

Much More than Gender

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Abstract Numerous publications on gender archaeology present case studies that incorporate gender in their analyses, but make little use of feminist theory and critique, and are ambivalent or negative to feminism. Aspects of Norwegian, British and American gender archaeology are discussed in relation to a desire for the ‘mainstream.’ The reasons for, and consequences of, a lack of feminist theorizing and engagement are related to Donna Haraway’s concept of situated knowledges.

Keywords Feminism · Gender /feminist archaeology · Feminist theory · Situated knowledges

It is possible to trace the beginnings of feminist interest in archaeology (at least) back to the 1970s, but it was in the 1980s that the first substantive contributions to a feminist archaeology were published both in the United States and Norway. For North American archaeologists a threshold was crossed with the article published in 1984 by Conkey and Spector (1984) on gender and archaeology. An important threshold was crossed at about the same time in Norway with the inauguration of the journal *K.A.N: Kvinner i arkeologi i Norge* (*K.A.N. Women in Archaeology in Norway*). Both the North American article and the Norwegian journal were feminist in intent and content. Feminism was crucial for these developments in archaeology and by the 1990s feminism in archaeology was flourishing with several major publications, not only in North America and Scandinavia, but also in some European countries and South Africa.

From its inception, feminism in archaeology was characterized by a concern to include women and gender in our understanding of the past. Traditional archaeological interpretations of prehistory were predominantly androcentric so the initial challenge was simply to envision women as present and as active agents in the past. As has been the case with developments in feminist scholarship in general, it

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soon became clear that this necessitates, not a monolithic emphasis on women, but an engendering of the past; it requires a consideration of gender as a process and a relation, and of how masculinity was played out, and it leads to consideration of other forms of difference, including race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and age (with children, in particular, becoming more visible).

Perhaps because gender is a central concept in feminism, the majority of this work has gone under the title of “gender archaeology” and much of the critique of traditional archaeology has been based on feminist critiques of science. Gender archaeologists criticize past and current models of (pre)historic society and gender roles, relations, and ideologies, and they produce new studies of archaeological materials by asking new (feminist) questions of the data. Often these questions drew attention to the roles of women and generated empirical studies that put women into models of past society; they gave rise to what Conkey and Gero refer to as “locate-the-women projects” (Conkey and Gero 1997:415). Much new and interesting work was accomplished and new views of aspects of past societies were presented.

Despite these successes, explicitly feminist scholarship in North American archaeology is regarded as difficult. Focusing primarily on archaeology in the United States (although she considers other English language publications), Kelly Hays-Gilpin states that all gender archaeology is feminist or feminist influenced, but is well aware that she is exaggerating (Hays-Gilpin 2000:89–93). She discusses both feminist activism and challenges to discriminatory practices in the profession and presents a cross-section of the rich and varied work on gender in the late 20th century. While generously optimistic, Hays-Gilpin also notes resistance to feminist approaches to archaeological interpretation and theory, reluctance to acknowledge gender discrimination or being a feminist on the part of numerous women archaeologists, and the “struggle to do archaeology as feminists in a field that still rewards androcentrism in so many ways” (Hays-Gilpin 2000:93–103). Thus, although interest in gender developed out of feminism and is often influenced by feminism, some gender archaeologists have distanced themselves from feminism. Wylie (1995, 1997) describes the tensions revealed in the first major North American conference on gender—the 1989 Chacmool Conference on “The Archaeology of Gender”—and notes that, although the participants were willing to take up questions about gender in their research, they were cautious about engaging explicitly feminist issues in scholarship and shied away from anything that might resemble feminist political engagement (Wylie 1995). In a recent overview of feminism and gender archaeology entitled “Has Feminism Changed Archaeology?”, Conkey (2003) identifies a feminist impact in archaeology in three arenas: making women in the past visible; visual representation in and of the past; and critical analyses of taken-for-granted. These are all, of course, common feminist concerns; the first puts women at the center of analyses, while the second two offer critical evaluation and then proceed to gender representations and analytical categories. Conkey consistently refers to this work as feminist and because much of gender archaeology is “feminist inspired” this name is clearly appropriate. But again, many of the authors referred to by Conkey are skeptical of any association with feminism, apparently because it is considered as ‘political’.

In England and Scandinavia, feminist archaeology was sometimes less difficult because it was often strategically associated with post-processual archaeology, which

admitted the political aspects of archaeological thought and practice. Unfortunately, the fact that feminist archaeology developed independently from, and was often critical of post-processual archaeology sometimes leads to an antagonistic relationship between these two archaeologies. As in North America, however, much European archaeological work on gender was, and still is, centrally concerned with culture historical questions and is produced in a processual vein, however 'old-fashioned' these categories may appear to be today.

