Historical and Archaeological Perspectives on Gender Transformations: From Public to Private

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With this substantial volume, Suzanne Spencer-Wood continues to bolster feminist historical archaeologies and Springer gains another strong addition to its ever-growing *Contributions to Global Historical Archaeology* series. There is much diversity packed into these pages. Chapters range from synthetic overviews of tea drinking and feminist theory to detailed case studies of individual reformers and their households. There is global scope. Massachusetts, California, and New York all receive individual attention, sharing space with studies of South Africa, Sweden, and the Pacific. The 19th century—which saw the entrenchment/negotiation of the titular spheres and is so often the focus of feminist archaeologies—receives the most attention. Collectively, however, authors cover the early modern period through 1940; there is even a chapter on medieval Spain. Studies of the later 20th century could have made connections between these early periods and present-day gender roles more explicit. Nevertheless, the editor has assembled a refreshing chronological breadth. Material practices of Anglo, European, Mexican, Native, and African Americans are addressed. Sites are both urban and rural. Chapters grapple with cultural entanglements (of reformer and reformed, colonized and colonizer, immigrant and native, male and female, etc.). There is some engagement with historical masculinities and subaltern gender identities, usually in the context of domestic life. The emphasis of the editor (and the all-women contributors) remains on middle and working class heterosexual women as social agents.

Spencer-Wood organizes the volume into five thematic sections after her introductory chapter, a roadmap to the collection that defines its central goals as denaturalizing (1) the separate spheres philosophy and (2) inherited gender stereotypes. While it is no longer revolutionary to approach gender as a cultural construct tied to race, age, and class, much work remains to be done clarifying this important topic. The volume achieves this end both through synthesis and microhistorical exposition.

Part 1 demonstrates that the ideal separation of the spheres never existed in practice. Rather, men's and women's public and private experiences overlapped and entangled. Material-based approaches are particularly good at demonstrating the fallacy of the spheres via spatial and practical evidence. Chapters in this section focus on the presence of the public sphere of social reform within the supposed private sphere of the home. Annie Gray discusses the long history of women and tea, concluding that women manipulated this iconic beverage as much to challenge normative gender roles as to reinforce them. Deborah L. Rotman studies Arts and Crafts style production within a feminine collective in Deerfield, Massachusetts, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Colonial revival nostalgia provided a model of gender equity for these women. Kim Christensen offers material biographies of two female reformers

from New York state during the same period. She finds that their belief in the separate spheres was challenged by their own social activism within domestic spaces and that competing ideologies charged everyday materiality with significance (especially as the Victorians embraced material culture's didactic potential).

Part 2 turns to public/private discourse within colonial structures of identity and power. These chapters constitute the most diverse section of the volume, and Spencer-Wood presents them chronologically. Ieva Reklaityte's chapter on urban architecture in medieval Spain, if somewhat disorganized, demonstrates how concepts of privacy and penetration were expressed in Muslim vs. Christian domestic spaces. She reinforces the lesson that modern American gender roles were not universal. Joyce M. Clements unpacks gendered, racialized, religious, and economic identities within Puritan society. She studies documentary and burial evidence of Native American women's subjectivities within colonial Massachusetts's Praying Towns. Clements concludes that these women had greater autonomy before "contact" than after. Shannon M. Jackson discusses bodies and architecture in Cape Town, South Africa, between 1665 and 1860. Dutch style architecture facilitated multiracial, gendered, and aged interactions within the home, while later Anglo styles rigidly defined and divided spaces, restricting these encounters/identities. She argues, however, that one must interpret this shift from multiple subjective standpoints and not accept it as a nomothetic truth. Angela Middleton explores expressions of the cult of domesticity at several Pacific mission contexts during the mid-18th through 19th centuries. Archaeology demonstrates how the Protestant "household" model of missionizing was an irregular fit at such institutional sites. It was also actively resisted, manipulated, and thwarted by indigenous peoples.

