

<sup>2</sup>Davis, 146-148; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, (New York 1994); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston 1997).

<sup>3</sup>Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "The Los Angeles 'Race Riot' and Contemporary U.S. Politics," in Gooding-Williams, ed., *Reading Rodney King*, 110.

<sup>4</sup>Rhonda Williams, "Accumulation as Evisceration: Urban Rebellion and the New Growth Dynamics," in Gooding-Williams, ed., *Reading Rodney King*, 84, 87.

<sup>5</sup>Melvin Oliver, James H. Johnson, Jr., Walter C. Farrell, Jr., "Anatomy of a Rebellion: A Political-Economic Analysis" in Gooding-Williams, ed., *Reading Rodney King*, 124, 126.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 125.

Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

In 1929, Virginia Woolf recorded — in *A Room of One's Own* — that "what one wants ... is a mass of information" about women's lives in the past. Looking on the library shelves for the "books that were not there," she wondered if some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton might not supply a history of women to supplement the history of men; in an even more ambitious move, Woolf suggested that such a student might even rewrite history itself. In the last decades, an explosion of interest in the history of women and of gender within the academy has begun to supply the "books that were not there" when Woolf wrote her essay almost seventy years ago. Where Woolf found only empty shelves, we can now find — in most if not all university libraries — rows and rows of books. In *The Gender of History*, however, Bonnie Smith suggests a new context in which to read Woolf's complaint. The books Woolf wanted were "not there," Smith's study implies, not because they had not been written, but because a university library was the wrong place to look for them. And the brilliant students of Newnham and Girton were not necessarily the ones to write them.

The assumption that most of the history written in the last two centuries has been written by and about men depends, Smith argues, on the assumption that the only history worth talking about is "professional" history, history written from within the academy and to the exacting standards of professional scholarship. On the contrary, Smith points out, women have had a lively interest in the writing of history since at least the eighteenth century. Women have, however written history as *amateurs* and not necessarily for a scholarly audience. The emergence of history as a scientific, professional discipline, according to Smith, was predicated on the discrediting of this amateur historical vision. The "founding practices" of the historical profession were themselves implicated in a gendered hierarchy. The historical profession, in effect, emerged not just without women but in opposition to them and to what

they represented: the “low,” the popular, the bodily, and the amateur.

In the early nineteenth century, Smith argues, history was literally undisciplined; the content, form, and focus of historical writing remained unsettled. Smith explores the writings of Mme. de Staël, whose works exemplified both the pleasures and the dangers of women’s history writing in this early period. Alongside de Staël’s persona as a rational, republican writer, Smith places another de Staël, whose work was not linear and realistic but “reticulative, theatrical, and dreamlike.” (26) Drawing on a range of sources — not only texts and written histories but also music, architecture, the visual arts, tombs and monuments — de Staël developed an interpretive framework in which the embodied historian served as the link between past and present. Smith characterizes this as de Staël’s “narcotic and erotic” apprehension of the past. (17) Visions and apparitions, opium dreams, even sexual arousal — all of these are techniques which de Staël uses in her effort to bring the past to life, to make it immanent in the present. This “embodied, sensual epistemology” privileges the body rather than the mind as a means of understanding the past. In this aspect of de Staël’s writing, Smith argues, we can trace a resistance to abstraction, to the articulation of transcendental “truths” which were to become the professional historian’s stock-in-trade. (29-30)

From these protean beginnings, (a time when the rational, liberal, constitutionalist de Staël could co-exist with de Staël the bizarre Romantic genius) Smith traces the emergence of two quite different historical sensibilities: the amateur and the professional. Smith locates women’s amateur historical writing in particular in the context of the multiple “traumas” of the Age of Revolution. In the first half of the nineteenth century, she points out, the disparities between “the articulation of universal equality” and “the codification of women’s inferiority” became increasingly visible (39). Women’s histories, Smith argues, fashioned out of these experiences of trauma a “better story.” Biographies of powerful queens or influential abbesses — “women worthies” of the old regime — functioned as a counter-narrative to their own “violent, tumultuous lives,” lives which were “marked by poverty, adultery, out-of-wedlock child-bearing, violence, abandonment, and abuse; lives inflected by the twin context of a political discourse of rights and equality and a legal one enslaving, impoverishing, and despoiling women” (39).

