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On Gender and Spatial Experience in Public: the Case of Ancient Rome

Amy Russell

Introduction: methodology, history, and feminist archaeology

Six years ago, Louise Revell (Revell 2010) published in a TRAC volume a feminist critique of Romanization highlighting three stages of inquiry into women and gender in the past which have become canonized in feminist archaeological and historical scholarship (Kelly 1976; Wilkie and Howlett Hayes 2006), and can be broadened to include queer and trans approaches and more. The first stage of inquiry is a critique of male bias: it can be harder than one might think to move past the silence of our sources, the prejudices of earlier scholarship, and our own subconscious resistance to change to notice both that we are systematically ignoring most aspects of women's lives in the past, and that this is a problem. Stage two, which involves recovering information about women's lives, might seem boringly positivist; but it is key both to redressing the imbalances noted at stage one, and as a step towards stage three: 'studying the relationship between genders and the factors which structure them' (Revell 2010: 2).

This tripartite division was first formulated twenty-five years earlier by Meg Conkey and Janet Spector (Conkey and Spector 1984). Revell's choice to remind her readers of it was prompted by some of the same motivations which led me to TRAC 2015. It was early TRAC volumes which first opened my eyes to the possibilities feminist archaeology could bring to the study of the ancient world, and in the 1990s the series was at the very cutting edge of the field. In the 2000s, however, the number of explicitly feminist contributions, or even contributions about women, dropped (noted at the time by Baker 2003). Perhaps these methods are seen as old-fashioned; as a historian trespassing on archaeological territory I am not the right person to restore them to relevance with dramatic theoretical advances, though the feminist historians I draw on in this paper also have much to offer to archaeology. But in any case, it would be a pity to lose sight of the hard-won advances of early feminist archaeologists – or to miss out on new ideas and new conclusions which their methods can still offer.

My nostalgia may seem unnecessary in a time when many battles have already been won. Certainly, we do not face the same problems as colleagues fifty or even twenty years ago: gender is accepted as a valuable interpretative lens across multiple archaeological subfields. Indeed, nowadays the study of women's lives can seem almost passé; women's history has given way to the more expansive field of gender studies. But it is dangerous to suppose that the study of women in the past has nothing left to offer, or that moving on to new methodologies does not entail risk.

Conkey and Spector's three stages of feminist inquiry are not perfect analogues to the three successive 'waves' into which feminist activism and thought has traditionally been divided (see Spencer-Wood 2007 for a full assessment of the three waves and their impact on archaeological scholarship). Still, there are points of comparison between the two models: both involve a first phase of calling attention to inequalities, a second phase which aims to redress them by making radical changes to the underlying system, and a third which broadens its scope to call into question even the assumptions on which the earlier phases were built. In feminist thought more broadly, third-wave attention to difference and intersectionality has gone some way towards correcting terrible wrongs perpetrated by earlier theories which too often assumed a single (white, Western, cisgender...) perspective, and highlighted the importance of taking all genders into account in the study of gender as a relation (discussion in Díaz-Andreu 2005: 13; Brumfiel 2007: 2-5). Feminist archaeologists at the end of the last century noted with optimism the effects that third-wave feminism was having on the discipline, and predicted that new advances in the study of gender as a relation would result (e.g. Gilchrist 1999: 1-9) – as indeed they have done. Yet some more recent commentators are warier (e.g. Spencer-Wood 2007: 56; Foxhall 2013: 14-15): has the study of gender begun to threaten feminist scholarship? Gender is huge and multifarious, and can be a radical, political, and transformative way to do scholarship. But it can also be a way to sanitize and deradicalize, to hide the uncomfortable reality that many of the goals of second-wave feminism have not yet been achieved (a point made most incisively by the feminist historian Judith Bennett, 2006: 16–25). If we are not careful, the triumph of gender studies across academia has the potential to distract from the problems specific to the study of women in the ancient world.