Part 3 returns to modern (19th- and 20th-century) America and the ways public reformist institutions infiltrated private domestic practices, spaces, and bodies. Spencer-Wood's second contribution begins the section. It synthesizes "Western Gender Transformations from the Eighteenth Century to the Early Twentieth Century" and includes an intellectual history of feminist scholarship. She offers the useful insight that reform movements charged supposedly mundane domestic practices—hence objects—with intensely contested meanings. University level students will find this overview a helpful introduction to feminist archaeologies. It would make more sense, however, as a grounding synthesis at the beginning of the volume. While many different sorts of people know what current fashion is, and ascribe to the values such dress manifests, only some have the means to practice it. Carol A. Nickolai comes to this conclusion after a largely documentary study of dress reform in 19th-century America. Anne E. Yentsch's biographical study of Mina Edison, Thomas Edison's wife, is an intimate portrait of gender roles that were at once conventional (in public) and radical (in private). Yentsch provides a valuable lesson: inherited histories can marginalize women's power, even as they mythologize the individual woman. Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh also writes in a biographical mode but moves the discussion to early-20th-century rural Sweden and the life of Hannah Rydh. There, technologies of efficiency forwarded Rydh's ethical and feminist agendas. Rydh was an archaeologist, as well as a domestic and agricultural reformer; one wonders how her beliefs shaped her archaeological practice.

Part 4 returns to the concept of colonialism, not as the imposition of a conquering foreign power but as an insidious internal mechanism of the modern nation-state. The distinction between part 4's "Internal Colonialism: Public Reform of Domestic Material Practices" and part

3's focus on public scrutiny of private practices is not always clear. This ambiguity suggests, perhaps, that postcolonial theory is a trenchant framework for analyzing diverse configurations of domestic reform. Through an archaeology of 19th-century households in the utopian community of Smithfield, New York, Hadley Kruczek-Aaron exposes a surprising irony: Christian social reform—even abolitionism—was tainted with disrepute. It threatened 19th-century reformers' respectability and gender identities. That is, activist men were accused of femininity, while public-minded women were decried as masculine. Mary Praetzellis compares and contrasts artifacts associated with two late-19th-century urban California kindergartens and neighboring households. The educational context is welcome, as is her intertwined discussion of early childhood, class, ethnicity (immigrant status), and gender. She wrestles with how to frame institutional sites of social control (internal colonialism or egalitarian idealism?) with no clear resolution. In the final contributed chapter, Stacey Lynn Camp continues themes from Praetzellis in a study of the early-20th-century Americanization movement, materialized within Mexican households in California and New York. Her conclusion applies equally to all chapters. Ultimately, she argues, research into gender reform and public/private spheres reveals more about the reformers than the reformed.

In her third chapter, the final part V "Commentary," Spencer-Wood defines 13 different theoretical streams that connect and crosscut the volume (radical feminist, Marxist, postcolonial, third wave feminist, queer, masculinity, etc.; embodiment is, surprisingly, absent). She makes explicit those frameworks that are sometimes more, sometimes less obvious in the chapters themselves—a service to the reader that supports volume cohesion. The chapter also works as a primer on modes of feminist scholarship. It adds greatly to volume utility, despite some repetition from her chapter in part 3 (of the three waves of feminist theory, for example).

Not everything relating to a topic can or should be included in an edited volume. Here, sex and sexuality are rarely confronted (but see Clements and Jackson). Some case studies describe non-normative household models and assert the situational fluidity of gender roles (e.g., Rotman); more sustained exploration beyond feminine/masculine binaries (and their inversion) would be welcome. The volume makes few new arguments, but, with compelling clarity in a kaleidoscope of contexts, it continues to dismantle the notion of separate spheres and natural gender roles. I appreciate the inclusive presentation of "archaeology." Many chapters are overtly archaeological (e.g., Christensen, Middleton, Kruczek-Aaron), but others make little to no mention of excavated materials, focusing instead on material traces in written, visual, and spatial sources (Yentsch, Arwill-Nordbladh). Most striking is the insight, articulated in Spencer-Wood's introduction and several chapters, that apparently coherent ideologies (in this case, separate spheres/cult of domesticity) are expressed via a varied field of disruptive practices. This conclusion raises a question. If the notion of separate spheres was more fiction than lived fact, why has it remained so persuasive? Authors will, it is hoped, share their perspectives on this issue in future studies.

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