but only Noordegraaf's work is referred to in the bibliography. The result is a work that in some aspects is already dated.

These asides should not, however, stop us from noting that this book meets the very high standards that Johan Huizinga set in 1941 with his *Dutch Civilisation in the 17th Century*. Whether one prefers the baroque intellectual and literary style of Schama or van Deursen's restrained tone is perhaps a matter of taste. Social historians may also deplore the somewhat superficial treatment of some of their favourite topics. But in those aspects that are central to van Deursen's study, i.e. the components of the mental world of the common man in seventeenth-century Holland, he is very much in command.

Maarten Prak

BOYDSTON, JEANNE. Home and Work. Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic. Oxford University Press, New York [etc.] 1990. xx, 222 pp. £24.00.

This valuable study of the transformation of housework and gender roles in America, from colonial days to the 1850s, summarizes and elaborates much recent research in the social history of the period. It thus provides a useful vehicle for assessing how the field has evolved in the United States since the end of the 1960s.

Initially, social history merely aimed to add the history of common people to that of elites, leaving standard categories, periodizations, and interpretations pretty much alone. Only later did we find that as social history filled in the blanks of traditional accounts, some of the boxes already completed turned out to be incorrect, while others began to change their very shape, and even to bleed into each other. Eventually, of course, social historians abandoned the crossword puzzle approach to history, discarding the old compartments for economics, culture, politics, and even seemingly "natural" categories, such as masculinity, femininity, and the family. We had first sought answers to the questions posed in Bertolt Brecht's famous poem, "A Worker Looks at History". "Who Built the Seven Towers of Thebes? [. . .] Was it kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone? In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished, where did the masons go?" Next we began asking how kings and stone masons, queens and prostitutes, shaped each others' lives and transformed the very conditions that gave rise to their original relationships.

The historiography of women in America exemplifies this transition. Early work by historians of women sought to fill in the gaps in traditional history, searching for the female counterparts to the male roles we already knew. Raised to believe that women had not worked outside the home before the 1960s, we were delighted to find that there were female blacksmiths, butchers, barbers, tavern owners, hunters, attorneys, physicians, undertakers, loggers, shipwrights, gunsmiths, jailers, and typesetters in colonial days. It was particularly intriguing to discover that the ideology of separate spheres, long assumed to be a natural outgrowth of "the" sexual division of labor, was actually a historically specific development that could be dated from the late eighteenth century. In that period, the duties and images of men and women began to be demarcated far more sharply than in colonial days,

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with a mutually exclusive set of roles, obligations, spheres of action, and even psychological traits parcelled out to men and women.

The heady discovery that women had played more active roles in the economic sphere than we had ever imagined sometimes led to romanticization of the past. In the 1960s, Gerda Lerner argued that women lost productive roles and status in the early Jacksonian period, while Barbara Welter traced the reconfiguration of woman's image from an earlier role as "meet-help" and "yoke-mate" to a definition by their familial relations and concerns.[1] Seminars discussed the loss of economic purpose experienced by women.

The notion that colonial women were "better off" than Jacksonian ones proved unfounded,[2] and a more nuanced appraisal of the trade-offs involved in women's changing roles appeared in the 1970s. But researchers such as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich confirmed that the nineteenth-century opposition of male breadwinning to female domesticity reflected a distinction lacing in colonial times.[3] As Jeanne Boydston points out in her recent book, it was not until after the colonial period that the conceptual notion of work was dissociated from the home and identified with the paid activities of men; housework was then stripped of its economic, class-specific aspects and came to be viewed as the universal activity of classless, "nonworking" wives. Where in colonial days there had been men's work and women's work, now there was *work*, done by men, and *home*, which was equated with femininity and defined as a nonworking sphere of life. The work of women – and the home life of men – became practically a contradiction in terms.

During the same period that women's historians worked through to this evaluation of women's changing roles in the early republic, another group of social historians chipped away at the traditional consensus school of American historiography, which had described capitalism and liberalism as emerging inevitably, and nearly unopposed, from market-minded colonists and the rugged individualists of the expanding frontier. James Henretta's well-known essay, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-industrial America", demonstrated that the early American household system of production and distribution was something quite distinct from entrepreneurial capitalism. Authors such as Alan Dawley, Paul E. Johnson, and Sean Wilentz detailed the wrenching transformation of work patterns, exchange systems, and class relations as an older household economy and set of localized markets gave way to wage labor and a capitalist market. Processes of class reproduction and formation, long ignored in American historiography, emerged as central themes in all these works.[4]

1. Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson", *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* 10 (1969), 5–15; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860", *American Quarterly* 18 (1966), 151–75.

2. The attack on the "Golden Age" hypothesis is summarized in Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Boston, 1980) and Lyle Koehler, *A Search for Power: The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth Century New England* (Chicago, 1980).

3. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1982).

4. James Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-industrial America" (*William and Mary Quarterly* 35 1978), 3–32; Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeepers' Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (New York:

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Early attempts to integrate the two lines of research led many historians to explain changes in gender roles and images as a predominantly reflexive reaction to processes of class reconstitution. As production moved out of the home, the story went, the precapitalist, nonindustrial nature of the family was thrown into sharp relief. The doctrine of domesticity emerged to preserve the home from the spread of capitalism to other arenas of life. Women gained new privileges as wives and mothers, but lost their former economic centrality.

A problem with this interpretation was soon noted, however: though some kinds of work moved out of the home, other kinds of work moved in. Far from being a preindustrial holdover from the past, moreover, or a last untouched preserve of precapitalist affiliations, the family relations and household work patterns of the early nineteenth century were qualitatively new, and they were intimately linked to new class and market interactions. In 1981, Mary Ryan's *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1856* showed the dynamic role that changes in family organization and female duties played in creating a middle class that could function effectively in a capitalist occupational structure. Since then, historians of women have increasingly modified or even discarded the public/private dichotomy and the distinction between male and female spheres that characterized their early work. By 1987, for example, the annual Berkshire Conference on the History of Women was devoted to "rethinking public and private in women's history". In 1988, Linda Kerber reviewed the strengths and limits of the separate spheres concept, suggesting that the ideological model of separate spheres served a social function that in fact proved the interpenetration of both spheres and their mutual dependence on shifting social and economic realities.[5]

Jeanne Boydston's study of the changing content and image of housework in the northern United States prior to the Civil War synthesizes and extends our growing understanding of the ways that class and gender processes, the so-called public and private arenas of life, are inextricably entwined. Boydston argues that the same forces that reorganized paid labor, restructuring production and distribution in households, shops, communities, and markets, also reorganized unpaid work within the home, altering its relation to paid work, its internal methods of production and distribution, and its ideological meaning. Much as labor became subordinated to capital even while the mobilization of labor became essential to the realization of investment, housework became subordinate to paid work even while it became essential to working-class survival and middle-class security in the cash economy. At the same time, much as nineteenth-century classical economists abandoned their traditional labor theory of value in favor of a theory stressing the creative power of capital, household work, once seen as the heart of an "oeconomical society", was redefined as nonproductive.

Hill and Wang, 1978); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

5. Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1856* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History*, edited by Dorothy V. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History", *Journal of American History* 75 (1988), 9–39. See also Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

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Boydston begins with a useful summary of the household economy of early America. Despite their pervasive subordination, colonial women were "*recognized* as workers, and the value of that labor – both to their households and to their communities – was openly and repeatedly acknowledged" (p. 5). In the late seventeenth century, though, land shortages combined with rise of a commercially oriented society to narrow the definition of productive labor, weakening women's ability to claim the status of worker.

The American Revolution temporarily interrupted this process, heightening the visibility and socially recognized value of women's household production. Ultimately, though, the growth of republicanism accelerated the eclipse of women's productive role, first by identifying citizenship with economic independence rather than economic usefulness and second by emphasizing a housewife's childraising duties over her other (often more time-consuming) household work.

Contrary to society's new insistence on women's seclusion from "the almighty dollar", women made cash contributions to many households, taking in boarders, peddling home manufactures or food, doing paid sewing at home, and selling scavenged goods. But women's unpaid work was perhaps even *more* essential to a family's survival in the cash economy. Boydston shows us the many ways in which women stretched their families' inadequate cash resources, frequently contributing more economic benefits to the household than they could have earned in formal paid work.

Yet despite the economic contributions of housewives, and despite the fact that both the rhythms and tools of their work were changed by the spread of wage labor and industrialization, the home was increasingly viewed as untouched by either capitalism or mechanization. Women's tasks around the home were seen "less as purposeful activities required and ordered by the welfare of their individual families than as emanations of an abstract but share Womanhood" (p. 145). In a chapter entitled "The Pastoralization of Housework", Boydston shows how even the most mundane necessities of daily existence were redefined as acts of love rather than work.

Moving past sterile debates over whether the labor of housewives served capitalism or patriarchy, Boydston brings historical specificity to an analysis of how women's "domestic" labor interacted with the emergence of a waged work force defined as male. She writes:

> Men experienced early industrialization *simultaneously* through their economic lives *and* through their gender identities, with each of these shaping and being shaped by the other. In the same way, it was in both of these forms – as *work* and as distinctly *women's* work – that the history of housework unfolded through the antebellum period. (p. 74)

Boydston's discussion of paid and unpaid labor, with its ideologically gendered differentiation between (male) work and (female) domesticity, would be clearer had she stressed that the real distinction in the organization of labor in antebellum America was between *wives'* domestic work and a paid work force that included many women – most of them single. More attention might then be paid to the complex ways in which capitalist employment policies, male dominance in the union movement, middle-class domestic ideology, and family alliances between working-class husbands and wives militated against – or actively suppressed – the

