

## Is There a Glass Roof or Is It Made from Clay?

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### Gender and feminist approaches – development and interaction

Sometime in the fourth quarter of the last century processualism in archaeology and anti-authoritarian politics in the world had one thing in common – optimism. The processualists hoped that asking all the right questions would lead to answering most questions, and the anti-authoritarians expected that the “march through the institutions” would lead to a fundamentally changed society.

Today it is clear that there are more questions than ever in archaeology and that all over Europe neo-authoritarian parties have appeared and won elections; thus disappointing the hope that societies would automatically become more tolerant and democratic.<sup>1</sup> Optimism that the world is developing into a friendlier future with all archaeological questions being answered has therefore been severely impaired. Parallel to these general developments, the archaeological and political aspects of feminism and gender have taken a similar dive in society, and that shall be the topic of this article. I want to see how far we have come since the beginning of feminist and gender archaeology.

This will require a number of definitions and an overview of the development in feminist and gender archaeology, before I will try to

describe a small facet of the present situation. The history and interaction of feminism and archaeology will only be considered here as far as necessary for the discussion of the subject matter. Very good overviews are available in many books and articles (e.g. [Gilchrist 1999](#); [Voss and Schmidt 2000](#)). Feminist and gender archaeology are closely related, but not synonymous, although they are sometimes used like it. Second wave feminism was concerned with equality in jobs and the invisibility of women (both in the past and the profession). It often had an universalist and essentialist view of women and men, possibly most clearly described in [Ortner \(1974\)](#), but it also had a clear political agenda, which was concerned with identifying the root causes of the oppression of women and, in particular, patriarchy as a theoretical framework ([Arnold and Wicker 2001](#)). In consequence second wave feminism thoughts and theories had a large impact on feminist archaeology, which studied the inequality in the profession, searched for women in the archaeological record and tried to reconstruct female (pre-)history. While there are already some articles from the mid-1960s onwards (e.g. [Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974](#)), it was the background of a feminist movement creating a particular political and academic climate, in which the seminal article by [Conkey and Spector \(1984\)](#) worked as a catalyst for discussion and further studies. They argued that despite their claims of objectivity, archaeologists were perpetuating

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1 A sign for the end of evolutionary thought?

gender-stereotypes by uncritically employing our modern notions in their interpretations of the past and failing to consider historical variation and cultural diversity in gender relations. Conkey and Spector described this male-centred view as androcentrism, the belief that men are at the centre of society with women being the deviation. Spector's 1983 article on gender task differentiation among the Hidatsa provided one of the earliest case studies applying feminist archaeological theory. Androcentrism was also evidenced in many articles, where it was always assumed that men did the majority of tasks, with the women usually not being mentioned or given a rather passive role. A typical example is the man-the-hunter paradigm (Gilchrist 1999, 18–21; Slocum 2008) that gave men more or less the active role in the entire process towards neolithisation. These stereotypes were often supported by the similarly male dominated science of sociobiology (e.g. Lovejoy 1981), which could be shown not always to be at the highest academic level (Fausto-Sterling 1992).

The Conkey and Spector article triggered a number of conferences and edited volumes about women in archaeology such as Gero and Conkey (1991), Walde and Willows (1991), Claassen and Joyce (1997), Hays-Gilpin and Whitley (1998), Arnold and Wicker (2001), Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon (2002). Nearly all editors of these volumes were female, which indicates one of the inherent problems of feminist (and gender) archaeology; male archaeologists were quite happy to ignore it for a number of years, considering these questions side aspects of archaeology. The question of why this happened has been widely discussed (Engelstad 2007; Gilchrist 1999; Wylie 1992), and one important reason lay in the processualist paradigm focussing on economic

factors over cultural factors. The latter were deemed to be less useful as evidence, as shown in Hawkes' ladder of inference (Hawkes 1954).