A perusal of some of the recent literature on gender archaeology shows that the relationship between feminism and gender archaeology is now being pushed even further into the background. Much feminist critique has given way to an emphasis on gender as an interesting analytic category; this is simply a cosmetic change in relation to traditional archaeology and very much still a process of adding women, and to a certain extent children, to our interpretations of past societies. In the process, gender archaeology appears to have become a sub-discipline comparable to other sub-disciplines such as ecological-, evolutionary-, symbolic-, behavioral-, processual-, post-processual- archaeologies. Despite the significant gains in engendering research and practice, gender archaeology is at risk of becoming a narrow specialty with little left of its initial critical feminist and theoretical edge. Why? The answer to this simple question is complex but this tendency can be attributed to a dwindling understanding of what it is to do archaeology as a feminist as well as to institutional contexts and a discipline that 'still rewards androcentrism in so many ways'.

Feminist Archaeology: The Norwegian Case

I will here give a brief historical overview of the development of Norwegian feminist archaeology, concentrating on the feminist archaeological journal *K.A.N.* Until the 1960s there were few archaeologists in Norway and few of them were women (Engelstad *et al.* 1994). The situation changed rapidly due to expanded university recruitment, and by the early 1970s there was a relatively high percentage of women in archaeology, all of them in lower academic positions.

Feminist critiques of archaeology and some work on gender equity issues were undertaken in the 1970s and the volume of this work increased through the 1980s (Dommasnes 1991, 1999). As a result of political decisions grounded in 'Scandinavian state feminism' (Hernes 1987), in the 1980s the Norwegian National Research Council (NAVF) expanded its support to women's studies in many disciplines. Although priority was given to research on women in contemporary society, archaeology received some support for bringing together the small but growing number of feminist archaeologists interested in women in both prehistoric and historic societies. At that time it was difficult to get feminist analyses of gender published in academic journals and much archaeological publication in Scandinavia emphasized empirical studies rather than critical, analytical, and theoretical perspectives. This problem was partially solved by the establishment in 1985 of the new journal called *K.A.N., Kvinner i arkeologi i Norge* (Women in archaeology in Norway). The title was a play on words; K-A-N also spells the Norwegian word for 'can' so that the meaning was also "kvinner *K.A.N.*"—"women can"—an important slogan for the feminist movement in Norway. *K.A.N.* was also an explicitly political

title and the journal represented a forum for (self-) empowerment. It was a small journal, published cheaply and dependent on volunteer editorial support from diverse groups of women archaeologists; it had a rather nomadic existence, wandering between different major archaeological institutions in Norway. It is important to note that the first two issues of the journal were distributed free of charge to all Norwegian archaeologists; the aim was to ensure everyone would have a chance to read *K.A.N.*

The first issues of *K.A.N.* were explicitly feminist; contributors advocated a theoretical re-orientation of archaeological research and presented various visions of what a different and more relevant archaeology could, and should, be. Their articles were both theoretical and political. Processual archaeology was well established in Norway and many of the authors publishing in *K.A.N.* were critical of the practice, the interpretations, and the implications of this kind of archaeology. There was a general desire to return to the discipline's roots in the humanities, not unlike that expressed by Ian Hodder in his initial critique of Processual archaeology (Hodder 1982c). The authors based their ideas on feminist critiques and feminist practice, on insights from the sociology of science, and on their own experience as women in research milieus. In the foreword to the first issue of *K.A.N.* the editors, Liv Helga Dommasnes and Else Johansen Kleppe, stated that what they wanted for future issues was "research on people in the past, as far as possible based on these people's own premises"; 'peopling' the past was an important feminist agenda (Dommasnes and Kleppe 1985:1).

The first issues of *K.A.N.* included a number of programmatic statements about the relevance of archaeology, not only for archaeologists but also for all others interested in the/their past. Jenny Rita Næss expressed a wish to "take up all questions which we felt were relevant in connection with women and archaeology, research on women in archaeological sources and their circumstances in prehistoric times, but also about ourselves and our circumstances for carrying out research which is meaningful for us" (Næss 1985:8). Further, she expressed a desire to both think and write archaeology in a different manner:

The specialist language we use gives a way of developing concepts which work as a barrier to understanding. The relationship between science, [archaeological] collections, society, and attitudes is in no way understood or carefully considered. (Næss 1985:9).

Here we see a commitment not only to take up equity issues, but also to make research relevant to people's lives and experience; Næss rejects the perceived need for scientists to distance themselves, and science, from the society of which they are a part.