To rephrase in terms of Conkey and Spector's stages: we should bear in mind that stage two of the three (the recovery of evidence about women's lives) is far from complete. And stage three (using that evidence to study larger questions about gender as a relation in ancient societies) often involves a process of deconstruction, as for

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example we challenge the stability or usefulness of the category 'woman' – itself an important part of the feminist project, but one which implicitly or explicitly challenges the work done in stage two (e.g. Offen, Pierson, and Rendall 1991: xxx; the critique is continual and recursive, and gender theory itself is not immune, as in for example Judith Butler's challenges to the sex-gender dichotomy: Butler 1993). Stage two might seem retrograde, but we should not be in a hurry to write it out of our own practice.

In this paper, then, I am unapologetically looking for gendered space in the late Republican and early imperial city of Rome by looking for space used by women, and space gendered feminine. I proceed by examining afresh the evidence for women's use of space (and here the difference between sex and gender is less vital than it might be in some other areas of study, since unless we are actually examining bodily remains the 'women' we see in our evidence are usually in fact bodies gendered feminine, no matter what their biological sex). At the same time, I return to some of the second-wave feminist scholarship of the 1970s on which contemporary studies of gendered space rest. The focus will be the fraught transition from two to three, in both senses: from collecting data about women to drawing conclusions about gender as a structural feature of ancient society, and from foundational second-wave thought to the new horizons opened up by postmodern approaches in the 1990s and beyond.

Methods for finding gendered space

Where should we look for gendered space in the Roman world? How would we even know it if we found it? 'Gendered space' can refer to a space specifically or even exclusively reserved for the use of one gender, but it can also mean a space conceptually linked to one gender or the other, or even space linked to a certain expression of gender as a relation. To choose a few obvious examples from contemporary Britain, the ladies' loos are a good example of gendered space, but so is the makeup counter at a department store, or the queue for a club where waiting customers play up to different gendered norms to win the bouncers' favour. The final category could stretch to include any space where gender differentially affects spatial experience – and so, really, any space whatsoever.

For now, though, let us return to the question of uncovering evidence for women's presence and movements in Rome. What kind of evidence should we be prioritizing? Often, historians simply cannot find women in the usual places by applying traditional approaches to traditional forms of evidence. The search for women in the ancient world brought me to space and to archaeology: everyone uses space, and we can use the evidence of material culture to start to undo some of the imbalance that our written sources, which tend to ignore or exclude women, have forced upon us. But this is not a call to throw away the texts entirely, and there will be plenty of text in what follows. Indeed, the spaces I investigate – public spaces in the Republican city of Rome – have not yielded carefully-excavated troves of small finds of the kinds which might demonstrate the presence of women (see Allison 2015 for an excellent recent account of both the benefits and the pitfalls of this methodology; again, the critique can be traced back to Conkey and Spector 1975: 10). When we are looking for women or any other marginalized group in the ancient world we have to use all the sources available.

Where should we focus our search? The house is one obvious place to start, and feminist archaeologists have been at the centre of the longstanding trend to focus on domestic spaces, rather than the traditional prestige sites such as fora and temples, as archaeological priorities. Historians are gradually catching up. But revaluing the domestic sphere can be problematic too: if we focus too closely on the house we reinscribe on the past our own notions of the feminine as intrinsically linked with the private and the domestic. Roman women were by no means confined to their homes, and identifying feminist archaeology with domestic space risks creating rather than bridging divides – not to mention ignoring important aspects of women's lives (Spencer-Wood 2007 34-5; Trümper 2012: 290). In this paper, I look for women in public space.

Gendered space in feminist scholarship 1: segregation

Feminist approaches to gendered space of all periods often rest on assumptions born of their own time and place which are not easy to apply to the ancient world. This is not a fault; much feminist scholarship deliberately understands knowledge as 'situated' (Haraway 1988), resisting master narratives and universal answers. For the scholar of the ancient world attempting to apply modern theory, however, the situatedness of knowledge forms a stumbling block. Many seemingly fundamental principles break down in the alien society of Rome. For example, one well-known model developed by feminist urban historians in the 1990s begins from the observation that gender stratification is often reinforced by spatial segregation; women are not given access to places where power is exercised or knowledge is kept. 'The greater the distance between women and sources of

