

PROGRAMME TO PRACTICE: Gender and Feminism in Archaeology

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ABSTRACT

In the past decade, archaeologists have given considerable attention to research on gender in the human past. In this review, we attempt to acknowledge much of this diverse and abundant work from an explicitly feminist perspective. We focus on reviewing a selection of approaches to gender that are anchored to specific theoretical standpoints. In addition, we highlight several approaches that challenge an archaeology of gender that does not explicitly engage with the implications of this topic for research, practice, and interpretation. From our perspective, we suggest the value of situating gender research within an explicitly feminist framework, and we draw attention to some of the important insights for archaeology from the wider field of feminist critiques of science. Last, we draw attention to the crucial implications for the practice of archaeology.

The big, unitary Answer that levels, grades and paves reality like a super-highway is not only NOT the solution, it is at the very heart of the problem.

Utne Reader (Jan.–Feb. 1995, p. 57)

...by showing “other alternatives are thinkable by no means debunks our current beliefs, it only exposes as fraudulent the absolute authority with which we think them” (Daston 1993, as cited in M.T. 1993, p. 35)

INTRODUCTION

In 1997, the state and fate of an archaeology of gender rest on more than any single political agenda or any monolithic approach to the topic. The intensity with which the study of gender has infused archaeological discourse and analysis in the past five years does not mean that there is now—nor is there anticipated to be—a shared orientation to the study of gender, or a single methodology for studying gender, or, perhaps more problematically, even a commonly held body of theory and data about gender (for a partial review of work on gender in archaeology before 1991, see Kehoe 1992). In fact, publications now include as diverse a set of statements and even straight-out contradictory starting assumptions as can be imagined.

This review emphasizes where a feminist-inspired archaeology sits within the discipline today and where it can potentially take the discipline as we move into the next millennium. We do not review all examples of the archaeology of gender, which, in any case, are too numerous to be accounted for individually. We also do not dwell on what is thought to be known about “women in prehistory” (but see du Cros & Smith 1993, Ehrenberg 1989, Spielman 1995), “women in history” (but see Balme & Beck 1995, Scott 1994, Seifert 1991, Walde & Willows 1991, Wall 1994), or “women in antiquity” (but see Archer et al 1994; Fantham et al 1994; Kampen 1995; Pomeroy 1975, 1991; Rabinowitz & Richlin 1993). We do not consider in any depth specific methodological approaches to reveal women (or “gender”) in the archaeological record (but for an overview of diverse approaches, see Costin 1996 or Hayden 1992; for burial analysis, see Hollimon 1991, 1992; for cross-cultural regularities of gender roles, see Kent 1995; and for ethnohistory, ethnoarchaeology, iconographic research, see Arsenault 1991, Gero 1997, Miller 1988).

Rather, today’s literature requires from us a more self-conscious positioning of perspectives; no single position within the larger discourse, and certainly not our own as given here, can present itself as neutral or all-encompassing or even as all-tolerant. Instead, we intend this review to move forward an explicitly feminist inquiry in archaeology, one that is committed to changing the way archaeology is practiced, the way it is presented, and the nature of archaeological interpretation.

We begin by considering how the recent explosion of interest in gender is positioned in the archaeological literature, highlighting several distinct ways of connecting empirical archaeological study to theoretical resources and arguments. We then review a selection of studies in feminist archaeology that are particularly notable for how they have opened up transformative and imaginative possibilities for the archaeologies of the next millennium. Despite the enormous promise of these revelatory studies, we recognize internal obstacles

or resistances that seem still to inhibit a full engagement in gender research in archaeology, and we raise questions about the overall effects of the increasing volume of gender research in archaeology, asking whether inquiry has been further opened to interested scholars or whether it has narrowed. Finally, we address the centrality of feminist thought—specifically the feminist critiques of science—to notions of archaeology as a science, to archaeological problem-solving, to fieldwork and data collection, and to teaching and the presentation of archaeological issues.

TAKING UP GENDER IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Locating the Corpus

The explosion of literature on archaeological gender in the past five years is concentrated in large part in published collections of papers originally presented at gender oriented conferences, or in organized speaker series (Balme & Beck 1995; Claassen 1992, 1994; du Cros & Smith 1993; Gero & Conkey 1991; Walde & Willows 1991; Wright 1996), together with similarly concentrated special gender issues of periodicals, e.g. *Historical Archaeology* [1991, 25(4)], *Norwegian Archaeological Review* [1992, 25(1)], *Plains Anthropologist* Memoir [1991, 26], *Massachusetts Archaeological Society Bulletin* [1994, 55(1)], *Journal of Anthropological Research* [1996, 51(2)], and *CRM* [1997, 20(3)]. These topic-focused special publications on gender numerically overwhelm the articles appearing singly in journals, a recognized historic pattern by which new subfields are introduced into archaeology (M Cabak, unpublished manuscript, 1989).

At the same time, almost all major North American journals have published at least one article that focuses on the archaeology of gender, including *American Anthropologist* (Moss 1993), *American Antiquity* (Wylie 1992), *Archaeology of Eastern North America* (Dent 1991), *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Linke 1992), *Current Anthropology* (Joyce 1993b, McCafferty & McCafferty 1994), *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* (Allen 1996, Larick 1991, Solomon 1992), *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* (McGuire & Hildebrandt 1994), *Latin American Antiquity* (Guillen 1993), *North American Archaeology* (Sassaman 1992), *Research in Economic Anthropology* (Costin 1993), *Visual Anthropology Review* (Gifford-Gonzales 1993), and *Gender, Place and Culture* (Tringham 1994). For one recent annotated bibliography, see Bacus et al (1993).

