

# Still Mad–On Feminism, Anger, and the Current State of U.S. Women’s Rights

An Interview with Sandra Gilbert

SANDRA GILBERT, KARIN HOEPKER

*The current state of Women’s Rights in the United States is a matter of grave concern and thus, without question, a core topic for an issue on “American Crises.” An altered Supreme Court and individual state legislation like the 2021 Texas Heartbeat Act raise distinct concerns over human rights issues, women’s reproductive rights, and the potential dismantling of Roe v Wade. The Trump administration and the January 6 insurrection gave new urgency to debates over toxic masculinity and its relation to populism and the media. The frustration over gender inequality, care work gaps, and the toll of emotional labor has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Recent Supreme Court nomination hearings have also raised new concerns about gender equity.*

*For a conversation about women’s rights, the state of feminism, and female anger we thus turn to one of the most enduring critical voices in American women’s studies: Sandra M. Gilbert, a scholar who has turned the madwoman in the attic into an icon of female rage against silencing and marginalization.*

*When in 2021, after almost two years of the global Covid-19 pandemic, Norton published Still Mad: American Women Writers and the Feminist Imagination, the volume marked a more than two decade-long journey of collaboration between two of the most renowned American feminist critics of our times. Ever since the two new female hires of the English Department at Indiana University Bloomington met in an elevator of Ballantine Hall, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have worked, taught, and published substantial bodies of work both on their own and in joint authorship. Starting with Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (1979) and followed by No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century (1991), their cooperation has constituted one of the important*

and enduring partnerships in literary and cultural studies. These two scholars blazed a new trail when *Women's Studies* was not yet a disciplinary field and English professors were almost exclusively white men teaching male authors. The *No Man's Land*-series has inspired a number of students and scholars to take their own journeys as readers and critics, and it continues to appeal to readers outside the discipline. Sandra Gilbert kindly agreed to add her voice to the polyphony of our "Forum."

**Karin Hoepker:** It is my great honor and pleasure to talk to feminist critic, scholar, public intellectual Sandra Gilbert today. She is also a poet, a writer, a distinguished professor emerita at UC Davis and really needs no introduction. So, welcome, Sandra, to our forum!

**Sandra M. Gilbert:** Thank you! I'm glad to be speaking with you!

**KH:** As part of our issue on "American Crises," which is the first issue of the relaunch of the *New American Studies Journal* at Göttingen University, I'd like to speak to you about the current state of feminism in the US as well as your new book with Susan Gubar, published last year, *Still Mad: American Women Writers and the Feminist Imagination*. The title harks back to your first collaboration with Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, which came out, I think, in 1979–

**SG:** 1979.

**KH:** This work has been one of the fundamental texts on women's literature ever since. Now, forty years later, *Still Mad* moves from nineteenth-century literature to the 1950s and after. You discuss the emergence of second-wave feminism; you talk about twentieth-and twenty-first-century writing; but you also include music, graphic novels, film, and TV series as part of a broader field of cultural production. It seems to me that you didn't just change the range and object of your study, but also your focus. You concentrate more on the lives of significant women, rather than exclusively on their writing, and use both the lives and the work of these women to reflect on the genealogy of feminist theory. So, looking back, if you compare *The Madwoman in the Attic* and *Still Mad*, would you say that your overall approach has changed? Have you moved more towards a cultural history of feminism?

**SG:** Yes, I think we moved much more toward cultural criticism. When we were working on *The Madwoman in the Attic*, nobody had written about this particular tradition that we felt we were defining. So, it was a much more theoretical book in certain ways, and it went more deeply into texts and to a certain extent into contexts as well, but it was really a more academic book. It was aimed at academic audiences; it was intended to help establish the field of women's studies in general and of feminist critical theory in particular. By now, of course, when we were working on *Still Mad*, these fields have been well established. What we were interested in now was tracing the overall arc of women's lives in the context of the community and culture in which they are living, which has become increasingly combative and difficult, especially in the Trump era. We began deliberately with the 2016 election and with a profile of Hillary Clinton as almost a paradigm of the women we were talking about. Women who, on the one hand, have been liberated to explore new ways of being, ways to "make the impossible possible," as Hillary Clinton herself said, but who, then, came up against real life, which proved to them that the impossible was still impossible or at least very difficult. So many of us were brought up to believe that we could do anything, we were brought up to believe that we could study anywhere, that we could get PhDs, that we could become professors, but we had never seen a female professor, neither of us ever studied with a woman professor. As far as we knew, professors were men in tweed jackets, with big, heavy shoes, and pipes, and sometimes beards. So where did we get the idea that we could do this? We were doing something that was completely impossible. We were trying to make the impossible possible. If we look around us now, here are you and me, and there are women professors like us all over the place. And yet, fifty years ago, forty years ago, that was not true.

