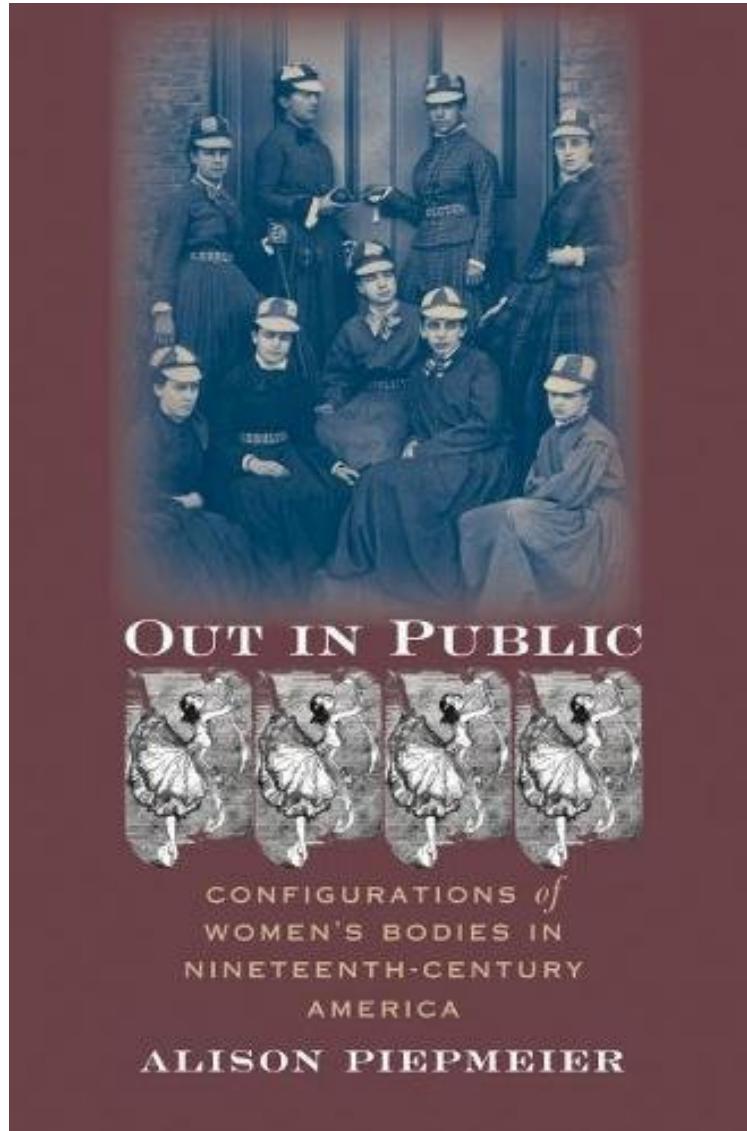


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Out in Public: Configurations of Women's Bodies in Nineteenth-Century America

Alison Piepmeier

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Alison Piepmeier : Out in Public: Configurations of Women's Bodies in Nineteenth-Century America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Out in Public: Configurations of Women's Bodies in Nineteenth-Century America:

Images of the corseted, domestic, white middle-class female and the black woman as slave mammy or jezebel loom large in studies of nineteenth-century womanhood, despite recent critical work exploring alternatives to those images. In *Out in Public*, Alison Piepmeier focuses on women's bodies as a site for their public self-construction. Rather than relying on familiar binaries such as public/private and victim/agent, Piepmeier presents women's public embodiment as multiple, transitional, strategic, playful, and contested. Piepmeier looks closely at the lives and works of actress and playwright Anna Cora Mowatt (1819-1871), Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), abolitionist and feminist orator Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), antilynching journalist Ida B. Wells (1862-1931), and Godey's *Lady's Book* editor Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879). Piepmeier's analysis of these women places their written documents in conjunction with salient cultural contexts, including freak shows, scientific writing, tall tales, and popular visual images of athletic women. By destabilizing and complicating traditional binary categories, Piepmeier makes culturally obscured or unreadable aspects of women's lives visible, offering a more complete understanding of nineteenth-century female corporeality.

"Deftly weaves between sentimental and sensational discourses." -- "American Literature" *Out in Public* is an important contribution to the ongoing work of feminist scholars who seek to challenge the traditional distinctions between public and private spheres. Focusing on a series of texts authored by nineteenth-century American women--black and white, folk and elite--Piepmeier analyzes the ways in which these women discursively represented the public embodiment of the private female body and, in the process, destabilized these very categories. Her argument is compellingly bold and lucidly articulated.--Carla L. Peterson, author of "Doers of the Word": African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880) By presenting an alternative method and approach to interpretation of the significance of these women's contributions, Piepmeier's analysis engages the impact of race, class, and gender and calls forth a reconsideration of the significance of twentieth-century scholarship of nineteenth-century women's history.--*Journal of American History* Piepmeier's insights into the dilemmas of her nineteenth century subjects are useful fodder as we consider how we will configure our own public bodies.--*Nashville Scene* With sound scholarship, persuasive arguments, and clear prose, Alison Piepmeier has produced an excellent extended examination of the variant forms of visibility acted out by women in the nineteenth-century United States.--Shirley Samuels, Cornell University Deftly weaves between sentimental and sensational discourses.--*American Literature* This is a work of literary criticism that takes historical context seriously. . . . Rich with exciting insights.--*American Historical* The innovative theses [and] the broad research . . . are useful contributions to American and Women's Studies.--*Feminist Teacher* From the Inside Flap Piepmeier examines the lives and works of actress and playwright Anna Cora Mowatt, Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy, abolitionist and feminist orator Sojourner Truth, anti-lynching journalist Ida B. Wells, and Godey's *Lady's Book* editor Sarah Josepha Hale to demonstrate a more nuanced range of roles for women than traditional understandings of 19th-century womanhood allow.