Furthermore, this is far from being a local, Americanist phenomenon. Research on gender has proceeded vigorously in many international contexts (e.g. Norway, Australia, South Africa, Germany), and international journals

have regularly if sporadically included articles on gender, e.g. *Journal of European Archaeology* (Bailey 1994a, Robb 1994), *Antiquity* (Englestad 1991, Gilchrist 1991, Kehoe 1991, Meskell 1995), *Archäologie der Schweiz* (Basel) (Muller 1991), *Australian Archaeology* (McDonald 1992), *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* (Boardman 1991), *South African Archaeological Bulletin* (Mazel 1992, Wadley 1989), and *World Archaeology* (Bailey 1994b, Dobres 1995b). International interest is apparent by other measures as well: Multiple conferences (du Cros & Smith 1993; Balme & Beck 1995; Kästner & Karlisch 1991; Solomon, personal communication), thematic journals on or by women (e.g. *K.A.N.* 1985–), review articles (e.g. Dommasnes 1992), and special journal issues (Englestad 1992) have appeared. However, French archaeologists appear perplexed by what they consider to be a historically and culturally specific Anglo-American concern with gender, a term that, they claim, has no translation into French [Coudart, personal communication; see also del Valle (1993b, p. 2) who makes a similar point for Spanish], suggesting that the genealogies of gendered anthropology are markedly Anglo-Saxon, linked to a new imperialist archaeology.

In addition to the burgeoning number of journal articles, it is increasingly the case that regional or topical edited volumes will include an article on gender (e.g. Gifford-Gonzalez's 1992 contribution to a volume on archaeozoology, or Yentsch 1991 and Spencer-Wood 1991 in a volume on inequality), and anthropological volumes on gender will sometimes include archaeological contributions (e.g. Conkey & Williams 1991, Nelson 1992, Silverblatt 1991). Moreover, gender issues are increasingly recognized as significant to other problem areas in archaeology (Dobres 1995b; Dobres & Hoffman 1994 on prehistoric technology; Hingley 1991 on social archaeology of houses; Hendon 1996 on domestic labor). Gender appears, though rarely, in Cultural Resource Management reports (e.g. Walsh et al 1994; for some discussion, or the special issue of *CRM* in 1997, see Rogers & Fowler 1994). According to Claassen, over 500 conference papers authored by over 400 individuals have been presented on gender since 1988, and over 10 conferences devoted to gender and archaeology have been held since 1987 (Claassen, personal communication), but it remains to be seen how much of the enormous oral literature will culminate in published works. A promising sign is the September 1996 announcement by the University of Pennsylvania Press of a new book series, *Regendering the Past*, devoted explicitly to gender in archaeology (e.g. Claassen & Joyce 1997).

The Gender Genre

Researchers in prehistory have embraced gender studies to resolve a wide spectrum of problems. Motivated by a rejection of the equation of human be-

havior with the behavior of men, a primary purpose for undertaking a gendered archaeology is to identify or assert the presence and activities of women on prehistoric sites. The value of these studies begins with a recognition of female labor in a broad range of activities (e.g. Benedict 1993), many of which were once considered exclusively male domains such as Paleoindian encampments (Chilton 1994), Paleolithic cave art (Russell 1991), Natufian transitions from foraging to agriculture (Crabtree 1991), Maya animal husbandry (Pohl 1991), or pre-Columbian Moche mortuary rituals (Arsenault 1991). Similarly, the identification of women in high prestige burials has challenged the monopolization of power by men in stratified societies (McCafferty & McCafferty 1994, Nelson 1991a). In addition, "looking for women" (indeed, finding women!) forces self-conscious attention to starting assumptions about gender, where, for instance, traditional assessments of a division of labor are examined and either adopted (Sassaman 1992, Watson & Kennedy 1991) or revised (Crabtree 1991, Duke 1991). Such "locate-the-women" projects also take up the once unshakable redundancy of gendered task "assignments" in cross-cultural perspective. For instance, by asking where women might be located in the production sequences of flaked stone tools, archaeologists have "found" women in the organization of quarrying activities (Sassaman 1997), heat treatment sequences of silicious rock, or variability in core preparation vs expedient technologies (Sassaman 1992). Looking for women also accounts for a renewed interest in iconographic representation (Levy 1995, Pollock 1991), and especially in female figurines (Bailey 1994b; Brumfiel 1996; Dobres 1992, Hamilton et al 1996; Joyce 1993a,b, 1997; Lesure 1997). The results of these studies are that women have shown up at prehistoric sites and in political and economic activities all over the globe, sometimes in the most unlikely places.

This literature contains sharply differing views of gender in human history: Males and females are interpreted as accepting and reproducing, or as resisting and redefining, their gendered social positions. Definitions of what it might have meant to be female or male at particular points in time alternate with descriptions of how gender meanings shift and undergo transformations. Gendered groups are lumped or split. The primacy of gender as determinant of social identity is sometimes emphasized. Other times, gender is subsumed under other social identities such as ethnicity, class, or occupational status. Some researchers use archaeological materials to focus on behavioral patterns (gender roles) of females and males, while others focus on gender relations and relative statuses of females and males, or on gender ideology as sets of meanings attached to being female or male (Robb 1994).

Equally notable is the continuing development and literature in archaeology that takes an explicitly gender-sensitive approach to the sociology of the field. A number of volumes deal with the previously "hidden voices"—women

as archaeologists—particularly in the history of archaeology. Biographies of previously unacknowledged or underappreciated women archaeologists include the work compiled in Claassen's (1994) and Reyman's (1992) edited volumes, as well as studies published elsewhere (S Bender 1991, 1992; Bishop & Lange 1991; Chilton 1992; Claassen 1993; Cordell 1991; Joiner 1992; Levine 1991; Nelson 1991b; Parezo 1993; Woodbury 1992). These reveal a surprising range of roles and strength of scholarship that women offered archaeology on many continents, sometimes as the hidden spouse but also often as a passionate but publically invisible contributor. There is also a substantive body on equity issues (in Claassen 1992, in du Cros & Smith 1993, Engelstad et al 1994, Ford & Hundt 1994, Hanen & Kelley 1992, Nelson et al 1994, Ovreivik 1991, Spielmann 1994).