**KH:** Here you are emphasizing differences and the fact that, clearly, we've come a long way. I am also struck, however, by your enduring focus on second-wave feminism. Some critics and readers have commented that this is an obvious choice: it's clearly where you're coming from and your area of expertise. But to me, as an Americanist, but not an American, *Still Mad* felt very timely. We currently see a resurgence of interest in the beginnings of second-wave feminism in popular culture as well, e.g., the Netflix documentary on Joan Didion, *The Center Will Not Hold*, Johanna Demetraka's slightly unfortunately titled *Feminists: What Were They Thinking*, and *Mrs. America*, the 2020, FX on Hulu, miniseries, created by Dahvi Waller...

**SG:** I saw that, yes.

**KH:** As a miniseries on the Equal Rights Amendment, it makes the interesting choice to devote a significant portion of its narrative and, indeed, its opening episode to Phyllis Schlafly, who is played by Cate Blanchett in a scary and intriguing way, I thought.

**SG:** Scary, scary and brilliant, right.

**KH:** But I find that very striking. Why do you think that is? Why is there this resurgence of interest in a historical period that, one would think, to a certain extent, we've overcome? Clearly, it can't be coincidental.

**SG:** I think, part of our argument—and I know Susan feels very strongly about this—is that the second wave is still cresting, that we are still part of the second wave. She feels very strongly that there is no third wave. I did a visiting professorship at Cornell where I had a bunch of very bright undergraduates who were claiming that they were all part of the third wave. Why? Because they wore spike heels and lots of lip stick and that made them third-wave feminists. So, I just said, “Well, you know, intellectually you really still are second-wave feminists, because your feelings and your theories and your ideas are essentially those of the second wave.” I mean, the second wave itself was so utopian in its visions. How could you go beyond utopian? What kind of more utopian utopia is there to imagine?

**KH:** Maybe that's a key point—that we try to tap back into second-wave feminism because we need more of a utopian impulse to deal with obstacles that post-feminism or a third wave doesn't quite address?

**SG:** No, it doesn't. All of the women we study, in one way or another—particularly the ones in the beginning, in the 50s and 60s—were conflicted. They were brought up to reach for the stars, but they were also told to “stand by your man.” They were brought up to get PhDs or go to medical school or go to law school, but they also had to worry about childcare problems—and they still do. Ketanji Brown Jackson, who was just nominated for the Supreme Court, a brilliant woman, had childcare problems. Fortunately, right now, her two daughters are seventeen and twenty something. So, she doesn't have to worry about that. How Amy Coney Barrett manages with seven children, I don't know. She must have tons of nannies.

**KH:** Maybe we can circle back to that later because I think there is an important point to be made about childcare and class and how a certain amount of privilege may make everything easier, surely.

**SG:** Right, right.

**KH:** But I felt, reading your book, that you make an argument that, looking at the academic landscape but also looking at political activism, the field has changed, that maybe there has been more fragmentation, that the field has somehow been fragmented by external pressures, by new media landscapes, by identity politics potentially. And yet, I felt, reading your book, that you're nonetheless really emphasizing a continuity, when it comes to this challenge to feminism: namely, that feminism from the very beginning needed to negotiate what might be the shared bases for alliances we're forming.

**SG:** Right. And I think that the concept of intersectionality is really important to us there. And we tried to talk about that in examining a number of the women and works we studied. At the same time, I think that at a certain point in the 80s and 90s a sort of "charisma of theory" overwhelmed the utopian and activist impulses of the second-wave movement. And as a result, many women—certainly on campuses—retreated from activism into a kind of ivory closet. A space that I thought was rather airless. I mean, if their only colleagues were going to be the French feminists, or the contingent of theorists from the Netherlands or from Germany or from wherever...they weren't going to speak to my mother and my daughters, who are not academics. And I felt that the second wave, when it began, did speak to our families and that was very important to us. Because you're not going to make crucial social and cultural changes if you only speak to people on campus.