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valued knowledge, the greater the gender stratification in the society' (Spain 1992: 27). Yet ancient Rome seems to have a high degree of gender stratification, but a low degree of spatial segregation by gender. There are some spaces in Roman contexts which were segregated: men's and women's baths, for example (though see Foxhall 2013: 114–36, noting that even here segregation did not always go very far in practice). But they are far fewer than we might expect (and Romans themselves noticed the absence of segregated space in their cities by comparison with contemporary Greeks: Cornelius Nepos, *Preface* 6-7). Status, rather than gender, often dictated how much access an individual might have to spaces of power. In Republican Rome, sources of valued knowledge were spatially located in places like the elite house – seen at least in part as women's domain – while the topography and archaeology of the political space of the Forum, at least in the Republican period, suggests an open and accessible multipurpose square which was not defined by architectural barriers and was available to all (Russell 2016: 47-9, and see below). But it would be wrong to take this apparent lack of spatial segregation as a sign of gender equality in ancient Rome.

Gendered space in feminist scholarship 2: public and private

Another frequent approach taken by some modern theorists is to consider the spatial relationship between the public/private dichotomy and gender. In many societies, public is mapped to masculine, and private to feminine; yet because the match is rarely perfect, we can use it as a starting point to consider and deconstruct both binaries. This approach reached fruition among feminist urban theorists of the 1990s (e.g. Wilson 1991; Spain 1992; Walkowitz 1992) but can trace its genealogy back to pioneering feminist scholars such as the anthropologist Shirley Ardener and the theorist Carole Pateman in the 1980s (Ardener 1981; Pateman 1983). Nineteenth-century cities, particularly Victorian London, provide some of its archetypes, though Puwar 2004 applies similar methods to modern British culture. Strict spatial segregation is not required: we can find plenty of examples of women in public, and men in private. Rather, these scholars understand the public/private divide as a technology used to police gender. When women are in public they are either constrained and marked, or, on the other hand, smothered and denied (Puwar 2004: 24). Cultural scripts might tell women that going out in public is dangerous or threatens their social status (for example, they could be mistaken for prostitutes): constrained, marked, stigmatized; at the same time, some public spaces may be gendered masculine so strongly, even to the extent that they are popularly understood as segregated, when in fact plenty of women spend time there. Women who clean, beg, serve, or even just pass through are ignored because on some level they 'don't count': smothered and denied. In such a society, most public space is gendered masculine (and much private space gendered feminine) even though very little space is formally segregated. In fact, it is necessary that women be present in public, so that the differential treatment of their bodies can be used to mark out and police public/private boundaries.

Public and private in Rome

Once again, we must be very careful in applying situated understandings of the public/private dichotomy to the ancient world: simply to assume that women were associated with the private and men with the public would be a perfect example of reinscribing our own conceptions of gender on the ancient world (noted as such by Conkey and Spector 1985: 19; see also Schmitt Pantel 1992 on the Greek city). An interdisciplinary approach incorporating both textual and material evidence can help. The textual evidence – though here, too, we must be careful not to import our own biases – hints that in ancient Rome women were associated with something analogous to our own 'private sphere'. There is a hazy sort of equivalence between women and the home: the traditional praise of wifely virtues on epitaphs is exemplified by the claim *domum servavit* – 'she kept house'. The literary sources have plenty more examples to offer (e.g. Cicero, *pro Roscio Amerino* 149: Caecilia deals with business at home while Marcus Messala takes charge of things which have to be done in the Forum); for further explorations of the theme, see e.g. Milnor 2005. Yet they also contribute a wealth of examples of women moving freely through the city's public spaces. The overall picture is tantalisingly reminiscent of Victorian London as explored by Wilson 1991 or Walkowitz 1992. So can this second approach to gendered space allow us to track how Roman discourses of public and private were used to spatialize and police gender?