Equity issues in archaeology have consistently influenced, and been influenced by, the scholarly research on gender in past human societies. In fact, studies by Smith & du Cros (1995), Wylie (1994b, 1996), and Hanen & Kelley (1992) find that the interest in engendering prehistory has been directly motivated by perceived or existing gender inequities in the modern research community (see also Whelan 1995). Meanwhile, feminist ideas, theory, or perspectives are only rarely cited as having motivated participants' interest in gender as a topic of research (Wylie 1994b, 1996).

Theoretically Anchored Positions

In this section, we highlight several theoretical approaches that have proven especially rich for engendering archaeological data and/or that present an especially well-developed theoretical position on gender. These are identified because the assumptions underlying each approach directly influence the scale of analysis, the data selected for analysis, or the interpretive meanings attached to archaeological gender research. In each case, the theoretical perspectives include a range of expressions rather than a single stance; further, they are neither mutually exclusive nor always compatible. We regret that our summaries may oversimplify to the point of distortion, but we provide additional references to pursue. Ultimately, each of the six approaches represents a different way to connect empirical archaeological study with theoretical resources and arguments, a process that we strongly promote for the maturation of an engendered archaeology.

GENDER AS SOCIOBIOLOGICAL STRATEGY Some researchers have found it useful to frame gender as the culturally mediated means by which sex groups seek to maximize their reproductive fitness by contributing more genes to the genetic constitution of future generations. Sociobiological researchers conceive of two unambiguously dichotomous sexes giving rise more or less di-

rectly to two uniformly gendered classes of individuals, males and females, whose biological sexual characteristics are modeled as presumed universals, including the (male) ability to fertilize (multiple) eggs and the (female) ability to produce single ovulation events and to physically bear children, in addition to hormonal differences, lactation, menstruation, and biological strength. Any one or a combination of several universal sex characteristics can be considered determinant of the cultural behaviors adopted by each sex group and account for why males and females are “assigned” gender-specific roles and activities. Socio-biological positions differ in the degree of determinism assigned to specific biological factors as well as in the degree of cultural conditioning and mediation that intervenes between the drive for biological fitness and the expression of gendered behaviors. Thus, highly determinant sociobiological positions include Knight’s (1991) argument for the cultural implications of convergent female menstruation and the simultaneous ovulation of proximate women (see also Golub 1992; or Zeanah et al.’s 1995 argument for different male and female foraging strategies in the Great Basin). Hayden (1992) similarly associates “well-established” sex differences such as hormonally related aggression levels with broadly observed gender preferences for particular tasks, such as group defense. At a much less direct level of sociobiological reasoning, Costin (1996) argues that gender difference in its many diverse aspects represents a highly general means for members of each sex group, within a given cultural context, to demonstrate their appropriateness both as marriage mates and as potential parents to a mate’s children.

GENDER AS SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION The concept that gender and sex are constructed—that is, not rooted in biology or procreation nor inherently dichotomous—has been integral to feminist theory in the anthropological literature since the 1970s (see especially Kessler & McKenna 1985). But meanings of “social construction” have developed and changed, from the initial liberal feminist approaches that emphasized only the social construction of masculinity and femininity, often taken as givens [see Epstein’s (1988) critique], to the French feminists’ focus on psychoanalysis and politics (e.g. Irigaray 1985), to the position that challenges gender as a construction more important than, or even differentiable from, aspects of class, race, and/or ethnicity (e.g. Collins 1989, Hooks 1984), to the cultural feminists’ (e.g. Butler 1990, Flax 1990) rejection of the stability of either sex or gender as categories, even as socially constructed ones, or to Lorber’s (1994) recent analysis of gender as a social institution. All the variant ideas within the constructionist critique start from the assumption that the construction of our analytical categories (even the very term “gender”) is deeply embedded in historical, sociocultural, ideological, and material contexts.

Archaeologically, this may take the form of questioning the "origins" of gender (e.g. Conroy 1993, Moore 1991, Whelan 1991): At what point and, more importantly, under what circumstances, did something like "gender," as a social construction, come into play in human life? What is its relationship to the (sexual) division of labor? How, archaeologically, might we recognize or identify the emergence or existence of social phenomena that look like gender? If one accepts the idea that gender is dependent upon symbolic communication systems, it is immediately problematic to assume that australopithecines or other early hominids had "gender."

There is little work within the anthropology of gender that does not take gender to be some form of social construction; perhaps only the sociobiologists reject or avoid using the concept. But the implication that necessarily follows, namely a "respect for historical difference and change" (di Leonardo 1991b, p. 29), has not always been embraced, even after such compelling studies as Laqueur (1990), Jordanova (1980), and Merchant (1980) have demonstrated the importance of historical change vis-à-vis gender and sexuality, just within Western history. While social constructivism is widespread, varying degrees of constructionism are admitted. There is justifiable concern about the radical version of the constructivist critique, which tolerates interpretations that could be labeled "nihilistic," and there is also justifiable concern for the ways in which this constructivist critique has been polarized against a conservative objectivism (Wylie 1994a,b; see also Bergman's 1995 critique of di Leonardo's oppositionality of postmodernism with political economy). Given archaeology's concern with the materiality of past human life, an important issue arising from these debates for archaeology, and one of archaeology's important contributions to them, is to probe the best means of analyzing the dialectic between human life as socially constructed and the very materiality of human life. One of the more eloquent expositions on this topic, specifically oriented toward the archaeology of gender, is by Wylie (1992; see also responses by Fotiadis 1994, Little 1994, Wylie 1994c). Above all, the idea of gender as a social construction mandates that archaeologists interrogate their starting assumptions when setting out to do an archaeology of gender.