**KH:** I actually remember that from Susan's class that we read all the French feminists and the French psychoanalytic school (though the French materialists are maybe a little more hands-on). And her engagement but also her concern about communication and accessibility that really...I mean, it's been a long time and there's a lot of stuff I don't remember—but that really stuck with me.

**SG:** We feel really strongly about that. It is certainly important to have a theoretical foundation for what you're doing and thinking but, at the same time, if you abandon public activism...

[telephone ringing, brief interruption]

**KH:** Returning to the importance of forming an alliance: you also talk about the history of female competition, but also about a culture of—you call it a “culture of trashing” (using a term from the 1970s, which is central to an essay by Jo Freeman in *Ms.*, April 1976 that you cite in *Still Mad*, p. 212).

**SG:** Oh, yes.

**KH:** Is that also something that you see resurfacing? That we experience increasing backlash and, at times, feel an anger that stems from the painful sense of being betrayed or sabotaged by other women? In the book, with reference to Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, you talk about these Serena Joy figures.

**SG:** That’s right.

**KH:** If you look at the Supreme Court and its shift from Ruth Bader Ginsburg to someone like Amy Coney Barrett, who seems to be a Schlafly-esque figure, at best, I feel...

**SG:** Actually, she is even more terrifying than Schlafly in a way, especially because she’s in a position to do more than Schlafly. She’s in a position to destroy *Roe v Wade*, which, I suspect, she will. I think that we have two kinds of fragmentation, though. On the one hand, there’s the fragmentation, which is the most important, where *Mrs. America* and “Judge Amy” and many women voters, who are Trumpists, just are ferociously, violently angry at feminism, and they are anti-feminists in every possible way. On the other hand, within feminism, there is a split between people who want to be more publicly clear and active, and people who are theorists and who feel that they need to be more theoretical, certainly in the academic world in order to compete on campus. So, we’ve been attacked more from the theoretical people because it seemed to them that, in *Still Mad*, we were attacking theory, and to some extent they weren’t wrong. We were not so much attacking it as pointing out some of its problems and drawbacks. There were ways in which it preoccupied women on campus so much that they forgot that one of our missions is to speak to the world and reaffirm feminism in resounding tones. So that’s another split.

**KH:** Reading reviews of *Still Mad*, a small faction of your readers—for whom *The Madwoman in the Attic* was so important—seem to be slightly taken aback by your move away from the more literary criticism, towards writing in a way more accessible for a general public. And that brings me to my next question, because, speaking of alliances and collaboration, for us as scholars, for you as a writer, the pact with the reader must be an important part of such an alliance. Part of the political impact that you have hinges on your ability to reach readers. So, I was wondering: do you feel that you have now addressed a different field of readers? Or do you feel that your readers have changed?

**SG:** That's an interesting question.

**KH:** I don't know whether that makes any sense, but: what's your imagined reader when you write something like *Still Mad*? Is it a new or different group?

**SG:** Yes, this was for general readers. This is for lots of friends who are sophisticates but who are not necessarily literary scholars. *The Madwoman in the Attic* was intended to speak to people who were, at the very least, English majors. I mean, I know many people read it as undergraduates and, I think, we attempted to write in a way that was not so arcane that it wouldn't be possible for an undergraduate to read and like our work. And we were also writing for ourselves. We were making sense of what we were discovering for the first time, so it felt like writing exuberant letters to ourselves and to each other. By the time we wrote *Still Mad*, we were looking at a whole overview of the field, of the world, of our colleagues, of our own lives, of the progress or lack of progress that has marked the last decades; and we're trying to assess all of that. Now, it's a much bigger field to undertake and to examine than we looked at in *The Mad Woman*. So, I think a lot of people miss, for example, the kind of deep readings that we did in *The Mad Woman*. We don't do deep readings: we read *The Bell Jar*, we read "Daddy," we read "Diving into the Wreck," but they are not deep readings. We can't devote a chapter to a single text because there's so much else that we want to cover. We're doing readings of lives. We have to read Hillary Clinton's life, we have to read Nancy Pelosi's life, and so that gives us an urgency in a different direction from the direction of *Madwoman*.

**KH:** And I liked how you do that. You read these lives and you interpret what they wear, and you interpret the public gestures, and it's very much a hermeneutic process. Or a thick description (in Clifford Geertz's sense). It's clear, I think, that a project like that will always open itself up to criticism. We can always debate choices of inclusion and exclusion, and the sheer necessity of having to limit and prioritize...

