

THE LEGACY OF SEPARATE SPHERES

LouAnn Wurst

IT HAS BEEN NEARLY TWO DECADES since Conkey and Spector's (1984) clarification call rallying archaeologists to the study of gender. It is gratifying that archaeologists have taken this call seriously, and there are few contexts where gender has not been considered at some level. Historical archaeology is no exception. In fact, given the nuanced information from documentary sources, historical archaeologists often pride themselves with being in a better position to deal with complex issues of social organization than prehistoric archaeologists. It is therefore no surprise that a great deal of gender literature stems from historic period contexts (Seifert 1991; Walde and Willows 1991; Wall 1991, 1994; Scott 1994).

As in any case of paradigm shift, the easy work of consciousness raising has already been accomplished. The hard work—reevaluating gender and other social relations—is still under way and has proved much more difficult. In many ways, much of the work to date has focused on theoretical issues stemming from political concerns (Sorenson 2000). Much less literature has focused on methodological issues. Obviously gender archaeology is easier to talk about than to do.

Much of the initial research on gender in history and historical archaeology has been framed around the idea of "separate spheres" as an

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3c Reforestation by the CCC. (Pamphlet)

3d The CCC: A Youth Program. (Pamphlet)

3a Annual Report of the Director of the CCC. (Report)

3b CCC Foremanship. (Pamphlet)

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that redware milk pans and pots be seen as dairying vessels that women used in the production of butter and cheese, both marketable commodities. Other vessels used in the preparation of family meals can also be seen as "productive," even though no cash remuneration was involved. As Boydston (1990) has argued, housework is an essential part of the productive relations in American society, and we must recognize them as such. Thus, we can see food preparation vessels as tools needed for women's productive labor. Eliminating the boundedness of these dichotomies allows us to focus on the social relations themselves: "People produce things to consume, consume things to produce, consume things in the process of social reproduction, and produce social beings and social relationships" (Wurst and McGuire 1999:196).

Working through the methodological legacy of "separate spheres" ideology has been one of the most difficult challenges for gender archaeology. Vestiges of these ideas can be found throughout this volume. I wonder, for example, why Young, given the evidence of matched vessels found at different slave cabin sites, assumes that it was the women who were the ones involved in gift giving and sharing their material goods and not men (or families, lineages, etc.)? McGirr's analysis of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial is based on and continues the long tradition of reified gender conventions that defines landscape as feminine. Even more subtle usage of "separate sphere" expectations can be found. For example, Lewis states that the gender relations that gave rise to his cellar deposit represented more than the "economic function of the building," implying that gender and the economy are somehow differentiated.

Demolishing Dichotomies

The solution to the problems inherent in A/Not-A dichotomies is not to do away with dichotomies entirely; they exist because they capture some basis of reality. Fox-Genovese (1993) makes the claim that all attacks on dichotomies are also attacks upon order in general, and thus the entire human past; we have to have some way to order and make sense of human behavior.

One common strategy to move beyond A/Not-A dichotomies is evident in the contribution by Suzanne Spencer-Wood. This article follows

a familiar structure—examining a specific context, demonstrating "a female presence on the male side" (Rotman, this volume), and then using this trespass to question the notion of an exclusive male/female dichotomy. In her analysis of women's role in urban landscape design, Spencer-Wood follows her previous work (1991, 1992, 1994, 1996) to challenge the male-public versus female-private dichotomies. Through her analysis of women's participation in the parks, playground, and children's garden movements, Spencer-Wood argues that women's efforts have been written out of the history of these domestic reforms, and that women's organizations actually led these reform efforts.

I would argue that this work, and other research following the same vein, is important, but that it is not radical enough. Documenting examples of men or women that may have crossed to the other side of the fence does not question the reality of that fence. This tactic does not move us past our theoretical impasse since it does not confront the false underlying structure of the dichotomy. Instead, these scholars are doomed to simply pile up one cautionary tale after another, hoping to smother the flawed logic beneath its weight.

Instead of doing away with dichotomies, we have to reconceive the logical structure underlying them. Dichotomies do not have to be framed as mutually exclusive A/Not-A structures. Instead, the traditional dichotomies of male/female, production/consumption, and public/private have to be defined dialectically—as A/B dichotomies. Instead of seeing dichotomies as polar opposites, we have to recognize that they are integrally connected, representing differing aspects of the same social entity. Rejecting the boundedness allows us to understand the relations between aspects of common dichotomies.

As Rotman suggests in the introduction to this volume, this approach requires a theory of internal relations based on the concept of the dialectic, where the web of social relations makes up the whole, and the appearance of these relations are taken to be its parts (Ollman 1993:35). McGuire (1992) notes that a theory of internal relations is not the only approach that uses the idea of relations. Relations are equally important within systems theory and other "common sense" approaches. The difference, however, is that these theories define concrete entities that interact as external relations. Using the dialectic implies that it is the internal relation that actually defines and creates the surface appearance

of the entity; the entity or "thing" does not and cannot exist apart from that relation (McGuire 1992:94; see also Ollman 1971, 1993; Sayer 1987; Harvey 1996).