GENDER AS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS Evolutionary models, which arrange discrete sociocultural instances in an order toward increasing complexity, may assume, and thus be useful in predicting, regular changes in the evolution of gender systems. While the egalitarian relations of foraging peoples are reiterated in nonhierarchical gender relations, an intensification of gender hierarchy is posited to correspond with each level of increased sociocultural ranking or stratification. Thus for the evolutionists, the widely observed male dominance in present-day societies is seen as anything but normal or natural.

Rather, the appearance of patriarchy is linked to the emergence or incurrence of the state, with its admission of hegemonic power relationships and overt power differentials.

Evolutionary models may follow more or less closely from Engels's descriptions of an early matriarchic period in human history (sometimes called Gynocentric Theory) later overturned by males who subverted the natural order and balance. Feminist anthropologists and ethnohistorians have used such understandings to explain the transformation of independent Naskapi women into submissive Christian wives after contact with Jesuits (Leacock 1981); the step-by-step erosion of Andean women's realms of feminine power, first through the rise of the Inka state and then as the Spanish conquest of what is now Peru intensified (Silverblatt 1987, 1991); or the undermining of Tongan women's power by the colonist invaders' transformations of social relations (Gailey 1987). There is little doubt that, given the success of archaeology with some forms of an evolutionary paradigm, the scrutiny of "gender" as part of the evolutionary transformations in the human past can and have yielded important new understandings of the transformations themselves.

GENDER AS POLITICAL ECONOMY Although the "culture and political economy" approach is a widespread feature of much recent anthropological inquiry (see Roseberry 1988), among feminist sociocultural anthropologists this view has been promoted most vigorously by Micaela di Leonardo (1991a,b, 1993). di Leonardo (1991b, p. 27) defines five key points in her feminist culture and political economy approach (di Leonardo 1991a, but see Bergman 1995 for a critique). First, she favors a radical rejection of social evolutionism. In contrast to the evolutionist approaches noted above, she argues that "feminist anthropologists cannot locate the 'key' to male dominance over women in small-scale societies," as if these somehow represented "living history" (di Leonardo 1991b, p. 28); the approach mandates a "respect for history."

From this pour forth additional points, including the rejection of essentialism, the potent role of social constructionism (see above), and the recognition of the "embeddedness" of gender in other social divisions like hierarchy. Lastly, she argues for the imperative analysis of all forms of social inequality and the explicit recognition of the "multiple layers of context through which we perceive cultural inequalities" (1991b, p. 31).

For archaeological studies, there is much to be gained from engaging with these points and putting them to work in interpretations of the archaeological record. Foremost among those who have considered the effects of political economy on gender roles and constructs is Elizabeth Brumfiel. Brumfiel (1992) reminds archaeologists that "political economy" is not equivalent to the more traditional "subsistence economy" approach because the former recog-

nizes the role of human agency, politics, and negotiations in economic decisions and actions. Brumfiel (1991) also draws on standard archaeological evidence such as ceramics and spindle whorls to demonstrate how Aztec women may have undertaken different strategies to negotiate the demand for production of tribute cloth. This provides an excellent example of how foregrounding gender, and in particular the role of women, in an analysis of Aztec political economy leads to more nuanced and “peopled” understanding.

Furthermore, Brumfiel’s study demonstrates that there is no single “women’s role” but rather several alternative strategies through which tribute can be “paid” through women’s labor. Brumfiel’s work is a powerful reminder against the tendency to homogenize or essentialize—in this case Aztec—“women” and forces our attention to what Moore (1993) has called “differences within” rather than to the “differences between”—as between the two genders, men and women—that are usually discussed.

GENDER AS AGENCY Taking a cue from what has been more generally called “practice theory” (Bourdieu 1977, Ortner 1984), some scholars have come to understand gender as one of the “acts” whereby social identities are produced and are constantly “in production”. Gendered subjects are produced, not born. Recent anthropological thought has recognized, first, the importance of an ongoing tension between “structure” and “agency” (after Giddens 1979 and others) and, second, “the agency of subordinated and marginalized persons to contest meanings and engage in praxis in their social worlds” (Bergman 1995, p. 235). As such, this perspective is clearly suitable for probing aspects of gender, especially in those historical circumstances in which gender, marginality, and subordination are inextricably, and perhaps inevitably, entangled.

If gender itself is taken to be produced by the goal-oriented actions and performances of individuals or groups, this opens the door, even within archaeology, to reassessments of everything from technology (as gendered labor practices, after Dobres 1995a) to sculptural choices (as producing and reaffirming conceptions of personhood, after Joyce 1993a) to apparently simple artifacts, such as the pins and spindle whorls (as markers of gendered identities, after Marcus 1994 or McCafferty & McCafferty 1991, respectively) to food preparation (Hastorf 1991).