The contributors to these early issues of *K.A.N.* also called for more epistemological discussion, and for theorizing the production of archaeological knowledge. Liv Helga Dommasnes writes, "I contend that our problems with 'finding' women in the past are not due to a too high level of abstraction, but one which is too low" (Dommasnes 1985:33), and Jenny-Rita Næss states that "[p]roblems with [archaeological] source material, choice of problem, and use of [archaeological] sources are a question about epistemological /ontological considerations" (Næss 1985:49). In *K.A.N.* 3 Mandt and Næss (1986) ask, "Who creates and recreates our distant past?" They go on to discuss the relationships involved in the production of archaeological knowledge as well as the relationships between subjectivity and objectivity:

The archaeological record is, as much as with other disciplines, a result of disciplinary activity. The archaeological record is created in a complicated interplay between researcher, society and the preservation of the physical remains. (Mandt and Næss 1986: 17)

The first issues of *K.A.N.* presented an understanding of research and science as social, as a part of society, and as laden with unrecognized and unacknowledged values. This was directly related to feminism and feminist critiques of science; the authors drew on feminist perspectives in theorizing the archaeological record, the relationship between this record and our interpretations, the sources for our interpretations, and involvement and advocacy on the part of the researcher. *K.A.N.* was a part of a larger debate about knowledge production from a feminist perspective. The critiques and new perspectives presented in the early volumes of *K.A.N.* reached not only Norwegian archaeologists but also a wider Nordic audience, particularly in Sweden. Interestingly, Norwegian archaeology did start to shift in the directions theorized in *K.A.N.* in the late 1980s. At the same time that *K.A.N.*'s influence was being felt, changes also came by way of archaeological influences from England. The impetus for these was post-processual archaeology represented by publications that included Hodder's initial work (1982a, b) as well as that of Shanks and Tilley (1987a, b); these offered a critique of archaeology that echoed the archaeological theorizing of contributors to *K.A.N.*, although without the feminist analysis (Engelstad 1991).

In the 1990s numerous articles in *K.A.N.* represent what Dommasnes refers to as "gender in action" (Dommasnes 2005); they were concerned with engendering the past and archaeology, typically with a focus on particular sets of archaeological material. Some concentrated on the kinds of micro-scale contexts—for example, households, identity, dress—that have been so important in North American gender archaeology (Conkey 2003:870–871), while others were concerned with macro-scale contexts—for example, trade, social control, urbanization, and professionalization. In order to reach a wider *international* audience, *K.A.N.* was published in English after 1996. This resulted in a return to greater emphasis on theoretical articles, but it also proved to be the end of the journal. Because articles now had to be submitted in English, the number of manuscripts received was drastically reduced. The last regular issue was published in 2005, with a special issue appearing shortly after. In an epilogue on the history of *K.A.N.* published in this last volume, Dommasnes (2005) attributes *K.A.N.*'s demise not only to the change in language and to institutional factors constraining women's possibilities in the academy, but also to changes in the intellectual climate. Many students and young colleagues no longer saw the need for a feminist journal because it was, by then, easier to publish in other types of journals and because of a sense that feminism had achieved its goals and was no longer necessary. At the same time, however, there has been a growing resurgence of feminist concerns as women and men have come to understand that the political ideals of equality and emancipation in Scandinavian countries are not yet realized, especially in academia. Thus there is an active group of archaeologists and students, both in Norway and Sweden, who are working with feminist perspectives and theoretical issues (for example: Arwill-Nordbladh 1998; Beausang 2005; Caesar *et al.* 1999; Damm 2000; Dommasnes 2006; Engberg and Welinder

2003; Engelstad 2004a; Hjørungdal 1994, 1995, 2005; Källén 2004; Lundø 2004; Selsing 2005; Skogstrand 2005; Barndon *et al.* 2006).

This might inspire hope that a Nordic K.A.N. could take shape, but the Norwegian interest in feminist archaeology is not as prevalent in the other Nordic countries—Denmark, Iceland, and Finland.¹ While feminist archaeology was established in Norway in the 1980's and in Sweden around the same time (Arwill-Nordbladh 2001), there has been less engagement in Denmark, Finland, and Iceland with feminist or gender archaeology, perhaps because more conservative cultural historical traditions continue to dominate the field in these countries. Despite some initial work on gender in Denmark in the 1980s (e.g. Nielsen and Nørgaard 1987), the strong empirical tradition in Danish archaeology appears to have left little room for the development of feminist theoretical perspectives; the study of social processes of all kinds was often considered too difficult and theoretical discussions were often dismissed. Comparative analyses of the history of feminist gender archaeology in the Nordic countries is lacking, so one can only speculate on why, in five countries with similar and related archaeological traditions, feminist perspectives or analyses of gender have such different trajectories of development.

Looking to Britain

Aside from Norway and Sweden, Great Britain appears to be the one other European country in which a strong interest in feminist archaeology took shape, beginning in the 1980s; this is a period in which British archaeology has had considerable influence on archaeology in both Norway and Sweden. Again this is tied to a stronger interest in feminist epistemological critique and an interest in theoretical perspectives in all three countries. Feminist archaeologists working in Britain and studying women and gender in the 1980s participated actively in both TAG conferences (in 1982, 1985, 1987) and Cambridge Feminist Archaeology Workshops (in 1987/88) (Arnold *et al.* 1988:2). In the introduction to a set of eight articles on “Women in Archaeology” published in the *Archaeological Review from Cambridge (ARC)* in 1988, the editors—Karen Arnold, Roberta Gilchrist, Pam Graves and Sarah Taylor—were concerned to develop feminist archaeology. They argued against replacing ‘feminist archaeology’ with ‘gender archaeology’ although some considered the latter term “less ‘controversial’ and less likely to evoke resistance or dismissal” because it “avoids political commitment”. They argued that gender was simply too narrow; “feminist perspectives can be brought to the whole panorama of prehistoric and historic archaeology, not just to the study of gender” (Arnold *et al.* 1988:3). They were angered by the way feminist archaeology had been marginalized within discipline and at national conferences despite the activity and enthusiasm it had generated (Arnold *et al.* 1988:2). Nonetheless, they concluded that “feminist perspectives embrace a variety of pertinent issues and critical demands which can be brought to bear on our studies of the past”; their goal, in publishing those eight articles on women and archaeology, was to provoke debate (Arnold *et al.* 1988:7).