All dialectical research focuses on the totality of real lived experience, and then proceeds to an examination of the part to see where it fits and how it functions (McGuire 1992; Wurst 1999; O'Donovan 2000). These parts or elements are defined through the process of abstraction, the simple recognition that all thinking about reality begins by breaking down the complex whole into analytically manageable parts (Ollman 1993:24). According to Sayer (1987:147), this process begins with the use of concepts that are empirically open-ended and analytically capable of letting in the real world. This process eventually leads back to a fuller understanding of the whole we began with (Ollman 1993:12), defined not as universals, but as the way people live their own history (Thompson 1966). In this vein, gender must be an empirically open analytical concept, since real gendered social relations exist only in concrete historical contexts.

The dialectical investigation of gender, expressed as an A/B dichotomy, provides an emancipatory potential absent in A/Not-A formulations, since it allows for alternatives and logically does not preclude the existence of C or D. Rejecting the binary and exclusive structure of the A/Not-A gender dichotomy allows us to conceptualize more than two genders, and to see age, marital status, class, and race as key aspects of gendered social relations. A theory of internal relations, and the focus on the production and reproduction of everyday life, also avoids the common pitfalls surrounding the "Holy Trinity" of class, race, and gender. The problems inherent in A/Not-A dichotomies are multiplied exponentially when dealing with the complex intersection of race, class, and gender. Like gender, race and class are typically seen as reified entities, where membership is based on mutually exclusive criteria that are marked through differential use of material culture (Singleton 1999; Wurst 1999). Thus, these social categories also fall prey to the underlying logic of A/Not-A dichotomies. A theory of internal relations focuses on social totality, which must be examined from different levels of abstraction, generality, and vantage point (Ollman 1993, see Rotman, this volume). In this context, race, gender, and class are not separable, but are rather different aspects of real lived experience.

McGuire, in her analysis of the landscape of the Vietnam War Memorial, highlights this interaction. Perhaps the professional jury deemed Maya Lin's simple design as "completely free of political statements," but the controversy that raged shows that the memorial became imbedded in struggles over class and race, as well as gender. The formulation of A/B dichotomies allows us to deal with the "real" complexity of gendered social reality.

A dialectical approach based on an A/B logical formulation also has very different methodological implications for a gendered archaeology, and historical archaeologists have begun to recognize that elucidating these social relations will require a great deal of methodological creativity. Numerous critiques have emphasized that the issue is not one of defining the "things" associated with either men or women, and performing a simple comparison. As straightforward and intriguing as this may seem, this approach is fundamentally flawed. From a dialectical approach, "things" are defined by social relations and cannot be understood outside of that totality. McGuire (1992:95) notes that material objects "are both the products of social relations and part of the structure of those relations."

Lewis presents a case study that demonstrates the power of breaking down typological barriers. He begins his analysis of an intact cellar deposit interpreted as the refuse from a tin worker's shop with the following question: Why did the shop remain undisturbed after the tin worker's death? Lewis's quest to answer this question follows an interesting path. He takes us on a journey into the legal context of women's property law and Elizabeth's key role in securing her children's inheritance after she remarried. While I was not necessarily swayed by all of his arguments, I was fascinated by his analytical movement through this problem. Lewis reminds us that all domains of social life are affected by gender relations, and that understanding the role of gender goes far beyond attributing activities to either men or to women.

To date, most of our attention has focused on defining what gender is, and the corollary, where or how gender can be linked to the material world. I find it useful in this context to raise the question of what gender does. Even though it has assumed the status of a dreaded "F" word, we ignore at our own peril the fact that gender has a function. While gender is an important structuring component to all societies, it can also function as an ideology, to naturalize and uphold dominant and often exploitative

social relations of production and reproduction. Asking "what gender does" in any social context essentially shifts the focus from gender as an essentialized "thing," to examine gender as social relations involved in the production and reproduction of social life.

Van Wormer discusses how the New Deal programs functioned to reinforce 1930s' U.S. gender ideals. She suggests that the goals and objectives of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Camps for Unemployed Women (CUW) were determined by the social construction of gender of that era. She describes how the programs for men emphasized the psychic debility of unemployment, community work projects, vocational training, and monetary aid to their families. According to societal norms, unemployment was the preferred state for women, so relief geared towards women focused on housekeeping skills and the temporary respite from physical and mental stress. These differences had real material consequences; the women, if they were paid at all, received only fifty cents a week while the men were typically paid about a dollar a day. These real material differences do not simply reflect gender norms of the time, but functioned to uphold and reinforce the status quo.

Mutuality, Complementarity, Conflict, and Power

A dialectical view of gender makes it possible to capture the complexity of social relations in the real historic contexts we hope to study. In her introduction, Rotman notes that household composition was not monolithic, and we need to understand that conflict and struggles defined the relations between homeowners and servants, husbands and wives, and parents and children. On the other hand, compelling arguments for mutual or complementary gender relations have been presented for contexts as disparate as the Inca (Silverblatt 1987), the Aztecs (Kellogg 1995), Native Americans (Devens 1992), and nineteenth-century farm families (Osterud 1991).