Women — as traumatized outsiders — avoided linear, analytical narratives. Such narratives, Smith argues, would have only served to highlight the distance between “then” and “now,” between aristocratic women’s power under the old regime and their own oppression as women in the Age of Revolution. Instead, these amateurs — like de Staël — attempted to bring the past to life in the present, through elaborate litanies of physical and material detail. Pages devoted to the minutiae of bygone fashions could, in effect, conjure the past onto the written page. Many of these writers also exploited the possibilities of social and cultural history, or of history in the form of a travel

narrative. So, the early nineteenth century writer Albertine Clément-Hémery criticized what she called the “long, fastidious, useless narratives” of military and political history, arguing that “Destiny often depends on the customs of a people.” Smith interprets this focus on everyday life — on festivals, religious processions, diet, or agricultural practices — as a way of surviving the traumas of “the republican/liberal gendering of political and economic modernity.” (60) Social and cultural history was a “better story” for women to write because it allowed writers to tell the story of women’s power and influence; political and military history told only of women’s oppression and exclusion from power.

In contrast to the richly detailed narratives that these amateurs produced — with their focus on material culture, and on bodily and domestic life, and with their “superficiality” and their refusal to engage in sustained analysis — a second type of historical writing had also begun to emerge in the early nineteenth century. The “scientific” histories of the professional historian took their shape in direct opposition to these amateur visions of the past. In a fascinating exploration of the (often brutal) rituals of the school-room, Smith traces the emergence of the dichotomies that would come to structure the form and content of professional and scientific histories. Out of the competition for prizes, the canings and the beatings, the elimination of ties to home and family, and in the privileging of texts over the life of the body, came the oppositions and hierarchies which came to define historical significance (and insignificance): “In the adolescent *agon* of boy versus master, boy versus boy, and boy versus the text — through the perpetual struggle against inferiority, the body, femininity — the adult historian painfully and passionately emerged.” (83)

If educational practices shaped the identity of the professional historian as “masculine” in opposition to a despised femininity, the founding practices of scientific history — the seminar and archival research — consolidated that opposition. The seminar and the archive, Smith argues, were both self-consciously masculine spaces. In the seminar room, all of human experience — or at least, those most “significant” traces of human experience, state documents — could be localized under the eyes of a new kind of community, a community of men bound together by their search for an authentic past. The seminar was conceived as a marketplace of ideas and as a republican brotherhood; these metaphors aligned the seminar with the increasingly exclusionary practices of the public sphere. If the seminar was a site for the display of the middle-class, masculine virtues of hard work and technical competence, the archive was conceptualized as a site of (hetero)sexual male conquest. In the accounts produced by historians like Leopold von Ranke or James Froude, recounting their forays into the archives, “descriptions of archival practices added a sense of forbidden knowledge and images of middle-class sexual prowess to the configuration of historical study as work and civic virtue.” (119)

Even more important to the masculinization of scientific history was the “coupling of science and politics” which Smith characterizes as “the quintessential installation of sexual difference at the core of professional history.” (132) Professionalizing historians produced a scientific history which was, Smith notes ironically, “a history of a higher and more truthful reality than people had lived, so pure and invisible that no one but the trained historian could see. It was a history that jettisoned many physical details of the human past as unimportant, while affirming that what went on in the historian’s dematerialized mind represented the “actual” reality.” (146) The local, the material, the domestic, the superficial, and the feminine were excised to produce “universal” histories of individual men, individual citizens of the nation-state.

Those women who, in the late nineteenth century, attempted to write as professional historians were, Smith argues, caught between two paradigms: the feminized amateur and the masculine professional. Some of this generation of women historians wrote highly conventional works of political and legal history. Others can be seen as “professionalizing the amateur impulse in a move toward economic and social history.” (199) Lucy Maynard Salmon, for example — who was trained in seminar methods at the University of Michigan, and introduced them at Vassar during her tenure there — exemplifies these contradictory impulses. She published a relatively conventional first book, a *History of the Appointing Power of the President*, in 1886, and then turned to a study of domestic service. In her Vassar seminars she introduced her students to a wide range of sources, from laundry lists to railroad timetables, which challenged the seminar’s exclusive focus on state documents and “high” political history. Her most innovative work was rejected by scholarly journals as insufficiently serious, and much of this work was published alongside the work of amateur historians in journals like the *Boston Cooking School Magazine*. (206-8)

From the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, women historians functioned as a “hinge” between amateur and professional visions of the past. As a result, this generation of women historians helped to open the profession to a new historical modernism which “incorporated the low, the everyday, the feminine, the aesthetic, the statistical, and much much more” (215). They also marked an important limit or boundary beyond which professional history could not go: Salmon’s “Ode to the Kitchen Sink,” Eileen Power’s list-like accounts of medieval life, or Mary Beard’s blank verse (“domestic amusers with babies, one baby this year, another next, possibly free one year, then twins, one’s own, one’s employers ...”) were experiments in modernist form which refused analysis and ultimately refused even intelligibility. While some male historians attempted to transform historical modernism into a more “virile” and “muscular” way of doing history, the danger for the woman professional — already teetering on the edge of amateurism — was that it ran

the risk of undoing her own fragile identification with objectivity and careful scholarship, the hallmarks of the professional historian.