¹ For those interested in learning more about Nordic feminism in general I recommend the web page of the Nordic Institute for Women's and Gender Studies (NIKK) at: <http://www.nikk.uio.no/index.html>.

In this same issue of *ARC*, Sørensen (1988) asked “Is there a feminist contribution to archaeology?” and began her article by critiquing the journal’s marginalization of feminist issues in the eight years since it was started. According to Sørensen, this 1988 volume was the first set of articles in an archaeological journal in English to be devoted to “women, gender, and feminist theories,” although she noted the existence of the Norwegian journal *K.A.N.* She then presented a review of areas that held potential for feminist work, asked for more critical theory about material culture, and demanded that archaeologists work with “critical reflexivity.” Of the five “fields of interest” that she proposed for a feminist archaeology—these included women’s work in the profession, making women visible in museums as well as publications, finding methodologies for studying women, rewriting women’s role in history, and “developing feminist theory with regard to gender relations in the past”—she was particularly concerned with the last. She argued that feminist thinking “can only improve archaeology,” but at the same time pointed toward a broader and more significant role for archaeology in relation to feminism, concluding that the “character of the relationship between feminism and archaeology will depend on us asking whether there is an archaeological contribution to feminist theory” (Sørensen 1988: 14–18). Clearly, on her view, doing archaeology as a feminist would be important not only for archaeology, but also for feminism and feminist theory.

Later in this issue of *ARC* Gilchrist (1988) presented some of her initial work on medieval English nunneries, concluding that,

[A] priority of any ‘feminist archaeology’ must be to criticize interpretations which characterize historically produced social roles as timeless and biologically determined. By exploding the hierarchal myths of powerful/public=male; domestic/private=female, the study of gender relations will focus archaeological enquiry on new areas of social conflict and analysis” (Gilchrist 1988:27).

Most, if not all, of the 11 authors responsible for the eight articles published in this issue of *ARC* on “Women and Archaeology” were at that time doctoral students and some continued in archaeology developing noteworthy careers; these include Sørensen and Gilchrist who have continued to work with gender. Following this issue *ARC* continued to publish articles on feminist and gender archaeology sporadically and, with the beginning of the 1990s, the volume of journal articles and books on gender and/in archaeology increased considerably.

More recently, however, several gender archaeologists working in Great Britain have expressed skepticism towards a feminist perspective. A better understanding of this skepticism can be gained by looking more closely at three important British publications on gender archaeology that have been used in archaeology courses in both Norway and Sweden and thus offer an interesting comparison with Scandinavian publications (Engelstad 2004a). These contain numerous critiques of the lack of concern in archaeology for women, for men as gendered, for the possibility of multiple genders, and for ‘peopling the past’, but they also present new and exciting work that illustrates how, in diverse ways, our understandings of the past and of archaeology’s role in society can be engendered. At the same time, however, they exemplify the troubled relationship between gender archaeology and feminism, or feminist archaeology. Here I will consider only what the authors of these publications write about this relationship.

In her excellent textbook, *Gender and Archaeology* (Gilchrist 1999), Roberta Gilchrist acknowledges the connection between gender archaeology and feminism and sees gender archaeology as developing "symbiotically with feminist thinking." However, she views feminists as chiefly interested in "equality and recognition of women as well as men," and she considers differences among and between women and men to be more important. Although she admits a debt to feminism, Gilchrist attributes an interest in difference to structural, contextual and post-processual approaches that, she contends, work more with plurality, an approach she likens to the perspective of third wave feminism (Gilchrist 1999:1, 7, 30). While it is difficult to see how structural theory would be adequate for studying forms of difference other than dichotomies, it is true that third wave feminism is generally more concerned with difference. Gilchrist thus appears to associate "feminism" with second wave feminism, or perhaps even with the first wave feminism of the suffrage movement, both historical periods in European and North American feminism characterized by an emphasis on rights for women and, thus, on realizing change for all women rather than differences between women. Historically, the politics of emancipation and equality associated with Western second wave feminism in the 1970s (in Norwegian, a period referred to as "70-talls feminisme" — 1970s feminism), quickly faced critiques that drew attention to its own discriminatory practices and challenged the domination of white, middle class women in North America and Europe. This eventually led to dramatic changes in feminism in all aspects of society, including the academy. The second wave feminist critique of gendered dichotomies has continued to be important, but by the early 1980s it was transformed into a concern with difference: differences between women, differences that can be incommensurable and related to varying access to power and privilege. This was exactly the period in which feminist gender archaeology began to take shape both in North American and in Europe. Thus, Gilchrist emphasizes a chronological sequence that ignores the continuities and internal debates within feminism, constructing a stark contrast between so-called second and third wave feminisms. Although the wave metaphor is sometimes useful, it obscures the continuity and diversity, the active development and debate that has been ongoing within feminisms as they have faced both internal and external challenges. It should be recognized, too, that feminisms are, at times, practiced and theorized quite differently in different political, activist, and academic spheres in various countries (cf. Lønnå 2004; Dahlerup 2004; Springer 2002).