One immediate problem is that for all the little we know about Roman gendered space, our understanding of Roman public and private space is just as hazy (a problem noted by e.g. Allison 2006: 345, 347). I have claimed that women were associated with the *domus*, though not spatially confined there – but does this automatically mean that they were associated with private space? The Roman elite *domus*, at least, was remarkably public when viewed through modern eyes (for the consequences for gendered space, see particularly Wallace-Hadrill

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1996). Elsewhere I have tried to show that what we think of as Roman public space, up to and including the Forum Romanum, cannot be adequately described as merely 'public', either (Russell 2016). Architecturally, motifs like columns, heavy use of marble, and pediments which in Greek cities signify public, civic space are entirely at home in the Roman elite house, or even the slightly-less-elite houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Householders wanted to bring some of the grandeur and importance of public space to their houses (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 17–37), but the relationship works both ways. In the first century B.C., an Aemilius Lepidus decorated his family's house with shields bearing portraits, presumably of eminent members of the family; he put up exactly the same decoration on his family's monument in the Forum, the Basilica Aemilia (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35.12). Fig. 1 shows how prominent the shields were. A visitor to the house was reminded of the grandeur of public space, while a visitor to the basilica was reminded of the personal power which in some other societies might be confined to the house, and of the links between the two spaces. In Rome (and particularly under the Republic, before the new category 'imperial' introduced its own complications: Milnor 2005), the architectural repertoire of columns, honorific statues, and so on does not construct a semantics of publicity, as Hölscher 1998 proposed for the Greek world; instead, it constructs a semantics of power which crosses boundaries between public and private.

Still, power was expressed differently in the house and in the Forum, and the difference was gendered. The architectural grandeur of the elite house did not necessarily exclude female power. Women were vital parts of the familial continuity the house celebrated, as represented by the tradition that the marital bed, as well as the ideologically-charged loom, should be displayed in the atrium (Severy 2003: 19–22). Roman public architecture, on the other hand, and in particular the architecture of politics, placed overwhelming emphasis on the adult male citizen. In the Forum, honorific statues celebrated past generations of Roman men; the narratives of success and conquest they told had male protagonists; the architectural appurtenances of politics, from the Curia to the Rostra to the tribunals which dotted the square reminded the viewer of political activities where were (at least in theory) exclusively male. The space spoke the language of *virtus*, the Roman concept of excellence or success which was really nothing other than manliness, conceptually and etymologically linked to *vir*, man. A male citizen viewer could identify with the men honoured in statuary or remember participating in politics; a woman, or slave, or foreigner, was always an outsider looking in. Of course factors like religious architecture, or the presence in the Forum of Rome's ambiguously-gendered Vestal Virgins (Beard 1980; Parker 2004), or the use of political spaces for games and other spectacles might alter this image, though there is no space to treat them in detail here. But many of the tropes of Roman public architecture worked because they reminded the viewer of his status as citizen.

In the literal Latin sense, it was the relationship with (male) citizen status which made public space public: *publicus* derives from *populus*, the citizen body. The word 'public' in English can be glossed as something like 'related to everyone'. In Latin, however, the primary meaning of *publicus* is 'related to the *populus*', to the correctly constituted group of Roman adults male citizens. So what relationship could non-citizens, non-adults, non-Romans, non-males have with public space? Tolly Boatwright has considered this question for the Forum Romanum, and argues that although the Forum was not segregated space, its architecture was marked in such a way that women would have been made uncomfortable, and probably left of their own accord: voluntarily self-segregated (Boatwright 2011). I suspect that many women did indeed spend time in or pass through the Forum, but their presence was simply ignored by our sources. But their experience of the Forum would have been different from that of a man. What is more, it would have been different from their experience of domestic space, and we can even track possible variation in how women would have experienced different public spaces.

Figure 1. Coin of M. Aemilius Lepidus (RRC 419/3) showing the Basilica Aemilia decorated with shields. Image: Classical Numismatic Group Inc., Electronic Auction 321, lot 471 (www.cngcoins.com).

Women in public space

I have argued that there was less of a difference between public and private space in the city of Rome than we might assume – at least if you were an elite man. Elite houses and basilicas were decorated in the same ways and hosted the same activities: a banker might transact exactly the same kinds of business in the Forum and in the atrium of a rich patron's house. But when we look at how space is gendered, we can see that there was still a difference between these spaces of power.

