song on *Medulla*. Grunts, meows, heavy breathing, and sex sounds abound. It's an innovative approach to song making, but the heavy breathing treads an uncomfortable line between artistic vision and audio titillation.

The beat boxing that Rhazel provides adds a hip hop element to the already eclectic *Medulla*. On "Mouth's Cradle," bits and blips of electronic noise swell into a soaring melody with an ebbing human beat laying the foundation. "Where Is The Line" starts out simply enough, with Bjork's melodic vocals, but a powerful grunt soon breaks in. Angelic choirs join the melee, and it's soon a full-blown orchestrated chaos.

On "Oceania," Bjork personifies herself as the ocean. Such an elemental voice is perfect for *Medulla*. It contains multitudes, literally. Sampled vocals form swooping, arpeggiated accents to Bjork's emotive vocals. "Oceania" contains only a few musical layers, but Bjork's voice fills the room easily.

And just as you think the album is about to end, a catchy, danceable song takes the stage. "Triumph of a Heart" finds a crazy IDM beat produced from human squabbling/squeaking noises, providing the background for Bjork's unmistakable crooning. This is a bit more like the usual Bjork — minus the drum machines, that is.

-- Jessy Lancaster is an OU junior majoring in psychology. She wants to do psychological research when she grows up. She likes McSweeney's magazine, astronomy, and dancing. She doesn't like jerks with stinky feet. (Katie's bio is on the previous page.)

Take Back the Night marches on

By Katie Krancevic

“Out of the dorms and into the streets! We won’t be raped; we won’t be beat!” If you were anywhere on campus May 5, you may have seen women marching and heard them chanting slogans such as this. The 28th Take Back the Night March was the culmination of Take Back the Night week, which included speakers, self-defense workshops, and documentary screenings. The Take Back the Night March is a protest against sexual violence against women and a display of women’s empowerment. It has been held in communities around the world since its founding in 1976, and in Athens for at least the past quarter century. Take Back the Night is also the largest annual feminist demonstration in Athens, typically composed of a few hundred participants. The overall event was open to men and women (including transgender persons). However, the march was a women-only space, with men (and anyone else who wished) showing support from the sidelines.

The Calliope Feminist Choir kicked off the event, followed by a poetry reading from Dawn Martin, an African-American lesbian committed to women’s empowerment. The march began with a candlelit vigil down Jeff Hill to commemorate victims of abuse. The women proceeded to march throughout each green on campus to Court Street, finishing the march at the College Gate, where women were invited to speak and share their stories and ideas.

As the women marched through the streets, they were encouraged by men on the sidelines and students from most of the dorms. A few women even joined the march as they saw it coming. Women were chanting, “Hey! Hey! Ho! Ho! This patriarchy has got to go!” and “Say it once, say it again. There’s no excuse for violent men!” among other things. The Athens Police did make their presence known but generally left the marchers alone as long as they did not impede traffic.

Katie Shaw, OU junior adventure recreation major, was glad that she participated. “The march really opened up my eyes to how many people are affected by the issues of hatred and sexual abuse.”

Mark Thornton was one of the men supporting from the sidelines. “The general feeling I got from women and men who were not marching was that the march was just a bunch of radical feminists and dykes who they certainly did not want to see or listen to. I think this perception is our biggest problem. If people really understood what a feminist is and what TBTN really is about, then I think even fairly apathetic and/or conservative women would be supporting the march too.”

-- Katie Krancevic is a junior magazine/broadcast major with an environmental science/psychology minor.

Major update

The proposal for a major in Women’s Studies has now been approved at all levels of University governance and awaits final approval by the Board of Trustees. Please check our website for updates.

Fall 2005 Course Offerings

WS 100:

Introduction to Women's Studies (4)

#06587; MW 5-7 p.m.; Bentley 110; Bedford
#06831; MW 1-3 p.m.; Bentley 023; Wales
#06589; TTH 2-4 p.m.; Morton 322; Hall
#06590; MW 9-11 a.m.; Bentley 306; Stokes
#06591; TTH 1-3 p.m.; Bentley 110; Whitson
#06592; MW 1-3 p.m.; Grover W113; Little

WS 350: Feminist Theory (4)

#06595; MW 3-5 p.m.; Gordy 203; Bedford

WS 481: Writing Gender (4)

#06750; TTH 10 a.m.-12 p.m.; RTEC 201; Peck

WS 589: New Feminist Scholarship: Graduate Capstone Seminar in Women's Studies (5)

#06826; W 1-5 p.m.; Gordy 205; Grant

AH 538A: Contemporary Art Theory and Criticism: Queer Theory and Visual Repre- sentation (4)