In the late 1990s a transition occurred, when the interest and focus gradually moved away from "invisible women" and "women's work" to gender construction and variability in past societies (Voss and Schmidt 2000). This gender archaeology was influenced by the third wave feminists, who questioned established norms and assumptions about sex and gender more thoroughly than the women coming before them. Sex had been understood for a long time to be the biological base for gender differences, and there are many people who still would like the world to be simply divided into clearly defined women and men. Gender has been convincingly defined as an individual's self-identification or identification by others, with specific gender categories always based on the culturally perceived sexual difference (Voss and Schmidt 2000). Simply said there are very female women and less female women and very male women, and the same can be said for men, and there might be all kinds of mixed feelings too. Gender can change temporally and spatially across and through cultures and given the cultural basis of gender, there should have been no limit to the number of possible genders in each society (Voss and Schmidt 2000). This is a standpoint, which seems to have been widely accepted in the humanities, although the public and here particularly the very conservative groups react to such ideas with an amazing amount of aggression and ridicule.<sup>2</sup> The discussion of binary sex divisions has caused and is still causing far more (public) irritation. It was the writing of Judith Butler (1990; 1993) in particular, which influenced this discussion profoundly. Her theory explicitly challenges biological accounts of binary sex divisions, and proposes

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<sup>2</sup> It makes one wonder, if some conservative women do not react very much against their own ingrained gender stereotype, when they argue so aggressively against a freedom of gender definitions (aggression not being a traditionally female characteristic).

that sex is constructed through discourse and cultural norms and not simply biologically determined. Essential to her postulation is the tenet that what is “normative” is actually constructed through reference to deviance. Thus it is “deviance” that is foundational and the “normative” that is unstable (Butler 1993). In archaeology the fact that gender and sex categories may coincide, but do not have to do so, has been recognised and discussed by several authors, mostly in connection with burial data (e.g. Arnold 2002; Cifarelli 2018).

An important effect, these third wave studies had, is the influence on other archaeological approaches, which were instigated or influenced by feminist and gender studies like the archaeology of identity (Diaz-Andreu et al. 2005), masculinist theory (Knapp 1998), archaeology of age (Baxter 2005), archaeology of sexuality (Schmidt and Voss 2000) and queer archaeology (Croucher 2005).

In archaeology the necessity to study gender relations and the construction of gender (and/or sex) has now been widely recognised, suddenly making our topic a forerunner in society. While gender mainstreaming is simply a procedure intended to lead towards a more equal footing of payment, research and law-making,<sup>3</sup> it has led to the strange development of gender-mainstreaming as a battle-cry used by those, who paint a dire picture of men not being allowed to be men anymore in modern society. This discrepancy might be explained by the growing separation between feminist and gender studies. I would also venture to hypothesise that this could be the reason behind another paradox, which is persistently

replicated: the unequal distribution of male and female authors in anthologies and journals as well as the asymmetrical allocation of power between male and female archaeologists. Such an unbalanced authorship has, of course, wide reaching effects, starting with gendered knowledge production, visibility of female (and/or queer) actors, differing levels of prestige and in the end leads to a narrowed field of accepted narratives as well as a limited number of archaeological topics of research, which are considered important (Bardolph 2014). The latter effects fund-raising, presence in media and thus career choices.

### **The publication record**

The following paragraphs will give examples of these discrepancies; the choice of journals and books is accidental and much influenced by a research situation determined by the Covid-19 outbreak and the limited access to physical libraries caused by it.<sup>4</sup> The scarcity of publications of anthologies before 2000 in particular is explained by this situation. The authors were sorted into only two sex-categories, male and female; this leads potentially to problems as it leaves out the possibility that sex and gender do not coincide or that individuals do consider themselves as a third or fourth gender. Any attempt to remedy that fault would have required personal interviews with authors, which is simply not possible under normal publishing conditions. I considered articles written by more than one man or more than one woman as one male or female contribution. The counted authors' contributions do not include the editors' introductions.

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3 “Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.” (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>).

4 The Covid-19 pandemic led to lockdown of public institutions including libraries, which made access to certain material rather difficult.