In *Gender Archaeology*, Sørensen (2000) presents a well-argued and more theoretical discussion of engendered concepts and case studies, but by repeatedly using the term "gender and/or feminist" archaeology she signals, confusingly, that she views these as dichotomous, or perhaps synonymous, options. What appears at first to be ambivalence toward feminism gives way to explicitly negative descriptions of and assertions about feminism and feminist archaeology. Unlike the editors of the last *K.A.N.* (Barndon *et al.* 2005), who cited diverse reasons for halting publication of the journal none of which were related to feminism, Sørensen draws the conclusion that it is feminism that endangers gender archaeology. Because a feminist "voice" is just one "amongst other marginal or minority ones, one that is relevant only to feminists" (Sørensen 2000:36), feminism appears to Sørensen to be purely a matter of politics and, thus, to be irrevocably biased. Referring to the introduction of a bibliography on feminist critiques of science (Wylie *et al.* 1989), she argues that

“female values’ imply that ‘doing science as feminists’...becomes a matter of politics rather than cognition”; in this case, she concludes, “it is difficult to see” how doing science as a feminist can avoid relativism or “provide a starting point for developing models of scientific rationality” (Sørensen 2000:36). While Wylie *et al.* uncover and critique the role that values play in the construction of scientific knowledge, they are concerned to counter arguments by which these insights are turned against feminist science, representing it as just another form of relativism. Feminist scholars are particularly concerned with of cognition and objectivity in the ideology of science, as well as with how these ideals are played out in scientific practice. But because *all* science is affected by values, they argue that it is only by acknowledging this that possibilities open up for developing new forms of objectivity and new forms of science that are relevant to, and engaged with, social and political concerns (Haraway 1988, 1991; Harding 1986, 1991, 1993; Longino 1990; Wylie 2003). Feminist scholars often observe that only those with power and privilege could believe either in the ideal of detached objectivity or that anything goes.

Invisible People and Processes (Moore and Scott 1997) presents a series of interesting case studies, few of which engage feminist theoretical considerations. Hodder (1997) and Bender (1997) comment on the articles that make up two sections of the book, “Part 1: Theory and Review” and “Part 2: Writing Gender”, respectively. They both note a lack of debate about or discussion of new theoretical perspectives, especially ‘gender theory’. As Joan Scott (1986) noted, ‘gender’ is a useful category for analysis, but it can also be a dead end if it is not theoretically contextualized. Such contextualization is easy enough to find in the ongoing feminist debates feminist conceptual frameworks and practices.

Interestingly, the two editors of *Invisible People and Processes* offer different perspectives on feminism and feminist archaeology. In her introduction, Scott (1997) describes feminist studies as a “key component” of post-processual archaeology and distinguishes these from the gender research that grew “out of, and alongside, feminist approaches” (Scott 1997:1). She considers both archaeologies to have the same set of “significant questions and problems” and regards these as fundamental to archaeology; they are not marginal, she insists, not the “‘fringe’ interest of a minority” (Scott 1997:1). In the conclusion, however, Moore (1997) urges a separation of feminism from gender archaeology. She is critical of the lack of “mainstream” publications on gender, asking:

What is happening to gender studies in archaeology? Have gender studies become so enmeshed in the concerns of feminist archaeology they no longer have an identity of their own? (Moore 1997:251)

Moore characterizes feminism and feminist studies as a perspective that risks falling into the trap of creating a ‘wished-for’ gendered past, thus abandoning the possibility of uncovering “any objective truth which is not the vehicle of some particular interest group” (Moore 1997:251). In the glossary that is intended to be an aid to readers of *Invisible People and Processes*, Moore separates “feminism” and “feminist studies” from “gender studies” (Moore 1997:258–262). Both feminism and feminist studies are defined in terms that represent them as confrontational; Moore describes feminism as solely concerned with equality, and feminist studies as solely concerned with male domination. These descriptions reflect a period-specific

conception of feminism that is most characteristic of feminist political struggles in the 1960s and 1970s. This is certainly a period of interest in the development of feminism, or rather feminisms, but much that characterized it has now changed. While such guideline definitions offer a quick and easy presentation, they obscure the diversity of feminisms and feminist studies; they effectively negate the importance of feminist theories, the dynamics of feminist scholarship, and the multiplicity of its forms and effective engagements. In the process, they severely limit the relevance of feminisms and feminist studies for the readers of the book.