Conceptualizing gender based on an A/Not-A dichotomy forces the question: Which is it? Exclusive dichotomies can't be both mutual and contentious. A dialectical approach, which abstracts different levels of generality, extension, and vantage point, allows us to recognize that households are composed of individuals that may have conflicting interests, yet at another scale, more complementary gender roles may be evident.

For example, in her analysis of two plantations in the antebellum south, Young shows how enslaved men and women labored for the mutual preservation of the household: "enslaved men and women divided and used the landscape of the slave community differently, and both worked within their gendered spaces to provide for and protect their families and community." We have been conditioned to view gender as a "battle of the sexes," men versus women, where goals and aspirations seldom coincide. Yet a focus on the production and reproduction of everyday life makes it clear that this is a simplistic caricature that may only capture social reality from a single level of abstraction. Men, women, and children, as families and households, exist with social relations that produce and reproduce material existence. It is hard to imagine human survival without some level of mutuality and complementarity in gender relations.

And yet, we have to be careful not to paint households in too rosy a light. Swayed by the dominant paradigm of separate spheres, historical archaeologists have been slow to recognize that the household, any household, is a locus of struggle and conflict (Wurst 1999). Decades of television families (such as *The Honeymooners*, *The Flintstones*, and even *The Simpsons*) should have taught us this, if even in a stereotyped and surreal way.

Hautaniemi and Rotman highlight the conflict within individual households in terms of access to resources (see also Jellison 1993). They discuss how provisions for water delivery and waste disposal are integrally related to labor: as a requirement for many types of work, labor to transport water, and the labor necessary to create the water provisioning system. Within the households of Deerfield, Massachusetts, access to and control over the basic necessity of water became a locus of struggle between men and women of the same households. Hautaniemi and Rotman's analysis reveals that women in male-headed agricultural households had less control over water resources than other independent women who ran their own households and made their own decisions.

Examination of the ways that the Shakers reproduced their vision of heaven on earth also leads Savulis to recognize the complexity of social relations within households and communities. In particular, she describes how the spiritual revival known as Mother's Work provided the setting for power struggles among the movement's hierarchy. This grassroots revivalism provided access to new forms of social and spiritual power for women and other marginalized members of the community. This example clearly shows that power and conflict were real aspects of

the gendered social relations of what we typically conceive of as a unified community.

Complementarity and mutuality are important aspects of all gendered social relations. I suspect that given the political imperatives of feminism, the importance of these aspects have probably been underestimated in much gender archaeology literature (Bender 2000). However conflict is also an essential aspect of these social relations. It is imperative that we do not forget that gendered social relations are always about inequality. Only by formulating gender as a dialectical A/B dichotomy can we recognize that these relations are mutual and conflictual at the same time.

Conclusion

We will never be in a position to understand gender relations in the past, or change modern gender inequalities without eliminating definitions of gender as an A/Not-A dichotomy. These dichotomies have been critiqued theoretically ad nauseam, yet we seldom recognize the impact that the A/Not-A structure has on the way we organize and classify our data. Until we rethink the gender boundedness of material culture, we will never be in a position to produce anything but "cautionary tales."

Jay has noted that A/Not-A dichotomies are very effective in resisting change. Those whose understanding of society is structured by this kind of formulation find it very hard to conceive of alternative forms of social organization since they eliminate the possibility of third choices. Within this kind of thinking, the only alternative to the one order is disorder. By not challenging this kind of structure, we look at history *through* gender by accepting "separate spheres" as logical categories. Instead, we must study gender in history by questioning whether gender spheres were truly separate and what social functions this socially constructed separation served (McCaw 1989:178). If we cannot really do this for the past, we will never be in a position to look "in" gender in the present.

The chapters in this volume provide some interesting road markers toward looking at gendered social relations with material culture. The most important lesson is that any boundaries or limitations are imposed by our own inability to refute the legacy of separate spheres ideology. The information here shows that fluid movement across the boundaries is essential. Every material bit, whether water pipes, tin scraps, playgrounds, or memorials, has the potential to elucidate gendered social relations.

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NINE

MULTILOCAL PLACES

MATERIAL SYSTEMS, METAPHORS,
AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

Lou Ann De Cunzio

"CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING" (DE CUNZIO 1996:12). I wrote this simple statement in a review of the practice of historical archaeology. Today, it offers a starting point for thinking about this chapter. In essence, I begin by putting *myself* into contexts. These contexts have informed my response to the essays that Deborah Rotman and Ellen-Rose Savulis have assembled to "stretch our understanding of landscapes and the dynamic nature of gender relations" (Rotman, this volume).

CONTEXT: January 2000, Quebec, Canada, *Discussant, Society for Historical Archaeology Session: Shared Spaces and Divided Places*. As I reviewed the papers in the session—some appear in this book, others do not—I thought about my general reaction to much of the historical archaeological literature on gender and landscape that I had read. Two particular concerns haunted me, and I hoped these papers would address them. First, I bridled against the limited goal of many studies that sought to "find" gendered