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ability of paid women workers to articulate their interests, or even assert their membership in "the working class".[6]

The point remains, though, that even when women withdrew from the paid work world to become wives, their work produced essential material benefits, not merely personal services or comforts. Yet the economic aspect of housewifery was systematically denied – so completely that *all* women were labelled as nonworkers on the basis of their presumed eventual destination, the home. How could such essential economic functions be rendered invisible? Boydston makes the same point about housework that Marx did about paid work in his *Theories of Surplus Value*: the social status and exchange value of a good or task do not depend on how useful or socially necessary it is, but on an entire matrix of power, ownership, and market relations. Furthermore, the use value of goods or services that are not sold on the market frequently cannot be realized, in practice or in ideology, under capitalism. Boydston seems to think she is modifying Marx here, remarking that although Marx recognized that price represented social relations rather than intrinsic "value", he did not consider that something can have a value without having a price. In fact, that is the central contradiction Marx and Engels posited for the commodity form: they first distinguished between use value and exchange value and then showed how capitalism dissolves the first into the second. Use value has no meaning under capitalism unless it is channelled through exchange value; if a good or service cannot be sold in the capitalist market, the labor put into it remains trapped in the good (or, in the case of housework, the service). It is this point that led Marx and Engels to argue that a labor theory of value would be meaningless in other economic systems, but expressed the central contradiction – and tragedy – of capitalist production.

Home and Work does an excellent job of showing how the reorganization of capitalist productive and power relations redefined housewifery as unproductive, despite its critical use value both to capital and to the individual working-class household. When their work is translated into market terms, as Boydston persuasively manages to do, housewives typically produced use values "worth" considerably more than their own individual maintenance (and also worth more than they could earn outside the home). But wives remained dependent on their husbands the way the value of commodities is dependent on the market; they could not realize the value of their work outside of marriage. At the same time, the wage system remained dependent on women's household labor even as it denied women the status of worker.

In detailing, and often quantifying, the ways that both individual men and their employers benefited from women's invisible labor, Boydston wisely stops short of reducing the complex dynamics of industrial households to a crass economic model of men expropriating all of a woman's labor beyond that required to reproduce her existence. While such a theoretical construct, put forward by many patriarchy theorists, correctly highlights women's subordination with the family, it is too

6. A good start for making such distinctions between the interests of women as wives and as single workers can be found in Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860* (New York: Knopf, 1986) and Mary Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work: Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

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simplistic in describing male relations to the family – the fact, for example, that many husbands did support their wives at a level beyond what the women would have been able to earn on their own. A family model focused on the husband's appropriation of his wife's labor also fails to grapple with the complexities of defining "surplus labor", especially in households with children. In place of such an interpretation, based on dominance relations within *individual* households, Boydston stresses "the role of unpaid labor in the creation, definition, and working of class in antebellum America" (p. 139) and the ways in which housework was in turn structured by class position. This emphasis on the centrality of gender to the construction of class is far more valuable than calculation of who "profits" from women's work. While it does not dissolve relations of male dominance into genderless, functionalist "family strategies", it contextualizes the power struggles and personal compromises of family life, calling into question "dual systems" theories that try to distinguish between class and gender inequalities or, worse yet, to rank them. Boydston's work contributes to the emerging understanding among social historians that class is far more than an objective, quantifiable relationship to the means of production. It is a system of symbiotic but opposed power relations and interests involved in organizing and contending over the very definition as well as the production, appropriation, and distribution of labor.

One of those power relations is gender. Another, of course, is race. The growing identification of work as a male activity was accompanied in the same period by the equation of workers with the "white race", a shifting, socially constructed category whose evolution in antebellum America is described by David Roediger in his recent book, *The Wages of Whiteness*. Taken together with Roediger's research and other recent social histories such as Peter Linebaugh's *The London Hanged*, *Home and Work* helps historians identify the processes whereby "the working class" became defined as white, male, and artisan-industrial, with the result that both historians and political activists have excluded women, minorities, and the persistently unemployed or underemployed from their analysis of the central dynamics of class.[7]

Boydston, then, makes an important contribution to the growing number of studies that establish the limits of public/private, home/work, or male/female dichotomies. Additionally, many of her points suggest the futility of conceptualizing gender, race, and class as separate "variables" and then trying to figure out which factor carries the most weight in what situations. No society has ever constructed class relations without the aid of specific gender and race or ethnic dynamics. In the earliest class societies, for example, the work for slave originally meant "captive woman". A workable definition of class, in any historical period, must include gender and race relations as a constitutive element of class. *Home and Work* is a valuable contribution to the task of redefining class in this way.

Stephanie Coontz

7. David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

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