I am aware that I have selected those aspects of the three books discussed in which the editors or authors specifically consider feminism and archaeology, and have given only a cursory account of their content. I am, however, particularly interested in examples of how feminism has affected archaeology. All four authors—Gilchrist, Sørensen, Moore and Scott—echo themes that routinely figure in descriptions of feminism in archaeology: the fear of being marginal and not mainstream; of embracing a perspective that is (simply) political; and of creating a desired past that forecloses any possibility of “objective” research. It is also apparent that what the authors reject is a feminism that existed in the 1960s and 1970s, so-called second-wave feminism. Although Gilchrist refers to third wave feminism and Meskell (2001a) considers *Invisible People and Processes* to represent the third wave, there are few references to work associated with third wave feminism in these volumes. As indicated earlier, the wave metaphor can be a useful way to describe different historical periods in the feminist movement, but I find the tendency to set up different categories or waves of feminisms against each other self-defeating. Feminisms, both as movement and as theory, in the past and today, are characterized by intense, ongoing internal critique and debate about theories, methodologies, practices, and concepts—including the eternal question ‘what is a woman?’ Thus, it is important that Gilchrist, Sørensen, and Moore and Scott have expressed opinions about the relationships between feminism and archaeology; and it is important that they join debates about this important subject. We need more critical and reflexive debates about what it is to do archaeology as a feminist; debates that we have seen too little of archaeology.

Seeking the Mainstream

It is clear that these four authors are critical of the marginalization of feminist gender archaeology, while at the same time they implicitly, and at times quite explicitly, express a desire to join, or be accepted by, the ‘mainstream’. The question is, what is mainstream archaeology? With the growing multiplicity of perspectives, practices, and practitioners that characterizes contemporary international archaeology, it is unclear exactly what the ‘mainstream’ is and why conformity to the mainstream should be treated as a guarantee of objectivity. What is referred to as ‘mainstream’ archaeology is seldom defined and is variously understood by those who either consider themselves to be a part of the mainstream or who want to be a part of it. ‘Mainstream’ archaeology can be considered a particular discourse or genre in the general production of archaeological knowledge. Factors that are important in uniting a set of texts and authors in a genre are relationships within the academic

production of archaeological knowledge, such as reference circles and both institutional and social settings (Phillips and Hardy 2002, Tilley 1989). It is clear that prestigious institutional settings increase the availability of publication channels as well as access to resources, financial or otherwise. Language is also important, as is evident in the dominance of English in ‘international’ publishing. In the past 20 years the genre of the theoretical text, either article or book, has increasingly gained in importance internationally and have become part of what many consider to be the mainstream. Articles on archaeological theory become international phenomena, while detailed cultural historical analyses, with and without an explicit theoretical perspective, are considered a more local phenomenon written for particular regional or national audiences, or for particular regional or national mainstreams. However, theoretical texts are seldom without some form of reference to, or analysis of, local archaeological and culture historical data and interpretations. Citation studies can be used to uncover those who are most cited and the importance of citation indices in other disciplines is an obvious sign of the value given to citation by others. Although the mainstream is rather diffuse and its membership is never clearly defined, it is obvious that being in the mainstream gives greater rights to speak and be heard, to publish and be read. Thus, some authors are more important than others and have greater access to the means of publication. Even a cursory examination of archaeological publications shows that Anglo-American authors dominate the international scene and that references to gender archaeology seldom occur in texts that are not in the “gender genre” (Conkey and Gero 1997:414–416).

Thus there are numerous contextual, locational, and situational factors that keep the mainstream in an advantageous and powerful position—at least for a certain period of time. It should not and cannot be assumed, however, that the mainstream is objective or value free in its understanding of the discipline. The numerous good (case) studies in gender archaeology should not, and do not, occur in a theoretical vacuum without reference to what is going on in archaeology at the moment. Distancing gender archaeology from feminism and feminist theorizing, and viewing gender simply as an analytical category, may have had the effect of making gender archaeology seemingly non-political and thus more acceptable for a ‘mainstream’ archaeology. At the same time, however, it seems also to have neutralized gender archaeology and rendered it largely irrelevant for that same mainstream, which is a great loss for archaeology. I will, however, still ask: has distancing gender archaeology from feminism made it more ‘mainstream’?

