

calculated to provoke, raise questions, and ultimately make us ponder the future of our global society.

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Leonore Davidoff — *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Pp. x, 276.

*Worlds Between* is a collection of feminist scholar Leonore Davidoff's essays, the majority of them published over the past 20 years in a variety of journals and anthologies. These were essays that I had first encountered during the 1980s as an undergraduate student of history and women's studies, such as "Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England" and "Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Case of Hannah Cullwick and A. J. Munby". My first reaction, on rereading them, was one of mild shock when I realized how much time had passed since many of them were first published; they were generally not "new" when I encountered them, but their insights and arguments opened up fresh vantage points to my novice historian's eyes. A decade later, I now read these essays as essential elements of nineteenth-century feminist historiography, for the richness of Davidoff's scholarship, the complexities of her insights, and the care that has gone into her research.

Davidoff opens the collection by telling us that these are essays "from the margins", concerned with previously ignored or trivialized subjects such as domesticity, housekeeping, dirt and disorder, and the relationships of domestic servants, landladies and lodgers, farmers' wives and daughters, and siblings (p. 1). However, I would qualify this statement by adding that, while they were written in the context of a profession that generally treated such topics with disdain, such is no longer the case. Since these pieces were first published the margins have moved — I admit, in some cases, inched — much closer to the centre because of the work of Davidoff and her generation of feminist historians. In elaborating on these margins, Davidoff has shown us just how important they have been. These essays contain numerous insights, such as the importance of domesticity and the home in shaping and mediating class relations in nineteenth-century English society; the ways in which class carried specifically gendered meanings and, a related point, the central place of gender in English society's hierarchies; the importance of rituals and patterns of consumption; and the complexities and contradictions of these relations of subordination and power.

Davidoff's insistence that gender and class relations must be analysed in specific historical contexts runs throughout the book; her work demonstrates how both feminist theory and historical scholarship benefit from such an approach. First, historical research has generated important theoretical insights into gender. Secondly, our understanding of the past has acquired many new dimensions through the efforts of scholars such as Davidoff. As well, many of these essays suggest that

feminist historians look not just at women and femininity and their relation to class but at men and masculinity, a theme that receives more and more attention as the essays progress. In her latest work, which culminated in the ground-breaking book *Family Fortunes* by Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Davidoff's interest in exploring the relational aspect of gender and class has given us empirically grounded analyses of middle-class masculinity, which have opened up critical ways of looking at those who so often wielded the gaze of power themselves.

The arrangement of these essays by date of publication demonstrates the paths that Davidoff's work has taken; if read consecutively, the articles illuminate a body of work and her development as a feminist scholar. Her research also reminds us of the importance of domestic service, both as the predominant form of employment for working-class women in nineteenth-century England and as a means of understanding the inter-linked nature of gender and class relations. Davidoff's study of J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick, whose relationship of fantasy and desire was conducted primarily (although not exclusively) through the rituals of gender and class, is perhaps one of the best-known examples of her ability to probe the social and cultural meanings of these relationships. While other historians have demonstrated an understandable concern with the movement of working-class women into the world of the factory, Davidoff's insistence that we pay attention to the world of the middle-class home, a space in which views of the socio-economic order were forged, is an insight that helps us break down the binaries of home versus market and private versus public (one made, it should be noted, in 1979).

The collection concludes with two previously unpublished articles. "Where the Stranger Begins: The Question of Siblings in Historical Analysis" builds upon Davidoff's work on household and family to examine a relationship that, she argues, has been central to European and British society (in various inheritance patterns, formal and informal, in migration, and in providing education and emotional support) but that has also been "strangely neglected, relegated to a fragmentary footnote of the historical record" (p. 206). Siblings, she tells us, also "occupy the boundaries between familial and the non-familial, possible strangers", since their "social relations are organized along horizontal lines ... of filiation" (p. 207). This historical terrain is not entirely new to Davidoff; readers of *Family Fortunes* will recall the importance of sibling relationships to middle-class society. In this essay, Davidoff does not provide a case study but instead draws upon scholarship in history, sociology, and anthropology to suggest new paths for research in the fields of women's and family history. This piece points to the multiple ways in which this neglected relationship could help us understand the nature of the socially forged boundaries embodied by those who represent both the familiar and the strange. The last essay in this collection, "On Reading Some 'Old Husbands' Tales': Public and Private in Feminist History", draws together much of Davidoff's and other feminist historians' thinking on this concept. In the first section of this piece Davidoff acknowledges that she is covering contested terrain, as she reviews some of the arguments made by European and English feminist historians; of greatest interest (besides its lucidity, which makes it extremely useful in introducing students to these concepts) is the piece's examination of the meanings of "public" and "private" in a number of areas

(politics, the economy, families and households, and voluntary societies) over the course of the “‘long nineteenth century’ (1780–1914)” (p. 230). Her discussion provides historical contexts for these concepts; furthermore, it reminds the reader that these constructs and metaphors were embedded in power relations and had very serious implications for those, such as women, Jews, blacks, or the original inhabitants of British colonies, who were seen as “mired in their biology” and supposedly lacked the “manly independence” that was central to full civic participation (p. 264).

If there are absences in this collection, they are predominantly ones of race and ethnicity. Davidoff’s work seems based in a conception of an England in which class and gender are the dominant relations of power — even though her concluding remarks suggest that other nineteenth-century hierarchies might have had equal meaning and import. She points out in her final paragraph that the spread of imperial power across the globe during this period means that the hierarchies worked out in the English context reached beyond the borders of “England” (p. 264), but, as a number of Davidoff’s colleagues have demonstrated, relations of empire also “came home” and left their mark on English society. Despite these concerns, *Worlds Between* should be part of the collection of both present and future generations of historians concerned with investigating the complex relations of gender and class.

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Diane Singerman and Homa Hoodfar, eds. — *Development, Change and Gender in Cairo: A View From the Household*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996. Pp. xl, 195.

*Development, Change and Gender in Cairo* explores the cumulative significance of the choices and practices of millions of individual households in Cairo for broader social, political, and economic change. The editors, Diane Singerman and Homa Hoodfar, situate lower-income families within the context of the wider international political economy and examine the coping strategies and struggles of Cairo’s most vulnerable groups to the intended and unintended consequences of policy changes made by the elite. In turn, they observe the impact of these groups’ reactions for the success or failure of state policies. Central to their analysis is the household or family as the primary political and economic institution representing collective interests. This “bottom-up” approach to politics begins with an examination of the ongoing negotiation of individual roles and positions within the family undertaken by family members in response to changing circumstances both inside and outside the household. The premise of this edited volume is thus rooted in the understanding “that collective behavior in Egypt is heavily influenced by the needs and demands of the household and that the household and intrahousehold relations are a crucial and central variable in development” (p. xix). While the lens is undoubtedly micro in perspective, the significance of “bread and butter” issues for macro politics is clearly drawn.