**SG:** Switch that one out or that one out. Some people were enraged and insulted that they were not included.

**KH:** People were personally insulted?

**SG:** Yes, and it didn't do any good to explain to writer X or writer Y that, "Well, you really weren't part of the 70s movement that we're talking about, so even though you are a wonderful writer you just didn't fit in this particular intellectual construct." At the same time, we were attacked as being too theoretical and we were attacked as being not theoretical enough.

**KH:** Yes, that struck me also. Reading reviews...obviously, these are essentially canon debates that people are having over a set of names, texts, works...in that sense, reactions say maybe more about the readers or critics than about the texts. Maybe it is more interesting to look at these reactions in terms of what they may say about the reader, the reader's expectations and frustrations, and about the context and the moment in time. The book sparks debate, and maybe that's already part of the productive process, the dialogue, and an engaged process of reading.

**SG:** That's an interesting point.

**KH:** One thing that really struck me is how—as part of this dialogue with a history of women and between the book and your real-and-imagined reader—the debate also seems to crystallize or congeal around the aspect of the personal. On the one hand, you explicitly focus more specifically on the women you discuss, on their lives, but there have been some questions to what extent you include yourself in this reading of lives. (I seem to remember a point made along those lines in an *LA Review of Books* article on *Still Mad*.)



**SG:** Somebody said that we should talk about our own struggles.

**KH:** Yes, I was surprised at that because that hadn't occurred to me while reading *Still Mad*. But it's interesting in terms of expectations...

**SG:** Well, there are certain material conditions that go into the making of a book. When we first wrote a proposal for this book—which had been suggested to me by our mutual editor at Norton—we said we would talk about ourselves, and the editor said no. She and her colleagues didn't want it to be memoiristic. So, that was a material condition: we were not going to be memoiristic because we wanted to publish it. We had a publisher who was enthusiastic about the project, and we weren't going to just sort of go around to other publishers and say, "Let us be memoiristic or we won't write this book." And I could see that the overview that they wanted us to do was in the end going to be more reasonable as a project. I mean, how would we insert ourselves... well, it's very easy for us to insert ourselves into the world of Hillary Clinton and Sylvia Plath, as readers and as citizens—but why us, you know, rather than somebody else? We're talking about representative figures who are cultural icons and, as you say, it's a hermeneutic process; we're trying to analyze them and their texts and their contexts and it would be rather egotistical to put ourselves in there.

**KH:** I also wondered: is this absence of the overtly personal maybe also a result of, or part of the process of collaborative writing? That there is something like a synthetic "we"?

**SG:** Oh, yes!

**KH:** You write about your individual experience, but you write somehow collaboratively.

**SG:** We do write about the history of our collaboration, yes.

**KH:** And that feels very personal and very intimate in a way.

**SG:** And it is. But it's true, I think you've read it right. Collaboration, because it's a third voice, it's not me and it's not her, it's...We will say to each other, literally, "Well, we wouldn't put it that way." I mean, maybe I would put it that way or Susan would put it that way, but *we* wouldn't put it that way. *This* is the way we would say it. And it's just very strange. I have read something very interesting that Auden wrote about his collaboration with Chester Kallman. He talks about the construction of this new, this other, this third collaborative voice. Most people don't collaborate in the humanities and so they don't know how it works. And you know, in fact, it's really hard to do. I mean, it takes a lot of practice and you have to get over a lot of embarrassment. For example, when we first started planning *The Madwoman in the Attic*, I said to Susan, "Oh, why don't we call this book *Upstairs, Downstairs*?" and she laughed, "Oh, that's so ridiculous! Oh my god, what a bad idea!"

[both laugh]

**KH:** Oh, that's a harsh reaction, though.

**SG:** Well, *Upstairs, Downstairs* was the *Downton Abbey* of the day.

**SG:** And I thought we were talking about the parlor and the kitchen in *Jane Eyre*, or the attic and the parlor. And so, then I said, "Well, what about *The Madwoman in the Attic*?" "Well, that would be good."

**KH:** You find common ground and that's part of the negotiation.

**SG:** Right, it is.

**KH:** In reading the book I feel that that kind of shines through and it makes the writing process a potential role model for how women work together and how that's maybe different. I mean, I have "collaboration envy" when I look at books like that! I'm like, I want that! I want forty years of writing together with someone. May I ask you how you do it, though? I think I've read somewhere that you communicate via speakerphone.