Take for example *Archaeological Theory Today* (Hodder 2001a), one of the latest mainstream(?) books on archaeological theory in English. It contains a number of interesting thematic articles, none of which is specifically about feminism or gender. Upon first opening this book my hope was that this signaled an integration of feminist perspectives into “important” theoretical themes but, unfortunately, this is not always the case. Gender is obviously included in an article on identity by a feminist archaeologist, Meskell (2001b), and Thomas (2001) grapples with gendered understandings of landscape, although his preferred philosopher, Martin Heidegger, is not particularly gender friendly. But take, for example, the topic of agency. Can one delve into the theorization of agency in archaeological interpretation without feminist critique and theorization? Can agency—“agents” or “the embodied presence of the agent” (Barrett 2001)—be theorized without

engendering agency? Barrett's contribution to this (theory) book makes it clear that this is possible. Behavioral archaeology is surprisingly un-gendered even though human behavior is defined as the "interaction of one or more living individuals with elements of the material world" (LaMotta and Schiffer 2001:20). Surely a behavioral archaeology that includes such key concepts as life histories, behavioral context, behavioral system, and performance characteristics would benefit from feminist theorization of gender, combined with other forms of socio-cultural difference. If archaeology is to engage with social theory, as exemplified by *Archaeological Theory Today*, then it needs to engage with feminist critiques of social theory. If archaeology is to engage with postcolonial theory (Hodder 2001b; Gosden 2001; Shanks 2001), then it needs to engage with feminist postcolonial theory (Lewis and Mills 2003). If archaeology is to develop appropriate epistemologies, then it should engage with feminist epistemology (Alcoff and Potter 1993; Haraway 1988, 1991). A more recent book representing the state of the art in social archaeology, *A Companion to Social Archaeology* (Meskell and Preucel 2004), is considerably better at including feminist and gender perspectives. Interestingly enough, however, these figure primarily in relation to topics that give prominence to the individual, identity, and the domestic and thus tend to neglect more institutionalized forms of gender and sexuality. One can understand the concern about being ignored that Sørensen and Moore express; much gender archaeology is both self-referential and referred to minimally by archaeologists concerned with other categories of analysis, other categories that are most often also gendered.

Situating Feminist Archaeology

I have given a cursory presentation of the Norwegian feminist journal *K.A.N.* and the views of four archaeologists working in Great Britain because there is an important difference between these two countries. Norwegian feminist archaeology was explicitly feminist when *K.A.N.* was founded and remained so to varying degrees throughout its history, only to publish a (possible) last issue with a reassertion of feminism, while British archaeologists often express a distrust of the usefulness, effects, and consequences of feminism. Roberta Gilchrist is Canadian and Marie Louise Stig Sørensen is Danish, and participates in feminist gender archaeology discussions in Scandinavia, so perhaps this contrast says more about the state of British archaeology and possible internal or external constraints than it does about these individual archaeologists. I believe it also reflects constraints imposed by the genre of the text book, often written in a neutral voice for those who need to learn about a field. Perhaps one can understand the need for both Gilchrist and Sørensen to be careful, however much one might have wished for more. The changing situations for feminism in academia in Great Britain and Scandinavia and the changing relationships between academia, society, and feminisms certainly attests to the situatedness of knowledge production.

There have been varying engagements with feminist perspectives and practices in archaeology in the late 20th and early 21st centuries in both Britain and Norway, but the current situation appears less open in Britain than in Norway. During the last ten years a similar set of reservations and shift in commitments is also evident in North American

archaeology, as attested to by archaeologists who reiterate the need to rejuvenate feminist theoretical perspectives and a feminist engagement in/with archaeology (Conkey and Gero 1997; Conkey 2003; Franklin 2001; Geller and Stockett 2006; Hill 1998; Hays-Gilpin 2000; Meskell 1999; Wilkie and Hayes 2006; Spencer-Wood 2001). Anglo-American gender archaeology is a source of inspiration for much Scandinavian feminist archaeology and often also functions as an ‘international’ reference point, with the power to significantly influence Scandinavian archaeology. Unfortunately, this is not a two-way street (see Griffin and Braidotti 2002; Garcia-Ramon 2003; Garcia-Ramon *et al.* 2006; Widerberg 1998 on the construction of ‘international’ disciplines). Anglo-American gender archaeologists take little notice of developments in feminist archaeology in Scandinavia, despite the fact that increasingly this work is being published in English. Among British and, apparently, American gender archaeologists’ fears of bias, relativism, and marginalization, and a desire to join the mainstream point to a process that threatens to blunt the critical, innovative edge characteristic of much feminist gender archaeology.

Neglect and misunderstanding of feminism in archaeology has been commented on previously by others and until recently has remained essentially unchallenged. On what basis does this understanding of feminism rest; on which feminist literature, feminist theory, and feminist debates is it predicated? Gender archaeologists make few direct references to feminist scholarly literature, but then this is not exceptional. In a previous paper, I examined eight books on gender archaeology (including *Invisible People and Processes*) and found that, on the whole, they made few or no references to feminist scholarly literature. The references they include were mostly to feminist critiques of science; those feminist theorists who were invoked were little used; and the feminist philosopher most frequently referred to was Alison Wylie, who specifically works with archaeology (Engelstad 1999). In addition, the unfortunate bypassing of feminist critique and theory has not had the effect of placing gender archaeology in the mainstream. This can be seen easily in the newest textbooks on archaeological theory where gender archaeology is often an isolated section and seldom plays a role in more ‘primary’ aspects of prehistory. Ignoring feminism has not opened the door to ‘mainstream’ archaeology and turning to ‘mainstream’ social theory is to ignore that ‘mainstream’ theory is gendered (Lutz 1995). Social theory has been substantially influenced by feminist considerations and challenges; the same cannot be said of archaeology. Rather than anxiously attempting to join the mainstream we should ask who defines, and maintains, the mainstream? Why, indeed, should the mainstream be such an issue when archaeology is becoming increasingly diverse in content and intent—if we have a passion for difference?