GENDER AS PERFORMANCE Arising largely from the work of Judith Butler (1988, 1990, 1993), the performativity view of gender dismisses gender as an essential quality or as any kind of entity that individuals can “have,” and is replaced by a concept of gender as how people exhibit themselves in their actions and bodily decorations. In assuming that ongoing gender “production” is crucial, Butler directs attention to the analysis of performance as a means of

analyzing this production. This is appealing in that it is a “temporally attuned approach” (Hasbrouck 1996, p. 17), one that promotes the idea that both gender and sexuality are very complex and fluid in each individual, continually in a relational flux. Moreover, in her work, and therefore differentiating her work from the earlier arguments of West & Zimmerman (1987), Butler argues that gender is constituted as a set of acts that produce the effect or appearance of a coherent substance, and that it works and derives its compelling force from the fact that people themselves mistake the gender acts they perform for the essence, coming to believe that such acts are genuine, inescapable moments of self-actualization. Thus, in Butler’s terms, performatives are both generative and dissimulating, compelling certain kinds of behavior by hiding the fact that there is no essential, natural sex to which gender can refer as its starting point.

In archaeology, the performativity of gender has been explored most actively by Rosemary Joyce (1993a, 1996, 1997) showing, for instance, how the practices of inscription required in the employment of ornaments of durable materials (carved stone and ceramic beads, pendants, ear ornaments, etc) transform the open and generative shifting performances of gender to closed, prescriptive ones.

Challenges to an Archaeology of Gender

Within the explosive archaeological literature on gender, a small number of studies cross-cut the examples of theoretically anchored positions examined above and differentiate themselves by presenting the discipline with real challenges to research as usual. The assumptions, methodologies, and conclusions of such works must be taken seriously to anticipate the full potential of a feminist-inspired archaeology of gender. For instance, although Janet Spector’s 1993 book, *What this Awl Means: Feminist Archaeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village*, covers what might be expected in a traditional site report (context and background of study, methodology, data, and interpretation) it also departs radically from traditional presentations of archaeology materials. Spector (1993, p. 3) rejects an “objective, object oriented and objectifying” archaeology to position herself and other interested contemporary actors (Native Americans, crew, archaeological associates) at the center of the report. The narrative abandons the passive academic voice and the abstracted European categories imposed on Indian artifacts and insistently ties archaeological information back to the experiences of specific archaeologists (Spector’s own intellectual roots) and relationships among specific indigenous peoples (the history and experiences of the Eastern Dakota).

The reiterated use of Dakota personal names and Dakota names for things is partly (literally) how Spector forces us to consider the Wahpeton Dakota in their own terms, but Spector also plumbs ethnohistory and nineteenth-century

illustrative accounts to present a richly detailed and specific reading of Dakota seasonal and gendered social life, confronting readers on another level with the enormous gulf that separates our normalizing “scientific” research from the highly individualized cultural lives that we study. Spector highlights women’s activities and the relationships between men and women by examining the tasks performed by each gender, but also by presenting a fictional reconstruction of how one artifact, an incised bone awl, might have been situated and then lost in the life of one Wahpeton woman. Spector’s work evokes our humility in understanding and proposing meanings for what we study in archaeology, cautioning us not to resist interpretation but rather to resist imposing meanings from outside the experiential worlds of the people we study.

Brumfiel, in her lecture as the Distinguished Archaeology Speaker at the 1991 annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, delivered a message of considerable insight and impact, not only for the archaeology of gender but for archaeological theory more widely (Brumfiel 1992). She shows quite clearly that to take up the topic of gender is, itself, a challenge to extant theory and method. As someone trained in, skilled in, and committed to many of the tenets of “processual” archaeology, Brumfiel has particular credibility in her critique of the ecosystem approach that has long been a central feature of processual research. In this, Brumfiel challenges the usually dichotomous categories of “processual” and “postprocessual” that have come to characterize different approaches in contemporary archaeology. Instead, she argues forcefully that the analysis of social change has “been hampered” by certain components of the ecosystem approaches as used in archaeology, such as its insistence upon whole populations and whole adaptive behavioral systems as units of analysis that obscure “the visibility of gender, class, and faction in the prehistoric past.” She shows that when gender, class, and faction are taken into consideration, then aspects of the prehistoric record can be explained that cannot be explained from the ecosystem perspective. Thus, the very appreciation of the importance of gender, class, and faction leads directly into a stunning critique of one fundamental processual tenet, namely, that cultures are adaptive systems.

Brumfiel (1992) also shows that the recognition of gender, class, and factions and their intersections has enormous theoretical implications. While reasserting the potential of an agent-centered or “peopled” approach, she simultaneously advocates that we can continue to pursue new versions of cross-cultural and testable models. This work is crucial to placing the archaeology of gender in several wider frameworks, including both the history of archaeological theory and the emergent emphasis in feminist research more widely on understanding the intersection among variables such as gender, race, and class.

The very category of "gender" in archaeological analysis has been challenged by Roberts (1993), with particular emphasis on the implications of gendered research for archaeology. There are two especially important aspects to her critique, a critique with which we have considerable sympathy. First, Roberts demonstrates that while social theory is central to taking up "gender" as a category of archaeological analysis, there is enormous resistance to the archaeological theorizing of gender. Because of the difficulties of importing social theory directly into archaeology, she argues, "theorizing gender will continue to be extrinsic to archaeology" (p. 17). This gives rise to the tension between those "who pursue an archaeology of gender as an end in itself (most gender case studies) and those who are critical of this approach (Conkey 1990)" (p. 18). Thus, Roberts identifies a key paradox of gender research in archaeology: "[T]hose interested in an archaeology of gender cannot afford to challenge the framework assumptions and paradigms of research practice...because an 'archaeology of gender' relies upon these things for its formulation and expression" (p. 18).