**SG:** Oh, yes, that's right! Well, each book has been written differently. With *The Madwoman* there was no email and there were no speakerphones. So, we traveled a lot, but we also mailed, just mailed things back and forth. It seems incredible, we mailed manuscripts, and we wrote on them, and we mailed them back and forth. And yet we did it all in a year or so, which seems amazing to me. Then, with the later books, in *No Man's Land*, we would travel, we would give talks somewhere, and then we'd stay an extra week to work together. Sometimes we'd write in the same room, with two notebooks and two pencils. Sometimes we'd fight about who would be the one who got to sit at the computer and do the actual writing. Each of us wanted to do that, right? And then, with this book, which we wrote during the pandemic lockdown, we just did it with email attachments and speakerphones. Sending drafts back and forth to each other, going over every one of them over and over, until I really couldn't tell who wrote what or what it had been before I last went over it, or she last went over it. But we would just keep going over it and streamlining it. And then our editor wanted us to cut it, so we had to do a lot of cutting, which also involved rewriting and revising, so, we were constantly doing that. And so, there is that stream of language that has been...I don't know where it came from. It came from some other place because it was so worked over. It is a very interesting process. When we have to write flap copy, we can get on the phone and finish each other's sentences.

**KH:** That's amazing! But I feel that you can see that. I mean, it feels hybrid enough that you understand that there must have been some sort of dialogue, but, at the same time, it's an actual "we." That's why I said to me it feels like a role model for, maybe, how women can work together and that you get over your own profile neurosis...

**SG:** Well, it's embarrassing, or, it can be. When we first started team teaching, it was like that, too. Usually in the classroom you have a kind of curious privacy. You have this intimacy with your students that you don't want anyone else to know about. You don't want other people to know what you do or say to students—it's embarrassing. Simply because everyone has an individual way of dealing with the classroom. So when you team teach with someone, that's replaced by a different dynamic.

**KH:** Do you miss teaching sometimes?

**SG:** Yes, sometimes I do, sometimes I do. I happen to belong to at least three different poetry groups, and in at least one of them, I think, I function a little bit like a teacher. Because I'm the one who suggests what poems we should read and some of the people are younger. But I learn so much from them —well, I always learn from my students. It's a group enterprise. So, no, I don't miss that kind of intellectual contact, because I do have it. And one thing I don't miss is grading papers. I do not miss that.

**KH:** I can see that. I just think that teaching is such an important part of how we may define ourselves. It is such a big part of how we reach out, reach an audience, hopefully make some sort of an impact.

**SG:** But also, for me, it's how I learn. I remember that I learned something crucial from a comment one student made about an episode in *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin. I mean, I really learned in the classroom. And I learned from my own teaching because I had to organize my mind in order to convey thoughts to other people in a clear and coherent and reasonable but inspiring way.

**KH:** To me, the classroom also seems a privileged space, in a way. The way you recognize each other in a mutual learning process, and maybe that also brings me to another question: to what extent do you feel that recognition is possible. Is there something like an ethics of recognition in society? To what extent is that maybe stunted by rage, on the one hand, but also by a culture of bullying. You write about white male violence. This scene in *Still Mad* when you write about Nancy Pelosi, how women deal with temper tantrums and narcissism and a fragility that is basically the product of privilege taken away. And the other person simply doesn't react like a responsible grown-up.

**SG:** Well, we had four years of that. And it's hard to believe that we really survived it. We barely did, considering what happened on January 6, which could have been even worse.

**KH:** Do you feel that that's over, though?

**SG:** No, I don't think it's over. I think he's still simmering down there in Florida and could go off like a nuclear weapon—just as much as his pal Putin is going off, right? He doesn't have the power, at least, that Putin has at the moment.

**KH:** He used to have access to nuclear weapons though.

**SG:** He did. It was terrifying. And yet, there were millions of women who voted for him. I remember hearing a woman on a radio program, a Trump voter from Montana, and she was being interviewed about why she wanted to vote for Trump, and she said, “Oh, he makes me feel so safe. He makes me feel so safe.”

**KH:** Wow. But why?

**SG:** Well, remember there was Schlafly’s argument that women are safer behind the MRS, behind the facade of the MRS, because they’re taken care of by men. And she was against the ERA because it meant that women would have more responsibilities. Did you know, by the way, that Trump spoke at her funeral?

