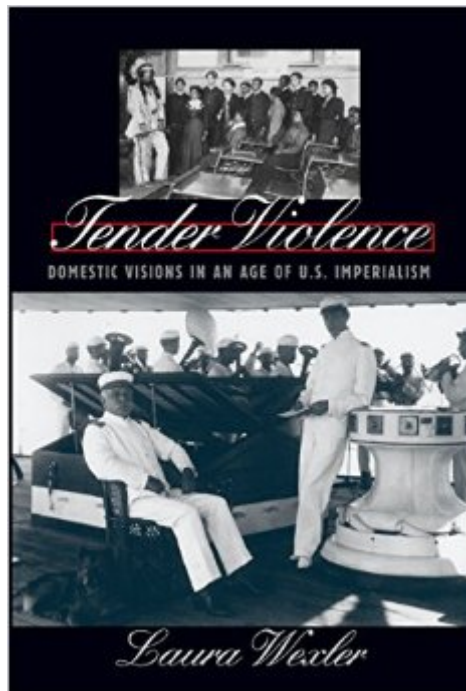


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# Tender Violence: Domestic Visions In An Age Of U.S. Imperialism (Cultural Studies Of The United States)



## Synopsis

Laura Wexler presents an incisive analysis of how the first American female photojournalists contributed to a "domestic vision" that reinforced the imperialism and racism of turn-of-the-century America. These women photographers, white and middle class, constructed images of war disguised as peace through a mechanism Wexler calls the "averted eye," which had its origins in the private domain of family photography. Wexler examines the work of Frances Benjamin Johnston, Gertrude Kasebier, Alice Austen, the Gerhard sisters, and Jessie Tarbox Beals. The book includes more than 150 photographs taken between 1898 and 1904, such as photos Johnston took aboard Admiral Dewey's flagship as it returned home from conquering Manila, Austen's photos of immigrants at Ellis Island, and Beals's images of the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904. In a groundbreaking approach to the study of photography, Wexler raises up these images as "texts" to be analyzed alongside other texts of the period for what they say about the discourses of power. *Tender Violence* is an important contribution not only to the fields of history of photography and gender studies but also to our growing understanding of U.S. imperialism during this period.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Wexler writes clearly, skillfully interspersing history, sociology, and photography to argue that domesticity was some CREATED, not just "always there" in the US. Wexler especially emphasized the role of photography in supporting a discourse of white women's purity and black slave women's

(or newly freed black women's) down-to-earth, animal nature. An excellent book for all students of art, social science, or history, this text can be used for undergraduates or graduate students.

This monograph was a requirement for one of my graduate seminars. Although I was "forced" to read it, I believe this book does offer an interesting perspective. At times, her interpretation seemed to be a bit of a stretch; for example, she "read into" a white divider between a photograph of a man and a photograph of a woman- some times a white border is simply a white border, in my opinion. However, for what it is worth, I do recommend this book.

Overall, a good book to explore both the benefits and potential pitfalls of applying semiotics to the study of history. Wexler provides good insights as well as a number of highly questionable interpretations (particularly of the photographs on the Olympia). If read with a critical eye, the reader will profit from being forced to examine the potential importance of images on our perception of history.

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