In 195 BCE, a tribune proposed that the Oppian Law, a sumptuary law which regulated women's dress and adornment, should be repealed. Cato the Elder campaigned to keep it on, and the women of Rome mobilized against his opposition. They came down to the streets around the Forum and assailed the men walking by with

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their protests. In Livy's version, Cato is furious, but more than that, he is embarrassed. He says their presence made him blush (Livy 34.2). Cato's comment is oddly reminiscent of a quote of Winston Churchill, who said (of Nancy Astor's presence in Parliament), 'I find a woman's intrusion into the House of Commons as embarrassing as if she burst into my bathroom when I had nothing to defend myself, not even a sponge' (cited by Puwar 2004: 13). The presence of a woman, a creature supposedly bound to her body and controlled by her hormones, makes Churchill uncomfortably aware of his own body, something which the apparently rational, disembodied, masculine world of politics denies. Cato's reaction is similar; in some indefinable way, women in his masculine space make him uncomfortable.

But an interesting twist follows: immediately after Cato has given his speech, his opponent speaks up, and asks why Cato is so upset. He points out that women go out in public all the time (Livy 34.5). Cato and his opponent represent two divergent views of the role of gender in Roman public life. The fact that they contradict each other does not mean they cannot both be accurate reflections of a single system of gender relations; each man is drawing on one part of a complex set of ideas (and ideals) which, like any system of gender relations, is likely to be rife with internal contradictions.

On the face of it, Cato's opponent is probably right. Though the evidence is sparse (as so often for the study of women in the ancient world), there is a strong argument to be made that women would regularly have been present in the Forum. The frescoes of the house of Julia Felix in Pompeii show a mixed crowd of men, women, and children going about political and commercial activities in the local forum. With more direct relevance to Rome itself, Plautus' description of the Forum Romanum from the *Curculio* (lines 470–85) depicts a bustling piazza full of shoppers and prostitutes as well as politicians. The most suggestive evidence, though, is topographical: a sketch map of the Republican Forum (Fig. 2) demonstrates clearly its multiple entrances and exits as well as its position along major roads (see further Newsome 2011; Russell 2014). Rome's central Forum was a multi-purpose space. It could not be sealed off and secluded. Cato was angry to see women in the streets near the Forum, but he was drawing on an ideal. Ideals held by elite men like Cato are vitally important to the process of understanding gender as a structuring concept of Roman society, but they may conflict both with the reality of how women moved through the city and with ideals held by others. We should not use his speech as evidence that it would have been unusual to see women in or near the Forum. As his opponent pointed out, reality was different.

Figure 2: Sketch map of the Forum Romanum, c.60 B.C.

So why, then, is Cato's angry reaction so spatialized? He imagines reasserting the masculinity of the space by chastising the women: 'What are you doing running around in public and besieging the streets and calling out to strange men? Couldn't you each ask your husbands these questions at home?' (Livy 34.2). Tellingly, he does not say that women should not get involved in politics, or even in wielding political power: he is much more interested in preserving the sanctity of the Forum as masculine space. And yet we know, and his opponent immediately points out, that the Forum was not and had never been segregated space. It is the combination of two factors that incenses Cato: women *qua* women, making their difference obvious, talking women's issues, and wielding power – in the Forum, as space which he conceives of as gendered masculine even though it is likely that plenty of women spent time there.

We could compare the praise of Augustus' wife Livia preserved in part of an anonymous poem known as the *Consolatio ad Liviam*: 'Your power did not stray to the Campus or the Forum, and you kept your house, within what is allowed' (lines 49-50). Here the 'Campus' is the Campus Martius, where elections were held; the 'Forum' is the Forum Romanum, seat of Roman political life. The author does not deny that Livia has power, and it would be foolish to suppose that that power didn't extend to elections or day-to-day politics. It would also be ridiculous to suggest that the reference is purely spatial: we do not know what Livia's day-to-day movements were, but she would have entered both the Forum and the Campus at least for religious festivals, games, and so on. What she did not do, I suggest, is visibly wield political power in the Campus, or in the Forum.