**KH:** I’ve read about that. I have this disconnect, like, I don’t understand how this culture that is conservative—Schlafly was also Catholic, right?—and religiously conservative, how they enter into these “unholy” alliances.

**SG:** Well, look at Amy Coney Barrett, she’s also an Evangelical Catholic. But I’m a literary critic, so I don’t really have an explanation. I mean, we did become cultural critics in this book, and we didn’t really talk much about Amy Coney Barrett and what she represents. But I think she represents Phyllis Schlafly redux. And yet she sits on the Supreme Court. So, it’s really sort of bizarre.

**KH:** You also turned to Atwood, to *The Handmaid’s Tale* for referencing some of that.

**SG:** Right, right.

**KH:** And that is so darkly dystopian. “Backlash” doesn’t even begin to describe this notion that we might be dropping back into fundamentalism. So, I was wondering, since your book nonetheless feels optimistic, how do you retain faith in the utopian impulse? Or do you? How do you not become disconnected and dystopian?

**SG:** Because with the election of 2021 we felt that there was a hope for some redemption. We were so thrilled by the nomination of Kamala Harris, a woman of color. We were thrilled when Amanda Gorman spoke at the inauguration, another woman, a very young African American poet. It felt like there might be a turning around. And even looking at the State of the Union address, it was inspiring to see Nancy Pelosi and Kamala Harris, two women, behind the President. And as he stands at the podium and they're at the speaker's desk, at one point, he was talking about *Roe v Wade* and the camera panned in on Amy Coney Barrett, who was sitting stone-faced in the front row in her Supreme Court robes. It was scary, it was scary like *The Handmaid's Tale*.

**KH:** I agree. At the same time, I feel that you still see the women standing *behind* the President and that is in itself...

**SG:** But it used to be men standing behind the President. I mean, they're not standing there with cups of coffee, they're standing there in office. They're both in line for the presidency. Harris is the first and Pelosi is the second in line for the presidency if anything should happen to Biden.

**SG:** And we did have Barack Obama. I know some people believe that his presidency laid the groundwork for Trump because it caused the backlash of the MAGA men. And then Trump kept saying he wasn't really born in America. Making this obscure nativist argument.

**KH:** But we learn from feminist history that that's the worst kind of argument: that *we* caused the backlash because women wanted equal rights and progress. You actually use *Fatal Attraction* as one of your examples for the 90s as a period of backlash and of male violence. As we see in the film, all of a sudden there is this external threat and then you get to fight for the nuclear family. (And that you betrayed your wife before is conveniently forgotten because now you're fending off the crazy, external, female invader.)

**SG:** Right, the female invader. Some of that gets acted out in science fiction. For *Still Mad*, we divided things up a little bit, so I was primarily responsible for the whole utopia/dystopia/science fiction stuff. I got very, very hooked on some of that. And you see that, for example, in Joanna Russ' *The Female Man*, where there

are four different types of women and one of them has stainless steel claws underneath her apparently normal fingernails. And she's the monster who will kill the man. The man that she's killing is not nice either. And I happened to have gone to college with Joanna Russ.

**KH:** Oh, wow, okay!

**SG:** She did see the world as a kind of battle of the sexes, and many of her other stories are like that, too.

**KH:** And then we have variations of that also in Octavia Butler's work, like the Xenogenesis trilogy, where the alien trope becomes a way of go beyond the binaries of gender and race. And also, Butler thinks of human hierarchy, aggression, and also toxic masculinity in interesting ways, which also connects directly back to *Still Mad*.... But that's maybe material for yet another interview, since there is so much more to discuss, and I'm afraid I have already taken up more of your time. Thank you for being so patient!

**SG:** This was a wonderful conversation!

## About the Authors

**Sandra M. Gilbert** is distinguished professor emerita of English at University of California, Davis, a literary and cultural critic, a public intellectual, a feminist, and a poet. One of her recent poems is included in this issue of *NASJ: A Forum*. Her work as a literary critic and feminist involves a long and productive collaboration with Susan Gubar that resulted in a series of series of anthologies and collections like *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English* (1985, 1990, 1996, 2007), as well as the jointly written volumes *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the 19th-century Literary Imagination* (1979), *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the 20th Century*, and, most recently *Still Mad: American Women Writers and the Feminist Imagination* (2021).

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