*Who publishes in journals?*

Whenever one looks through academic journals, the impression is always of a majority of male authors. When that impression is tested, it becomes clear that it is still mostly reality (Tab. 1). In *Paléorient*, the prestigious French journal, which deals mostly with the earlier period in Southwest Asia, male authors are more than double than female authors in the period between 1973 and 2018.<sup>5</sup> The similarly prestigious British journal, *Iraq*, which has a wider historic span and includes a large amount of textual based articles, presents a similar situation.<sup>6</sup> Before 1990 more than three quarter of the articles are written by male authors (Tab. 1, Tab. 2), which drops to two thirds after 1991, with an increased female and mixed authorship during that later period. Both of these journals exist since over 45 respectively 60 years and could be considered traditional archaeological journals, while the *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* was founded in 1991 with a focus on human cognition (Scarre 1991). This resulted nevertheless in a male authorship of 75% before 2006 and

of still double as many male authored articles than female authored ones after 2006 (Tab. 2).

Percentages such as the ones shown here, repeat the results from earlier studies into gender balance in publications (Bardolph 2014; Beaudry and White 1994; Victor and Beaudry 1992). While Victor and Beaudry (1992, 11) found that 74% of the articles published in *American Antiquity* (between 1967 and 1991) were written by men, Bardolph could show that the number was at 76% even higher between 1990 and 2013. This scarcity of female authors is underlined by the low number of articles dealing with gender related topics (Tomášková 2011, 112). Bardolph’s study includes four more journals, which all show similarly low numbers of female contributors. The highest number and best average can be found in the *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, where over 38% of the articles are written by female authors (Bardolph 2014, 527). The same journal has a higher number of contributions dealing with gender or feminism (Tomášková 2011, 116).

	Male	Female	Mixed	Unidentified
<i>Paléorient</i>	530	234	No info.	299
<i>Iraq</i> (1960-1990)	335	82	15	23
<i>Iraq</i> (1991-2017)	201	75	27	3

	Male	Female	Mixed
<i>Paléorient</i>	69,4	30,6	?
<i>Iraq</i> (1960-1990)	77,5	18,9	3,5
<i>Iraq</i> (1991-2017)	66,3	24,8	8,9
<i>CAJ</i> (1991-2006)	76	16	8
<i>CAJ</i> (2006-2017)	59	30	11

Tab. 1. Numbers of male, female, mixed and unidentified authors in journals.<sup>7</sup>

Tab. 2. Percentage of male, female and mixed authorship.<sup>8</sup>

5 The homepage of *Paléorient* offers a complete overview of authors since the 1970s, which is a very helpful tool. The numbers give the distribution of the authors; this leads to higher absolute numbers than in *Iraq*, because several people can author one article.

6 The numbers for *Iraq* were provided by Reem Aljader, for which I would like to thank her very much. Counted are the articles written by male, female, mixed or unidentified authors.

7 Gender was determined based on first name; if names were ambiguous or from a different cultural background, I sorted them either by familiarity of the individual in question or by internet search. Knowledge of individuals was also used, when names were given only with initials, otherwise they remained in the “unknown” category.

8 The percentages for *CAJ* were provided again by Reem Aljader (Kerner and Aljader in prep.).

***Who publishes in edited volumes?***

After the results in the journals, I examined a number of very different edited volumes, which are given here anonymous, only providing the main topic, year of publication and country of publication (**Tab. 3**). They all deal with archaeology in Southwest Asia or with theoretical developments relevant for archaeology. A similar approach and result are demonstrated in the analysis of publications in Handbooks ([D'Anna et al. in this volume](#)).

Of the 14 studied volumes ten have more than 50% male authors, and in eight of them the authors are over two third male. A closer look at the four volumes with 50 or more percent of female authors shows that they are two volumes dealing with food, one with textiles and one with theoretical papers. A third volume on food (2010) has with 33.3% female authors still more than most of the others. The three food volumes and the textile volume have only or mostly female editors, while the theory volume with a high percentage of female authors had two male editors. The three volumes with the smallest

amount of female authors are a Festschrift, a pottery volume and a chronology volume, all edited by only or mostly male editors. The two volumes about metal show a change between 1980 and 2014 with the number of articles written by female authors and particularly by mixed groups of authors increasing. This statistically not relevant sample indicates that the topic does not necessarily determine the choice of authors for such volumes, although food and textiles seem to be topics, which favour female authorship. The editors of theoretical compendia on the contrary tend to invite male authors, with the laudable exception of McGuire and Bernbeck (2011). The trend here seems still to follow the tradition, which Conkey had already criticised in 2003, namely that women are only asked to write about gender or feminism in theoretical volumes. One obvious result of this short analysis of edited volumes in archaeology is that female editors have more female authors in their books. A strategy for future more balanced research output can thus only be to have more volumes edited by women, which most likely means also more conferences and workshops organised by women.

