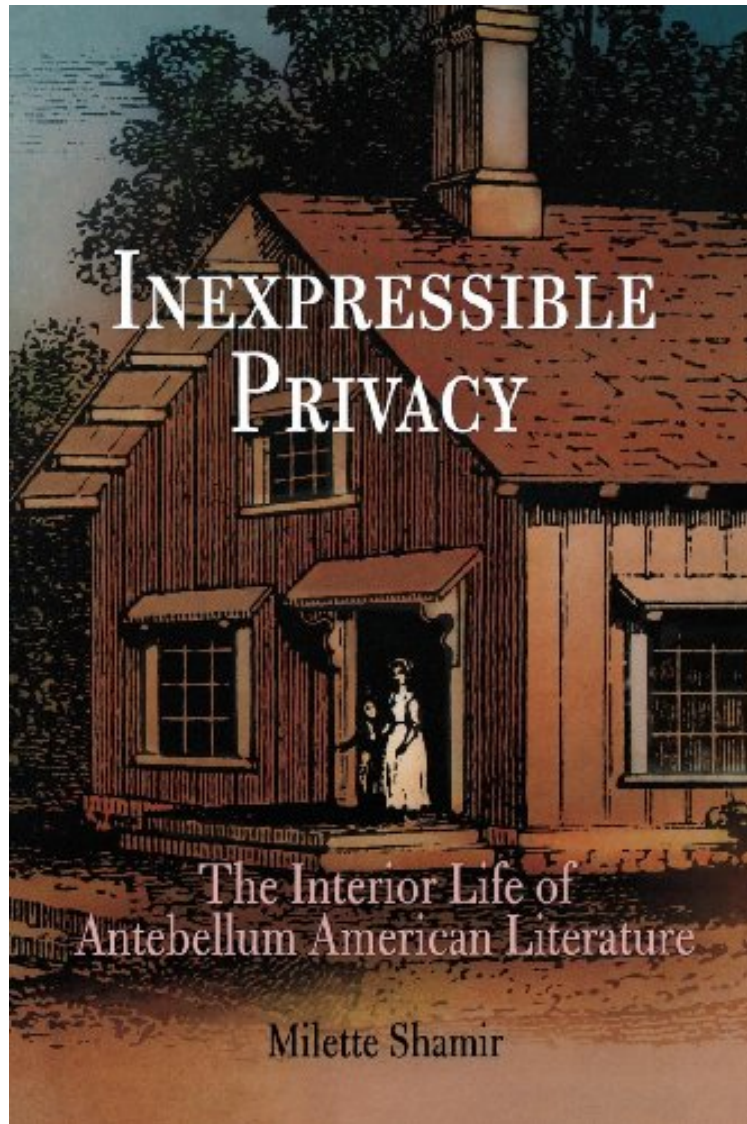


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Inexpressible Privacy: The Interior Life of Antebellum American Literature

Milette Shamir

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Selected by Choice magazine as an Outstanding Academic Title for 2006 Few concepts are more widely discussed or more passionately invoked in American public culture than that of privacy. What these discussions have lacked, however, is a historically informed sense of privacy's genealogy in U.S. culture. Now, Milette Shamir traces this peculiarly American obsession back to the middle decades of the nineteenth century, when our modern understanding of privacy took hold. Shamir explores how various discourses, as well as changes in the built environment, worked in tandem to seal, regulate, and sanctify private spaces, both domestic and subjective. She offers revelatory readings of texts by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Frederick Douglass, Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry David Thoreau, and other, less familiar antebellum writers and looks to a wide array of sources, including architectural blueprints for private homes, legal cases in which a "right to privacy" supplements and exceeds property rights, examples of political rhetoric vaunting the sacred inviolability of personal privacy, and conduct manuals prescribing new codes of behavior to protect against intrusion.

"Shamir's arguments are very persuasive, and she surveys an expansive cross-disciplinary range of writings on privacy a great boon to those interested in the subject." *Journal of American History* "Shamir contributes centrally to historicist studies of feminine and masculine subjectivity and the unevenly gender-freighted practices of privacy and intimacy. The book will be noted for the large sweep of its argument about the creation of masculine privacy, as well as for the small details of its readings. Cogently argued, immediately relevant to American studies scholarship in a variety of directions, *Inexpressible Privacy* is extraordinarily topical and innovative." Dana D. Nelson, Vanderbilt University "Shamir dismantles the link that has been forged by cultural historians and literary critics between domesticity and privacy." *American Historical* "In what is easily one of the best works of literary and social criticism this reviewer has read in years, Shamir explores the inherent contradictions in the American 'cult of privacy,' tracing the obsession back to the decades before the Civil War. . . . Extraordinarily well written and researched, this volume confronts key gender questions. . . . Essential." *Choice* From the Publisher Milette Shamir is Senior Lecturer in American Literature at Tel Aviv University. About the Author Milette Shamir is Senior Lecturer in American Literature at Tel Aviv University.