This carefully spatialized prohibition – women can be in public, and women can have power, but women cannot have power in public – links back to the private sphere as understood through, for example, Shelley Hales's work on the deceptive openness of the Roman house (Hales 2003). The house is in some ways gendered feminine, even though it is also a public space, and a space of power. Elite houses are supposed to be highly visible, but in fact that visibility and accessibility was carefully controlled. One thing that the deceptive openness of the Roman house could achieve was to conceal the reality of elite female power.

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The spaces difference makes

At the cusp of postmodernism and feminism's third wave, the postmodern geographers Ed Soja and Barbara Hooper proposed that we should move from 'understanding that space makes a difference' to looking for 'the spaces difference makes' (Soja and Hooper 1993). Rather than looking for women in the spaces we ourselves consider feminine, we should think about how women's experience of space might have been different. Women's experience is capable of marking out new categories and boundaries and spaces which would be invisible to us if we followed the standard, uncritical methodology of assuming that the people who populated the Roman city were homogeneous (which in practice tends to mean male). Above (and elsewhere), I have proposed substantial overlap between public and private space in Rome: it is hard to locate any purely public or purely private space, let alone a boundary between them. The grey area between the two expands to cover everything. For an elite man, the Basilica Aemilia and Lepidus' private house were surprisingly similar. For a woman, however, they offered different experiences of gender. She could probably be present in both spaces without attracting particular attention, but her behaviour was differently constrained in the two different contexts. In the house, she could participate in political conversations, as Cato recommended to the frustrated women of his time; if she did so in the basilica, she might face the same reaction as those women had faced from Cato when they brought their concerns to public space. At least for an elite woman, gender was differently expressed and marked in the basilica than in the house. We could imagine a similar, but distinct, pattern in the lives of non-elite women. For many of them, work outside the household was a standard part of life; their gender might have been more marked in relationships within the household.

Looking at gender and status together can also highlight otherwise invisible spatial categories within public space. When he cannot find his girlfriend Cynthia, the poet Propertius asks her slave which portico or campus she is in (Propertius 2.23.5-6). One she might have favoured was the magnificent public portico built by Pompey on the Campus Martius, attached to his theatre (mentioned as a possible destination by Propertius 2.32.11, and cf. Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 3.387). In his fit of temper, Propertius suggests that he might prefer a prostitute, whom he imagines finding on the Sacra Via which leads to the Forum (Propertius 2.23.15). He locates the higher-status woman, Cynthia, further away from the traditionally political space of the Forum. There's a further twist: in the very next poem, 2.24.2, the famously multivalent opening statement 'your Cynthia is picked up all over the Forum', the insult is not just in the double meaning of the Latin verb *lego*, which could imply both that the book of poetry he named after her is being widely read and that the woman herself is being picked up, but also the location. The fact that this activity, whatever it is, is going on in the Forum reduces Cynthia's status to that of the prostitute in the earlier poem.

Propertius' use of different public spaces to characterise (and punish) his female characters demonstrate how interactions between status and space worked differently for women and men. For men, the Forum was a space associated with high status and political activity. Indeed, for them, the two spaces were not particularly different: we have seen that Campus Martius, as the site of elections, was also a political space, and Pompey's portico even contained a senate-house. But a woman who risked being seen near the Forum was in danger of being attacked by a Cato or stigmatized as a prostitute by a Propertius. Meanwhile, the Campus was seen as an acceptable and even normative location for female leisure: Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 3.385-8 points out that women cannot join the men exercising on the plain, but they can stroll in the Campus' porticoes. Even though prostitutes also frequented Pompey's portico (Catullus 55), merely being in the same space as them did not threaten Cynthia's own higher status. And the (admittedly imperial) evidence of the *Consolatio ad Liviam* adds further nuance to the picture: for a woman like Livia, of particularly exalted status, both Forum and Campus could be painted as locations to be avoided. Women's gender and status were each experienced and expressed differently in the two spaces, and attention to gender can therefore help us see the differences between types of public space which were remarkably similar in some ways from a male perspective.