In the second aspect of her critique, Roberts makes a clear distinction between "two threads" in the use of gender as an archaeological category. She calls one "the archaeology of gender," the other "gendered archaeology." While these threads are interwoven, she says, they will necessarily have different impacts on the practice and "results" of archaeology. The archaeology of gender, while offering "crucial insights" and rectifying some gender biases, "moves toward synthesis" and does not necessarily lead to reconceptualizations. Gendered archaeology, however, "involves the interrogation of archaeological inquiry"; archaeology is shown to be a "highly-constructed form of knowledge-seeking" (Roberts 1993, p. 18). It implies that we should follow a path that is more self-reflexive and that gender, for example, must be a fully theorized concept, not just another analytical variable. She draws explicitly from feminist insights, and while advocating our attention to such, she does not advocate merely replacing our existing modes with some sort of "uniquely feminist mode," something that, in any event is itself hotly contested (e.g. Longino 1987, 1994; Stacey 1988; Wylie 1995).

Roberts (1993) herself notes that the very introduction of gender research in archaeology has contributed to two significant features of contemporary archaeology: (a) the recognition that archaeology is necessarily interpretive and therefore "must come to terms with other than common-sense explanations of human action" (p. 20); and (b) the recognition that archaeology is, more than ever, faced with developing its own distinctive understandings. This means that while there is much extrinsic to archaeology to be looked to and inspired by, gendered archaeology will necessarily need to adapt this material to the special conditions of archaeological knowledge. We endorse this view.

Critical Thoughts: The Overburden of the Cottage Industry and Other Obstacles

There is much to celebrate about the enthusiastic adoption of gender in archaeological study: New questions have been put to old data, new topics and perspectives have been brought to well-studied archaeological situations, and questions have been raised about the gendered production of both the archaeological record and archaeological knowledge (see below). But the above-discussed challenges also suggest that the explicit focus on gender in archaeology has more deeply exposed—or at least thrown into new relief—fundamental and even irreconcilable differences between what a feminist and a traditional archaeology are, and how one thus goes about doing archaeology. That is, not all archaeologists will embrace the pursuit of an archaeology of gender, even when the point is clear that not everyone must “find” gender (e.g. Dobres 1995c).

In the explosion of work in archaeology about gender, some of it draws explicitly and creatively from robust and richly developed theoretical resources, from both within and outside archaeology. But much of the literature considers gender in prehistoric studies without reconfiguring archaeology in any way, without drawing from new resources to tackle new problems, without admitting the ambiguity of archaeological data, and without repositioning the otherwise authoritative scholar in the complex web of theory, data, and archaeological practice. As Bender (1997) points out, there seems to be a rush to the pragmatic, to the empiricist studies without a simultaneous engagement with the requisite theoretical resources. To her, this makes for “rather thin gruel” (B Bender 1997). This also matters to us.

This is not to say that only archaeology has such problems. In her introduction to *Gendered Anthropology*, del Valle (1993b) notes how little of the theoretical work in gendered anthropology has impacted, much less been incorporated into, anthropology more widely, and mainstream assumptions and categories remain intact. She astutely notes that this is primarily related to the control and validation of (anthropological) knowledge, an issue to which we can only allude here (del Valle 1993b, pp. 14–16) but which is also true in archaeology.

We could expect the explosion of work in the archaeology of gender to appear in wider feminist and even anthropological treatises; there should be archaeological contributions to journals like *SIGNS* or to the Association for Feminist Anthropology’s Silvia Forman Prize competition for an outstanding student paper. This has yet to happen. In Lorber’s (1994) recent overview chapter on the archaeological contexts for understanding gender, one finds only several references to Ehrenberg’s (1989) general text; no other works on

the archaeology of gender are taken into account. Why is it that it is discussions of “the Goddess” (and citations of Gimbutas, e.g. 1989) that are featured in such overviews of the human past (but for critiques see Billington & Green 1996, Conkey & Tringham 1995, Meskell 1995). Why, despite the many new studies in the archaeology of gender, have most merely added gender as just another variable into an otherwise depersonalized view of the past? into an archaeological account in the passive voice? into a way of framing human life that distances and categorizes more than allowing our own positionalities to inform and generate engagements with the people of the past? We worry that the recent archaeological studies of gender have participated in narrowing the field rather than opening up our studies.

SITUATING GENDER RESEARCH: WHY FEMINISM MATTERS

It is clear by now that gender as a subject of archaeology elicits genuine concern for much needed revisions of archaeological accounts that have systematically ignored, devalued, or underestimated the roles, actions, contributions, and innovations of women. There is interest in more concentrated and informed inquiries into gender relations, gender dynamics, and explicitly engendered past human societies, and for the roles and effects of gender (in its broadest senses) in human life, cultural change, and human histories. In addition, there are concerns for refocusing archaeological scrutiny to consider at least equally factions, class, gender, or other sociocultural dynamics at the human level, the concern for a more peopled past (e.g. Brumfiel 1992; McBryde 1996; Tringham 1991, 1994).

From these genuine concerns with a newly gendered and peopled past, certain additional issues are immediately implicated. From the beginning, it was apparent that rampant biases—where were the women?—were entrenched in the interpretations of past human societies. Clearly, the awareness and even shock of these and related gender biases fed on and were fed by other critiques raised by investigators like Leone (1973, 1982), Trigger (1984), or Gero et al (1983). However, subsequent archaeological studies of gender and more general critiques of the discipline have not always taken advantage of the well-established literature on gender theory and feminist critiques of science, especially as they bear on issues of interpreting human cultures and the organization of scientific practice. While Bergman (1995, p. 235) can say with confidence that feminist anthropology has been shaped by, but also has contributed to, interlinked critiques of essentialism and scientific authority, we are not so sure the same can yet be said for anthropological archaeology.