	Male	Female	Mixed	Editors, male	Editors, female
Metal 1980, USA	10	3	1	2	
Pottery 2000, GB	18	3	1	2	
Festschrift 2002, D	24	2	1	2	1
Theory 2004, GB	19	5	2	1	1
Theory 2005, GB	9	2		1	
Food 2010, USA	5	3	1		1
Festschrift 2011, USA	13	4	1		1
Theory 2011, USA	4	6	2	2	
Textile 2014, GB	2	9	2		4
Chronology 2014, D	9	2	3	2	
Metal 2014, USA	15	8	5	2	
Food 2015, DK	5	10	1	1	2
Food 2015, D	4	6			1
Festschrift 2018, D	21	6	2	3	

*Tab. 3. Numbers of articles written by male, female or a mixed group of authors in edited volumes.*

### *Who is read and cited?*

Another important aspect of the visibility of men and women in archaeological research is the practice of citation and an overview of the most read articles. Scott Hutson studied citations in four American journals (Hutson 2002) and found that men cite women nearly as often as women cite women. The real difference lay in the lower number of citations compared to the actual publication record “stated differently, men received significantly more citations than expected given their rate of publication” (Hutson 2002, 339). Citation is, of course, also the outcome of other criteria, such as language group, interaction between students and professors at graduate school and citing circles “By citing certain writers and not others, authors communicate, consciously or unconsciously, their alliances, alignments and scholarly self-identities. Furthermore, citation may obliquely flatter [...] or affront.” (Hutson 2002, 335).<sup>9</sup> With this study in mind I reviewed the list of most read and most cited articles (Tab. 4) in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* (CAJ), *Norwegian Archaeological Review* (NAR), *Iraq*, *Iran* and *Levant*.<sup>10</sup> The *Norwegian Archaeological Review* is according to its homepage an international journal with particular emphasis on archaeological theory, method and practice, while *Levant* is another prestigious, regional-based British publication. The outcome was a surprise. In two of the five journals the 10 most read articles were mostly written by female authors (70% in *Iran*, 50% in *CAJ*, 40% in *Iraq* and 30% in *NAR*). However when the most cited articles are studied, the number of female authors drops considerably (to 10% in *Iran*, *CAJ* and *Iraq*, 20% in *NAR*). Only in *Levant* is the number of read and cited articles of female authors with 10% each, identically small. Such an outcome, even though it is anecdotal

and not statistically relevant, underlines the statement by Hutson that men get cited more than their rate of publication would suggest. Stated differently, women’s articles might be read more, but cited less.

	Male	Female	Mixed
<i>Iraq</i> , 10 most read articles	60	40	
<i>Iraq</i> , 10 most cited articles	50	10	40
<i>CAJ</i> , 10 most read articles	0	50	50
<i>CAJ</i> , 20 most cited articles	65	10	25
<i>NAR</i> , 10 most read articles	50	30	10
<i>NAR</i> , 10 most cited articles	60	20	20
<i>Iran</i> , 10 most read articles	30	70	
<i>Iran</i> , 10 most cited articles	50	10	40
<i>Levant</i> , 10 most read articles	40	10	50
<i>Levant</i> , 10 most cited articles	30	10	60

Tab. 4. Overview of most read and most cited article in several journals (*Iraq*, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, *Iran*, *Levant*).

### *Who makes the decisions?*

Having studied the gender division of articles in a number of journals, I found it useful to delve into the question of gender division in editorial boards. The situation is indicated in (Tab. 5) and shows that only the *Norwegian Archaeological Review* has a board with a female majority and a main female editor. Most other boards have a slight male majority of male committee members, except *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, which has (and had) a male editor and an overwhelmingly male board. It might not be completely unfounded to assume that such a composition of decision makers would have an effect on a journals’ direction. It is one of the cornerstones of post-processual theory that

9 Susan Pollock and myself have been over two decades members of a theoretical discussion circle, not quite seriously named “Zitierkartell” (citation cartel).