Every space, both in ancient Rome and in our own world, has its own particular relationship with gender. Since I am looking for women in particular, Pompey's portico seems like a good place to try to find a public space which was gendered feminine. Unlike the Forum, it was not a space where women's presence was ignored or suppressed by our textual sources. The Augustan poets talk about this space a lot, and they talk a lot about women in this space. Nor was it a space, like the Forum, whose architecture and decoration (attested both archaeologically and in textual sources) excluded women. It was full of sculptures of female subjects, probably including a series of courtesans, a series of poetesses, and a series of women who were associated with prodigious births, such as Eutychis who had thirty children, and Alcippe who gave birth to an elephant (Coarelli 1971-2). One statue base, found in situ in the portico, labels its subject as Mystis (a female name only otherwise known as a comic heroine, and thus possibly also a courtesan. The base, *IGUR* I.212, was published by Coarelli

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1971-2; for full discussion see DeRose Evans 2009). These women represent the bodily, the intimate. The courtesans, real and sculpted, represented sex – though certainly not private space or domesticity. But does that mean this was a space gendered feminine? If Cynthia did choose to stroll there, she would risk being constrained, though in a different way from the experience Propertius imagines for her in the Forum. We should probably see Cynthia herself as an elite courtesan, and Ovid recommends the portico to women looking for love. Perhaps all the portico's female and feminine aspects actually marked it as a space designed for the male gaze and male pleasure. If so, we should see it as gendered space primarily in the sense that it was space in which women were expected to adopt specific gendered modes of behaviour.

Conclusion

When we look at Roman public architecture, we tend to imagine an ideal or average viewer, usually without gender, and thus implicitly male. In many ways, this uncritical method can actually yield a fair and appropriate reading: most public architecture itself constructs its imagined viewer as male. Just like our literary sources, it ignores and erases the presence of women. But the ideal that women were less welcome in public space than men, though central to the operation of gender as a structural feature of Roman society, was not necessarily always maintained in practice. Careful attention to the second stage of feminist analysis, recovering women's actual movements through space (or at least questioning our elite male sources who on the face of it seem to imply that they did not usually enter public space) is vital. And the insights of second-wave feminist theorists such as Ardener and Pateman can help us identify how and why women's presence in public space has been written out of our sources, or used to police gender. Finally, this data can feed into wider analyses of gender as a relation which draw on third-wave and other postmodern approaches to difference. If we concentrate solely on the conceptual exclusion of women from public space, we miss the spaces difference makes: the ways in which women (including women of different statuses) experienced different public spaces in different ways.

I have argued in this paper that we can trace a relationship between something that looks at least analogous to the modern public/private dichotomy and Roman gender. Gender, and in particular women's experience of their own gender and status, was constructed and understood differently in the Forum and in the house, and indeed in the Forum and the portico. All Roman public space was in some ways gendered masculine. But women were not pushed out. We know that they were there: in fact, they had to be there so that the processes of marking and stigmatizing, or suppressing and ignoring, could be properly enacted. Tantalizingly, the fact that they were present also opens up the possibility that public space could be a site of resistance. They must have had some reaction to, for example, the Forum's architecture and the overbearing way in which it addressed men as citizens. Unfortunately, our sources do not allow us to say what their reactions were.

I have built on Puwar's identification of two discourses concerning women in public: either they are specially (and usually negatively) marked, or they are denied. We can see similar processes at work in Roman public space. In the Forum, their presence was erased by our sources and denied by men like Cato – and when this discourse failed, in moments of crisis like Cato's panic, they were stigmatized and attacked. In Pompey's portico, the primary discourse was of marking and stigmatizing gender: both the stone women and their flesh-and-blood companions were exoticized and sexualized. Thinking about how these processes might have worked and how women experienced them can help us understand better how the house was and was not different from the basilica, or the Forum from the portico – and not just from the perspective of the ideal male citizen viewer.

I draw two main conclusions from the arguments above. First of all, the public/private divide was indeed used to define and police gender in ancient Rome, and just as was the case in Victorian London, this implied women's presence both in public and in private. Secondly, the delicate step from the second to third stage of feminist analysis, from finding women to analysing the operation of gender relations, is fraught but fruitful. By taking Soja and Hooper's suggestion not only to look for difference itself but also the spaces difference makes, we come to better understandings of both Roman women's lives – the way space was gendered – and the way Roman gender was spatialized.

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