The tendency to regard feminism and feminist theory as merely a perspective reveals little understanding of the feminist critique of science; this is not simply a critique of androcentrism, but rather calls into question the underlying ideology of western social and life sciences that advocates neutrality. Feminist analysts and theorists recognize that all production of knowledge is situated, and yet they work to find ways of avoiding extreme relativism (Alcoff 2000; Egeland 2004; Harding 1993; Haraway 1991). The lack of theoretical discussion and debate—especially the lack of feminist theoretical contextualization—the preoccupation with so-called mainstream research and the concentration on case studies may seem safe but, I will contend, it also ensures that gender archaeology is less relevant to archaeology than it should be. The lack of

engagement with feminism and with feminist theory limits the radical and critical process of engendering the past and archaeology. Gender archaeology is at risk of losing its ability to disrupt traditional archaeological interpretations and make new theoretical and substantive contributions to archaeology — in general.

The political and intellectual foundation of engendered archaeology lies in doing archaeology as a feminist, as the articles in this volume illustrate. The richness of doing archaeology as a feminist is to be found in an unfettered interest in all aspects of archaeology, an interest in doing all aspects of archaeology differently. Doing archaeology as a feminist opens up, even generates, possibilities not only for enriching but also for transforming archaeology. Doing archaeology as a feminist does not mean doing archaeology from a narrow, dogmatic, monolithic platform. The contributions to this special issue amply illustrate that those who think so are, at best, uninformed; doing archaeology as a feminist is dynamic, multifaceted and multivocal. Feminist scholars have long since called into question the presumption that science offers an objective view of the world, a view that can position itself outside of society—what Donna Haraway (1991:189) calls “the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere.” They have critiqued the scientific desire for transcendence, and the unreflective scholar who defines the world in *his* own image; knowledge production is situated in culture and society, in political concerns, in academic and institutional contexts. For Haraway (1991), then, feminist objectivity is a matter of recognizing that all knowledge production is situated and limited by location: “feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*” (Haraway 1991:188). Recognizing the situatedness of knowledge production does not negate the importance of that knowledge; neither does it entail that knowledge production is a fiction nor risk extreme relativism. Rather, the concept of situated knowledges requires reflexivity: a recognition that no position is innocent, whether it be feminist, minority, marginal, ‘other’ or mainstream. Most importantly, it demands accountability for the process of knowledge production (Haraway 1988, 1991; Engelstad and Gerrard 2005a, b; Prins 1997; Skogstrand 2005).

The knowledge we construct is never a total picture; it is always based on specific pieces of evidence, on evidence we have learned to see and understand. Knowledge production is related to both the social identity of the knower and the context in which knowledge is produced. This is not bias; it requires us to be answerable for what we see. Feminist knowledge production is never unexamined; feminist commitments open up possibilities for interrogating the work we do interpreting and constructing visions of the past and the present. Because there is no splitting of subject and object, feminist objectivity and situated knowledges inevitably require that we take responsibility for, and can be held accountable for, how we ‘do’ archaeology: for our research interests, methods, interpretations, and ways of writing, presenting and representing the past. This, of course, gives rise to an ethics that takes differences seriously (Code 1991). The articles in this special issue richly illustrate what it is to do archaeology as a feminist: the concerns and the challenges. They show us that doing feminist archaeology is a critical and reflexive perspective on gender in the past and present, in relation to varied feminist approaches and goals. Doing archaeology as a feminist is far from limiting. For example, it does not mean using only feminist theory, but rather opens up the possibility of using feminist perspectives to interrogate and challenge other theories, whether they are Marxist,

constructivist, post-colonial, ecological, Darwinian or any other of the theories used in archaeological analyses and interpretations. We can see this being done by the archaeologists who contribute to this special issue as well as in the “feminist sensibilities” that Wilkie and Hayes (2006) bring to bear in engaging global historical archaeologies, in the emphasis on difference in the third wave feminist challenge of Meskell (1999) to more traditional feminist archaeologies, and in the demand of Franklin (2001) that archaeologists to take up the challenge of Black feminist critical perspectives. Perhaps it is time to recognize that doing archaeology as a feminist is as diverse, productive, and rewarding as contemporary feminisms. Yes, doing archaeology as a feminist is political. Yes, it produces situated knowledges that are committed to changing the discipline. Yes, the commitment to doing archaeology as a feminist is important and essential for the entire discipline. It is concerned with much more than gender; and it can and will substantially transform archaeology.

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