We now consider feminist resources essential to understanding the production of archaeological knowledge and the sociology of the field more generally, and the potential of gender research more specifically. These perspectives matter not merely to gender research in archaeology but to archaeology as a wider practice. The feminist literature encompasses issues that engage us in debates about the very nature of humankind: essentialism, inequality and power relationships, social categorization, political economy, rationality and ways of knowing, ideology, meaning and symbol making, materiality and agency. Most or all of these are crucial to the archaeological enterprise, whether focused on gender or not, and often offer radically innovative twists and challenges to the ways in which our conventional categories operate.

A recent and staunchly critical attack on women's studies by Patai & Koertge (1994) argued that while it might be productive to learn about women, it is downright dangerous to engage in the "radical reappraisal of all the assumptions and values found in traditional scholarship." We, however, find much merit in Sternhill's (1994) critical review of Patai & Koertge (and also of Sommers 1994), insisting that feminist thought is "supposed to be dangerous"; "radical reappraisal—rigorous, scholarly, informed—is called for."

If we want to explore a configuring of contemporary archaeology, it is simply "poor research" to ignore a large and diverse body of theoretical, analytical, and conceptual possibilities that pertain directly to and substantively inform the questions at hand. This includes the literature on gender theory, readings that span archaeological feminism (e.g. biographies of women and equity studies) and nonarchaeological feminist critiques of science. "Do I have to do the readings?" We would say the answer is, "yes."

Feminist Critiques of Science

Clearly, archaeology now admits a well-developed documentation of the social and political "entanglements," both for the practice of archaeology and for its "results" (e.g. Fotiadis 1993; Gathercole & Lowenthal 1990; Gero et al 1983; Leone 1986; Pinsky & Wylie 1989; Trigger 1980, 1989). Although no responsible archaeologist today can claim unmitigated objectivism or sociopolitical or historical innocence (Wylie 1994a,c, 1996), it is still the case that we regularly, perhaps schizophrenically, shelve our doubts and move on with assured and even definitive statements about "what the past was like."

Feminist thinking, however, has long offered a foundation for a critique of authority, symbol, the canon(s) of science, and the arrangements by which science is produced—indeed, the very nature of scientific inquiry. Feminist critiques of science raise crucial questions about who can be a "knower," about the relationships between the community of knowers and the knowledge they

cooperatively produce, and about the “moralization of objectivity” (Daston & Galison 1992). Needless to say, they hardly converge on a simple solution.

Feminists have engaged in a decade of debate about the degree of revision versus rejection that would be required in today’s science to make feminist-friendly those versions of objectivity that exist presently in the service of hierarchical and positivist orderings of what is to count as knowledge. Harding’s “successor science” project (an insistence on irreducible difference and radical multiplicity of local knowledges) risks denying that realities can be known. Alternatively, Longino (1990, 1993) argues to preserve a modified and improved umbrella of universal scientific practice, in part because it is this very tradition, supported and carried out by a highly varied set of practitioners, that has been responsible for the unveiling of androcentrism and the devaluation of women’s lots.

With such a long-standing association between feminism and science critiques, it is hardly surprising that fundamental questions about the organization of archaeological inquiry have disproportionately come from archaeologists of gender. A number of points developed out of feminist critiques of science have proved particularly powerful in interrogating archaeological practice, and we summarize some of these here, in a necessarily abbreviated form, pointing each to archaeological applications:

1. Feminists, among others, recognize that politics and the substantive products of knowledge are essentially inseparable (Code 1991, Keller 1985, Jay 1991, Rossiter 1982). Long suspicious of science as a bastion of male privilege, feminists argue that at the least the sciences betray a pervasive disinterest in concerns of women, and at worst that science, especially the social and medical sciences, reproduce and legitimize precisely the ideology of gender inequity that feminists question (Wylie 1997). Moreover, the statistical absence of women in the sciences, and the ideology that has underwritten and supported this gender distribution in the sciences, has also produced “masculinist” understandings and research conclusions.

At this very general level of critique, archaeologists have provided compelling evidence of how gendered research is coupled to specific construals of theory and of the past. Brumfiel (1993), for instance, has argued that a special high-prestige disciplinary niche is reserved for archaeological directors of large regional field projects (“big digs”), and moreover, that this prestige system generates narrow notions of class-based ideologies. Gero (1993) provides evidence that the exclusion of women from Paleoindian research has permitted a dominant paradigm to persist that focuses exclusively on hunting as the essential and definitional activity of early colonizers of the American continent.

2. Feminists, among others, have argued that rationality, with its attendant notions of separability of subject and object, dispassionate objectivity, and neutral transcendence of personal states, is a mythical conflation that never obtains in actual scientific practice and, more significantly, itself represents a metapolitics of power relations. The insistence that thinking, feeling, and willing are not separate facilities but rather underlie all informed interpretations of data has led some archaeologists to replace, or at least amplify, their purported subjectless research conclusions with richly informed fictional interpretations of what transpired in prehistory (Handsman 1991; Pollock 1991; Schrire 1995; Spector 1991, 1993; Tringham 1991). Similarly, a feminist-inspired archaeology has embraced sensuous, rather than exclusively rational or cognitive, experience as a motivating antecedent for behavior (Kus 1989); it has also focused archaeological study on sensuous domains of material life, including alcohol consumption (Lawrence-Cheney 1991, 1993), sweatlodge participation (Carman 1991), and brothel life (Seifert 1994).

3. Feminist thinking has argued for and been associated with a cognitive style that favors "intimate" knowledge and nuanced understandings of data over categorical thinking. Ambiguity in observations of data and unique expressions of phenomena are recognized and taken to be informative rather than to be dismissed as lying outside the province of "scientific" data (Haraway 1988; Keller 1983, 1985). This appreciation for the idiosyncratic and its associated tendency to distrust categorical formulations has led more specifically to an impatience with binary or dichotomous thinking (Jay 1991, Moulton 1983). Thus, archaeologists like Spector (1993) point out how common typological schemes of material inventories can bias appreciation for indigenous views, imposing foreign values and distorting native categories.