10 The choice of journals was dictated by the information easily available online.

	Editor, male	Editor, female	Committee/board member male	Committee/board member female
<i>Paléorient</i>	1		6	5
<i>Iraq</i>	1	1	2	4
<i>CAJ</i>	1		13	3
<i>NAR</i>		1	2	4
<i>Iran</i>	2		6	4
<i>Levant</i>	1		7	5

Tab. 5. Overview of gender distribution of responsible editors and committee or board members.

personal experience influences one’s outlook, or that embodied experience has an impact on daily practice, or that “*the past is produced in concrete practice, is reworked and reinscribed in the present, [...]*” (Shanks and Tilley 1992, 13). The low representation of women (and queer people) in decision making bodies permeates the inequality of gender relations, with all the effects mentioned above, such as limited narratives and low visibility of women.

### Feminist and gender studies

Without any doubt the situation of female archaeologist has improved, particularly when compared to the situation even at the end of the last century as described here “*To fully appreciate the hostility that the topic of gender has evoked among some archaeologists, I encourage the reader to seek out this issue of [...] Archaeological dialogues (1998, 5.2)*” (Tomášková 2011, 110). The frequency of publications written by females has increased, there is a smaller gender gap in salaries and there are more female tenured professors than ever before. There is nevertheless still a long way to go, and many aspects of equality have not improved as hoped for (Conkey 2003). If one studies books, articles and blogs published currently, gender is often mentioned, but not often in connection with feminism. The influence of feminists on the development of theoretical archaeology

particularly in the realms of identity construction and personhood definition is only sometimes acknowledged (Harris and Cipolla 2017, chapter 4). In the beginning the term “feminism” was a “dirty” word and described women, who burned bras (which they actually never did); and one cannot help feeling that in a complete circle we have arrived at a similar situation today. My students in Copenhagen are overwhelmingly female, and in most German universities (like Munich, Münster and Frankfurt) the situation in Near Eastern Archaeology shows a majority of 50–60% of female student beginners. Others like Mainz and Berlin have more fluctuating numbers.<sup>11</sup> It is nevertheless difficult to create an interest in questions of (political) feminism, even though problems of gender identity find more attention. Silvia Tomášková analysed in 2011 the situation in terms of gender or feminist approaches to archaeology. She did not study gender relations in authorship, but examined how many articles, mostly between 1990 and 2010 had either gender in title, abstract or keywords. The results were not encouraging, showing that the big journals such *American Antiquity* and *Antiquity* had published one article every year or every other year. The more theoretically oriented *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* and *Archaeological dialogues* had only minimally more articles concerning gender (Tomášková 2011, 113).

<sup>11</sup> Many thanks are due to my colleagues from those universities for providing me with an overview.

Nevertheless in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* and *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* the term “feminism” appeared more frequently. The latter journal devoted in 2007 a whole issue to “Doing Archaeology as a Feminist” (Wylie 2007), which included articles by Alison Wylie, Ericka Engelstad, Stephanie Moser, Sivia Tomášková, Margaret W. Conkey, Joan M. Gero, Rosemary A. Joyce and Ruth E. Tringham – a really fascinating assembly of female scholars in feminist archaeology. These scholars had an average age of 58, with the youngest being 42 at the time of publication.<sup>12</sup> I am left wondering if explicitly feminist standpoints in archaeology were associated with a specific generation, and if younger archaeologists find it less interesting, rewarding

or generally promising to engage with questions of feminist archaeology and explicit gender archaeology?<sup>13</sup> My apologies go here immediately to all those younger archaeologists, which I have not mentioned; I realise they are out there, but their voices seem to be less audible than they used to be. This is most likely not the fault of those who still do gender archaeology, but of a society, which still considers the unequal power balance between the genders a minor problem. More feminist approaches might do such a society good. During her entire live Susan Pollock has worked against this, both in her academic writings and in her everyday life dealings with students and colleagues. This article is a small token of appreciation for her.

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<sup>12</sup> My thanks go to the Silvia Tomášková and Stephanie Moser for providing me with their age.

<sup>13</sup> Obvious exceptions can be found as e.g. in the article by Maria Bianca D’Anna, Nolwen Rol, Birgül Ö□ut, and Reem Aljader in this volume.



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