Smith's account ends with a brief discussion of the "multiple traumas" out of which women (and men) continue to write history: "We inhabit a gendered profession, one in which the higher status of the male historian and his topics — considered the loci of universal value — fosters much bad 'acting out' of this obviously fraught role; yet the more sophisticated stage of 'working through,' which accompanies issues of power, abuse, and trauma, is never reached." (240) Professional history, Smith suggests, actively resists "rewriting" — whether by feminists, by post-colonial critics, or by labour historians — because its emergence as a discipline was founded on and enabled by the exclusion of women, non-Europeans, and the working-class. One of the legacies of this historiographic trauma is that talk of oppression — of women's oppression for example — has come to seem amateurish, emotional, uncritical, and therefore "unprofessional." (69)

This notion of "trauma" is at once Smith's most productive and most problematic insight. It is productive in that it enables a more sophisticated reading of many of these women historians than has previously been available. Amateur women writers, she concludes, looked for "better stories" to tell than the story of their own oppression; Smith therefore reinterprets those stories which focused on the privileges of elite women, or stories which contained anti-Semitism, racism or imperialism, as "different circuits around [women's] own inferiority" (67). Smith does not attempt to exculpate these women, but to re-position our analysis of them, exploring not just the fact of racism or imperialism but the ways that these political positions were produced and reproduced within the context of women's own oppression. Smith's account also forces us to rethink our own investments — libidinal and otherwise — in particular historical practices. Only by focusing attention on the hierarchical dynamics of the profession can we avoid perpetuating the historiographic traumas traced here; this is why Smith calls on us to "work through" rather than to "act out" the effects of trauma.

At the same time, this argument assumes, rather than demonstrates, that the emotional and psychological mechanisms governing trauma operated in the past as they do today. Developed in the context of our own contemporary discussions of the relationships between "cognition, emotion, and the psyche" (9), this concept of trauma seems to be a fundamentally a-historical one. If "trauma can involve the inability to mourn, to dispatch the dead or accept traumatic consequences by working them through to closure"(53) then the amateurs' refusal to acknowledge trauma may become the only available "evidence" of that trauma. Evasions, gaps, silences and absences become crucial, until it occasionally seems as though we can know that these writers were traumatized precisely because they refused to acknowledge or confront that trauma. The evidence for trauma, then, resists precisely the kind of

analysis and documentation that has come to define professional historical practice.

After reading Smith's account, however, it becomes difficult even to formulate such criticisms without an uncomfortable awareness of all that is at stake in disagreements over "professional standards," and of the ways in which the profession continues to be shaped by the gender of its history. Smith has drawn our attention to the ways in which historical praxis has been structured by hierarchies and dichotomies: between "low" and "high," amateur and professional, bodies and texts, feminine and masculine. The play of modern historical debate — whether over theory, method, content, or audience — is always located within these hierarchies and dichotomies. At the same time, it remains difficult to see how we should evaluate our own locations within these structures. Smith herself does not fully resolve this. She refuses, for example, to endorse a model which would valorize the "mature" female professional over the "immature" amateur. Yet she clearly writes as a professional historian: a chapter which deals, among other things, with the fetishization of the footnote, itself contains over one hundred detailed notes. This is an unsettling account of the history of our profession, one which raises as many questions as it sets out to answer. The questions it raises remain crucial, however, not only to history's past but also to its future.

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Philip M. Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre: Americans and the Paris Commune* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

In keeping with the globalizing trends of the late twentieth century, U.S. historians are increasingly peering beyond the nation's borders, trying to situate the United States in a wider international context. Comparative, transnational, borderlands, and imperial studies are all manifestations of this wider project. In his elegantly written and very engaging study of the Paris commune, Philip M. Katz contributes to the internationalizing endeavor by showing the extent to which the tumultuous events in Paris in the spring of 1871 impinged on Americans' consciousness. Even as he argues that American conceptions of the Commune had less to do with events in France than with events at home, Katz reminds us of the importance of the world beyond U.S. borders in helping to shape U.S. political culture in the post-Civil War period.

Although the bulk of the book covers Americans' reactions to the Commune, Katz begins with a chapter on General Gustave Paul Cluseret, a French soldier and adventurer who served in the Union Army and then became the War Minister of the Commune. Exceptional though he was, Cluseret helps