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Gendered Spaces. by Daphne Spain

Review by: Joy Charlton

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is no question but that this book would be a valuable resource for anyone concerned specifically with Eucharistic cults and devotions in Europe. Nevertheless, and despite the promises made in the introduction, it is for the most part a study of how the Eucharist was regarded by various social and religious elites. Whether the Eucharist had the same meaning for the vast majority of the population in different areas of Europe during the different centuries under consideration is unclear, and anyone interested in this question will have to find the answer elsewhere.

Gendered Spaces. By Daphne Spain. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pp. xviii + 294.

Joy Charlton
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We typically overlook the importance of spatial arrangements. The way we arrange space becomes taken for granted, invisible, and seemingly natural. But spatial arrangements, within which our daily lives are created, both embody and generate the rules and consequences of social life. Daphne Spain does us a significant service, therefore, when she endeavors to make visible the relation of space to gender, knowledge, status, and power.

Daphne Spain examines spatial institutions and their association with gender stratification across time and across cultures, using a wide variety of examples. She argues that, historically and cross-culturally, women and men have been spatially segregated, that spatial segregation has limited women's access to knowledge that men have used to produce and reproduce power, and that spatial segregation thereby reinforces women's lower status. To measure relative status, Spain chooses three variables: control of labor, control of property, and public/political participation. She utilizes all three variables in historical and cross-cultural versions, using, among other data sources, ethnographic accounts and the Human Relations Area Files.

Spain focuses primarily on three "spatial institutions": the family, education, and the labor force. She begins with nonindustrial societies, looking first at family dwellings. Women and men, she notes, can be separated from one another in dwellings as small as one-room huts. Examining examples of societies with segregated dwellings (e.g., Islamic *Purdah* societies), integrated dwellings (e.g., Balinese houseyards), and exceptions (Navajo anomalies), she finds the predicted pattern. The greater the segregation of the sexes, the lower the status of women. Spain next examines education in a nonindustrial version, that of men's ceremonial huts where "knowledge important to public status is passed among men and from one generation to the next" (p. 67). And indeed, those societies with ceremonial huts, she finds, are associated with a lower status for women, as are those where the division of labor is more spa-

tially segregated (e.g., Eskimos of North America) than integrated (e.g., the Bari of South America).

The focus shifts to spatial institutions in the United States, beginning with domestic architecture—from gentlemen's country homes to southern plantations to bungalows to contemporary designs. She finds historically a gradual reduction of gendered spaces in American homes, correlated with women's changing status in the United States. New home designs typically include, for example, a multipurpose family room/kitchen combination, integrating spaces where women and men were previously separated. Education, too, has historically been divided into gendered spaces; Spain reviews the Dame schools, Masters' schools, academies and seminaries, and women's colleges. The move to coeducation again paralleled elevations in women's status, although gender segregation remains, in classrooms and in choices of discipline. Finally, there is workplace segregation: women have been more likely to work in household production/domestic service while men labor outside the home, with corresponding differences in relative status.

Unlike American homes and educational settings, however, gendered spaces in contemporary workplaces have not changed remarkably over the past century. Although occupational segregation is declining, 31% of all women in the labor force can still be found in only three occupations: teacher, nurse, and secretary. Also it is important that women more often work in "open-floor" jobs—subject to greater scrutiny and therefore greater control—while men more often work behind closed doors; higher status is linked to the greater control of one's own space. And "when women and men do not share the same workplace," Spain argues, "women do not receive information that can be translated into higher status—in the form of higher wages, for example" (p. 227).

Spain believes that spatial integration—degendering space—is necessary for gender equality. "Space is organized in ways that reproduce gender differences in power and privilege. Status is embedded in spatial arrangements, so that changing space potentially changes the status hierarchy and changing status potentially changes spatial institutions. . . . Gendered spaces provide the concrete, everyday-life grounding for the production, reproduction, and transformation of status differences" (p. 233). She acknowledges that race and class add layers of complexity and need further examination, as do additional cultural institutions such as religion and the military.

Although a self-conscious feminist, Spain devotes only a few sentences to the recent work by feminist scholars, particularly anthropologists, who have been rethinking the understanding of status so that we might not privilege typically masculine activities by their very definition. Spain's form of analysis, then, is quite traditional. Some conceptual ambiguities between causal and correlational arguments exist; the breadth of focus means that the insights gained from the nuances of space have to be glossed over; the interdisciplinary nature of the work means that the book may please no discipline thoroughly. But the interdisciplinary effort

is precisely the book's strength, bringing together in one place the fields of anthropology, sociology, geography, architecture, and urban planning. The illumination of spatial dynamics, not to mention gender dynamics, deserves such concentrated attention.

Women Watching Television: Gender, Class and Generation in the American Television Experience. By Andrea L. Press. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991. Pp. 238. \$38.95 (cloth); \$16.95 (paper).

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Andrea Press contributes to the paradigm in mass communications research that decodes popular culture. The paradigm is based on the un-American combination of critical perspective, empirical study, and qualitative methods. Like Radway, Long, Ang, and others, Press also adds feminist theory to the brew. Her text is the corpus of prime-time entertainment; her respondents are 40 working- and middle-class women, young and old, and her problem is whether the process of interaction with television texts results in the reinforcement of traditional female roles ("patriarchal values") as the classics in soap-opera research used to suggest or in the raised consciousness of a new feminine identity as is currently theorized.

The main findings, not surprisingly, are that television does a little of both. But it does a little of both in somewhat different ways for middle-class viewers and for working-class ones. For the middle class, it drives home the dominant representations of women in contemporary culture while also serving as a cultural reservoir of images of feminist power. For working-class women, it proposes a middle-class life-style as normal and normative, while provoking a certain moral indignation among these viewers over the manner in which television women manipulate the patriarchal system by means of sexuality and weakness.

Press distinguishes between two modes of involvement. Analyzing her qualitative interviews, she finds that middle-class viewers are affected primarily through the process of identifying with both the glamorous, sexually provocative female characters and the more traditional nurturing ones. Although they discount the reality of television it is fantasizing itself that lowers their guard. Working-class viewers are more likely to accept television as realistic, and, as a result, find their own reality and themselves inadequate by comparison, even if they find their own behavior more worthy.

In functional terms, Press's findings suggest that television provides middle-class women raw material for psychological games in which the self is projected onto favorite characters and vice versa, while working-class women use the medium as a window for collecting information about the "big world" and how to behave in it. A different classificatory