All three of these areas of feminist thought and their applications to anthropological research have been explored in Haraway's (1988) rejection of omniscient scientific knowledge, "the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere," in favor of "situated knowledges," where only the partial perspective can promise objectivity: "All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object" (Haraway 1988, p. 583).

4. Feminist thinking has shared a deep commitment to challenging the status quo or, minimally, to welcoming the possibility of change in basic disciplinary arrangements. From its well-substantiated impatience with androcentric structures of knowledge and with the standard means of producing and reproducing that knowledge, feminists are eager for an alternative voice or voices to be heard. This proposition is explored more fully below.

FEMINIST PRACTICE

The implications of the feminist critique, taken seriously, point ineluctably to a recognition of the bias inherent in how archaeology is practiced, and to a dedicated effort to develop a more feminist-friendly archaeology. It is not just that archaeological institutions should be more tolerant of diverse agendas that include gender as a legitimate endeavor of research, nor that the range of variables considered relevant and the array of explanatory hypotheses considered worth testing be expanded, but more fundamentally that we reconsider the gendered arrangements by which “facts” are established and subsequently accepted as knowledge. Of course, the implicit, taken-for-granted rules of practice make it difficult to discover foundational principles and make their outcomes appear seamless, theory-neutral, and objective. If feminism, however, is to have meaning in archaeology, we must ask how to “do archaeology” as feminists (Longino 1987, p. 53). And as starting points, we suggest three broadly defined concerns that could be involved in the practical remaking of archaeology as a transformatory enterprise:

1. Feminist practice might strive to increase the visibility of human agency in knowledge production, becoming more conscious of, and making more public, the choices that accumulate into what is known about the past. Here, for instance, we might consider publishing fuller field diaries that tie investigatory decisions to specific items of new knowledge, to diminish the appearance of knowledge appearing directly and automatically from the field into textbooks. On a very different tack, we might study, with special attention, areas in the production chains of archaeological knowledge where males or females appear significantly clustered, questioning why predominantly one gender or the other is cited, or why one gender or the other participates in certain symposia or publishes in certain literatures and asking what values and priorities underpin these sortings and what kinds of knowledge they authorize.

2. Especially given the destruction and nonreplicability of archaeological sites of excavation, we might organize archaeological field projects in less hierarchical fashions, avoiding the situation of a single unchallengeable authority who pronounces judgments from the top. Instead, feminist practice might offer multiple interpretive judgments and evaluations at each nonreversible step of investigation, and coordinate multiple strategies and objectives of different co-investigators into the research of nonrenewable archaeological resources.

3. Feminist practice needs to admit ambiguity and partial or situated knowledges in its analyses; we need to find ways to value the indeterminate, the nuanced, and the specific in new narrative and historical cognitive frames,

rather than always circumscribing scientific models and categorical data. A related preliminary step that might be initiated by feminists would urge recognition that all generalized archaeological pronouncements, from taxonomic arrangements, to attributing cause-and-effect, to reconstructing climatic conditions, to interpreting past lifeways, are all interpretive activities, not entirely divorced from writing informed fictional interpretations.

"Keep Your Mind on the Prize...."

As research on women and gender comes of age in archaeology, the most pressing question we face is precisely that of how to do archaeology differently—how to do it better, more inclusively, more imaginatively—given the realization of the ways in which our thinking and practices have been confined by androcentric and many other "taken-for-granted." Our essential premise is that an archaeology that takes feminist theory seriously is self-transformational and communal. Radical reappraisals—rigorous, scholarly, informed, purposive—emerge from feminist theory precisely because traditional assumptions and values really do look profoundly different when viewed from a woman-centered perspective. Some have wanted to call this "seeing gender everywhere," with the derogatory term "genderlirium." But "genderlirium" is an equally apt term with which to critique Western androcentricism, with its hard-headed rules for a single way of knowing and its single vision.

While archaeology enjoyed an earlier infusion of optimism from New Archaeology—the 1960s Binfordian proclamations that "we can know anything if we just ask the right questions"—we are excited by the imaginative possibilities for what archaeology can do and say if it engages with gendered archaeology (in Roberts's sense) and with much of what is under consideration in feminist thought. In our visions for archaeology, we see an increasing recognition that knowledge-making is a pluralistic enterprise with, for example, more recognition and institutional rewards for collaborative multiperspective research, teaching and writing, and increased recruitment of the many still-silenced (ethnic, gender, racial) voices that should be integral to archaeological discourse. We also envision not just tolerance for but the fostering of views—including ways of presenting and writing, and what constitutes archaeology—from many "wheres" (if not from everywhere) (after Longino 1994, Wylie 1995). We would encourage the trajectory already witnessed in the archaeology of gender to giving simultaneous attention not only to gender research about the past but also to the teaching and pedagogy of archaeology (in Claassen 1992, Wright 1996), to the practices of archaeological research (Gero 1996, Preucel & Joyce 1994), and to its institutional structures (e.g. in Nelson et al 1994).

To have a vision for an archaeology influenced by feminist concerns is not to promote a static, prescribed utopia. While one should always “keep your mind on the prize” (Collins 1994, p. 32), the feminist vision has no fixed end-point to be achieved by a standardized set of rules (p. 32). Feminist destinations are perhaps less important than the everyday pragmatic work of moving the feminist vision along; the dignity achieved in struggling for something worthwhile may be more important than any predetermined endpoint of a feminist world. As such, we are impressed by the heretofore unimagined interest, concern, genuine thoughtfulness, and diversity of “results” from the first decade of an explicit attention to gender within archaeology.

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