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# The Gender Of History: Men, Women, And Historical Practice



## Synopsis

In this pathbreaking study of the gendering of the practices of history, Bonnie Smith resurrects the amateur history written by women in the nineteenth century--a type of history condemned as trivial by "scientific" male historians. She demonstrates the degree to which the profession defined itself in opposition to amateurism, femininity, and alternative ways of writing history. The male historians of the archive and the seminar claimed to be searching for "genderless universal truth," which in reality prioritized men's history over women's, white history over nonwhite, and the political history of Western governments over any other. Meanwhile, women amateurs wrote vivid histories of queens and accomplished women, of manners and mores, and of everyday life. Following the profession up to 1940, *The Gender of History* traces the emergence of a renewed interest in social and cultural history which had been demeaned in the nineteenth century, when professional historians viewed themselves as supermen who could see through the surface of events to invisible meanings and motives. But Smith doesn't let late twentieth-century historians off the hook. She demonstrates how, even today, the practice of history is propelled by fantasies of power in which researchers imagine themselves as heroic rescuers of the inarticulate lower classes. The professionals' legacy is still with us, as Smith's extraordinary work proves.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This wonderful book is a must read for all serious students of history. While it is admittedly beyond most undergraduates, it should be required for all aspiring professional academics in the humanities

and social sciences.

This book is absolute filth! It tries to frame absolutely everything in the writing of history as some sort of freudian manifestation of sex and drugs. I had to read this for a college philosophy class and it was nothing short of mortifying and infuriating.

This book fails to present any new argument for the treatment of women historically. It does point out that women have been ignored over the centuries but most of us already knew that. The use of technical language, assumed foreknowledge of historical figures and an overestimated understanding of historical process make this book inappropriate for most undergraduates. Graduate students should be able to muddle their way through most of the book and it is also a book for academic collections.

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