#00640; MW 3-5 p.m.; Seigfried 403; Klein

AAS 582: The Black Family (4)

#00692; TTH 12-2 p.m.; Lindley 050; Childs

ANTH 345/545: Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective (4/5)

#00766/00772; TTH 10 a.m.-12 p.m.; Bentley
Annex 011; Freter-Abrams

ANTH 349/549: Life History(4/5)

#00768/00774; TTH 6-8 p.m.; Bentley 304;
Rubenstein

ENG 153A: Writing & Reading Gender (5)

#02956; MW 5-7:30 p.m.; Ellis 119; Staff

ENG 306J: Women and Writing (4)

#02994; MTTHF 8-9 a.m.; Ellis 016; Staff
#02995; MTTHF 8-9 a.m.; Ellis 103; Staff
#02996; MTTHF; 9-10 a.m.; Ellis 031; Freeman
#02997; TTH 9-11 a.m.; Ellis 016; Staff
#02998; MTTHF; 10-11 a.m.; Ellis 015; Staff
#02999; MTTHF; 11 a.m.-12 p.m.; Ellis 109;
Staff
#03000; MTTHF; 12-1 p.m.; Ellis 019; Staff

#03001; MTTHF 1-2 p.m.; Ellis 213A; Staff
#03002; MW 2-4 p.m.; Ellis 213A; Staff
#03003; MW 3-5 p.m.; Ellis 120; Staff
#03004; TTH 5-7 p.m.; Ellis 015; Staff
#03005; MW 7-9 p.m.; Ellis 213A; Staff

HCCF 360: Human Sexualities (4)

#03483; MW 3-5 p.m.; Grover W305; Janson

HCCF 462A/562A: Diversity in Families (4)

#03509/03517; MW 1-3 p.m.; Grover W215;
Manoogian

HIST 320A/520A: Women in American History Before 1877 (4/5)

#03710/03758; MTWTH 1-2 p.m.; Bentley 306;
Jellison

HIST 332/532: Women in the Middle East (4/ 5)

#03715/03762; MTWTH 10-11 a.m.; Bentley
021; Quinn

HIST 354A/554A: Early Christianity (4/5)

#03721/03769; MTWTH; 1-2 p.m.; Bentley 129;
Uhalde

HIST 360C/560C: Women Warriors (5)

#03723/03771; MW 7-9 p.m.; Bentley 021;
Blessing

POLS 319/519:

Gay and Lesbian Politics (4/5)

#05597/05618; TTH 1-3 p.m.; Bentley 023;
Hunt

SOC 220: Introduction to the Family (4)

#05910; MWTHF 9-10 a.m.; Bentley 129; Hall

SOC 421/521: Comparative Studies of the Family(4/5)

#05929/05937; TTH 10 a.m.-12 p.m.; Bentley
304; Henderson

SOC 471/571: Gender and Justice (4/5)

#05931/05938; TTH 8-10 a.m.; Bentley 015;
Staff

Summer courses listed on Page 8.

Summer 2005 Course Offerings

First summer session

WS 100: Introduction to Women's Studies (4)

#11666; MTWTHF 10 a.m.-12 p.m.; Bentley 011; Little

COMS 420: Gender and Communication (4)

#11125; MTWTH 1-3 p.m.; Lasher 209; Miller

ENG 306J: Women and Writing (4)

#11272; MTWTH 1 a.m.-12 p.m.; Ellis 210; Gradin
#11273; MTWTH; 1-3 p.m.; Ellis 214; Staff

ENG 325: Women & Literature (4)

#11280; MTWTH 1-3 p.m.; Ellis 319; Gradin

HCCF 360: Human Sexualities (4)

#11317; MT 1-5 p.m.; TBA; Janson

PESS 500: Women in Sports (3)

#11719; MTWTH 8-10 a.m.; Grover W211; Bullard

Second summer session

ENG 306J: Women and Writing (4)

#40164; MTWTH 1-3 p.m.; Ellis 210; Rice

ENG 325: Women & Literature (4)

#40170; MTWTH; 1 a.m.-12 p.m.; Ellis 106; Webster

HCCF 462A/562A: Diversity in Families (4)

#55950/55951; MTWTHF 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Grover W215; Manoogian

POLS 319/519: Gay and Lesbian Politics (4/5)

#40596/40596; MTWTH 10 a.m.-12 p.m.; Bentley 120; Hunt

Complete course descriptions and updated course listings can be found on the Women's Studies Program Web site at www.ohiou.edu/womenstudies/.