

Camouflaging Consumption and Colonial Mimicry: The Materiality of an Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Nipmuc Household

Guido Pezzarossi

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Abstract This article serves as an interpretation of Nipmuc history in colonial contexts by focusing on the engagement and survival of the “capitalist colonial” world by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Nipmuc inhabitants of the Sarah Boston Farmstead Site in Grafton, Massachusetts. Ceramic analyses are drawn upon to argue that active consumer strategies and/or choices may potentially undermine the material and discursive markers of difference linked to notions of domesticity, class and race. The apparent homogenized or “insignificant” character of the Sarah Boston Farmstead ceramic assemblage is argued to in fact be quite significant, as its banality speaks to a degree of knowledgeable “mimicry”—tactical or not—that may have deflected (but not negated) inequality through the undermining of markers and discourses of difference.

Keywords Colonialism · New England · Postcolonial theory · Consumption

Introduction

Historically, archaeologies of consumption have primarily focused on straight-forward socioeconomic models of consumption that link consumption almost deterministically to economic power (Klein 1991). More recent work in historical archaeology (Cook et al. 1996; Mullins 1999, 2004, 2012) has sought to bring new perspectives, such as those elaborated by Daniel Miller, to bear on archaeologies of mass consumption. While productive, these approaches have been challenged by Marxist-inspired critiques of archaeologies of consumption that have espoused a “disdain of mass materialism” as a reifying agent of capitalist exploitation (Leone 1999; Mullins 2004, p. 195, Wurst and McGuire 1999). These critiques have brought to light important elements to consider as archaeologists reframe consumption as a potentially “active” process that plays a critical role in the way populations “construct a culture that is authentic and profound”

G. Pezzarossi (✉)
Department of Anthropology, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94309, USA
e-mail: guidopez@stanford.edu

(de Certeau 1984; Miller 1987, 1990, p. 77). In tandem, these approaches to consumption have opened up historical archaeology and archaeologies of the recent past to new ways of interpreting the “tangible evidence of everyday materialism” of the early modern era that came to be primarily constituted by mass produced commodities (Cook et al. 1996; Mullins 1999, 2004, p. 195).

In particular, recent archaeological work has sought to redress the lacuna of explorations of subaltern engagement in the practice and products of consumption (e.g. Camp 2011; Mullins 1999, 2004; Wilkie 2000 among others). Nevertheless the consumer strategies and practices of Indigenous populations in the colonial period have been minimally explored (but see Pezzarossi 2008; Silliman and Witt 2010; Witt 2007). I argue that this lack of research on Indigenous consumption is related in part to outdated acculturation-centered frameworks of culture change that have continued informing discourses of the Indigenous colonial experience (Silliman 2005; Voss 2005). Such discourses are underpinned by static, essentialized notions of Indigenous identities defined by a “precontact baseline” (see also Lightfoot 1995; Silliman 2009, pp. 212–222) that equate Indigenous cultural and material change through the consumption and use of “Euro-American” material culture as outright unidirectional acculturation producing “inauthentic” Indigenous cultural forms.

This article serves as an interpretation of Nipmuc history in colonial contexts by focusing on the engagement and survival of the “capitalist colonial” world (Stoler 1989) by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Nipmuc inhabitants of the Sarah Boston Farmstead Site (Sarah Boston Farmstead hereafter) in Grafton, Massachusetts. Through insights provided by excavations and artifact analysis, I argue that this engagement took place through the appropriation of the practice and objects of mass consumption in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In light of the disciplinary bias against analyses of Indigenous consumption of mass produced material culture, this article has two central goals. First, I seek to nest the consumer strategies of the Nipmuc inhabitants of the Sarah Boston Farmstead within the broader anthropological project of theorizing the dialectic relationship between cultural continuity and change. I will then operationalize this theoretical framework through the archaeological interpretation of the cultural and material practices at the Sarah Boston Farmstead that were explicitly constructed through the materialities of the capitalist colonial world of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Second, through the analysis of the ceramic assemblage of the Sarah Boston Farmstead, I will demonstrate that consumer strategies and/or choices can undermine the material and discursive markers of difference linked to notions of pre-Victorian and Victorian era domesticity, class and race. I argue that the apparent homogenized or insignificant character of the ceramic assemblage is indeed quite significant and speaks to a degree of tactical and/or unintended “mimicry” that may have deflected—but not negated—inequality through the undermining of markers and discourses of difference (Bhabha 1985, 2004; de Certeau 1984). The temporal context of the Sarah Boston Farmstead situates the primary occupation of the site within a larger discursive shift from the material demarcation of difference to later eighteenth-/nineteenth-century/“Victorian-era” anatomical (i.e., racial) demarcators of status and difference (see McClintock 1995).

I argue that the efficacy of the Sarah Boston Farmstead inhabitants’ strategies of mimicry through the consumption and appropriation of mass produced material culture was at its height at this period of flux in the discourses of colonial othering

and social differentiation. Through the material blurring of the already “fluid” and “plastic” boundaries between colonial populations (Leone 1999, p. 9; Meskell 1999; Mrozowski et al. 2000), this “camouflaging” consumption strategy may have served to deflect inequality and subvert the colonial scrutiny of othering discourses, such as that of “domestic barbarism” (McClintock 1995, p. 53) that impacted subaltern populations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century in Massachusetts. Characterized by the linking of domestic disarray to the supposed degeneracy and inferiority of populations of lower class ranking, discourses of domestic barbarism served as a means to “mediate the manifold contradictions of imperial hierarchy” in cases where “skin color as a marker of power was imprecise and inadequate” (McClintock 1995, p. 53).

In the context of the Sarah Boston Farmstead, the notion of domestic barbarism appears to be in play despite the potential of skin color and anatomical features of the inhabitants to otherwise serve as clear demarcators of difference. Later Victorian-era local histories paint the Sarah Boston Farmstead household as “low and little, black and old” with “nothing in the house” and “Indians lying about sleeping” (Taft n.d., p. 6) that serve to establish and portray the domestic “barbarity” and degeneracy of the inhabitants through the alleged poverty of their domestic material conditions and the unkempt nature of their domestic lives (see description of Irish domestic conditions in Martin 2004, p. 90; see McClintock 1995 for an analog). The archaeology of the Sarah Boston Farmstead however, has established a strikingly different picture of the household. The recovery of a rich assemblage of ceramic artifacts that were central to the colonial and later Victorian practices of domesticity and entertaining reveal the inhabitant’s participation in these practices and their associated connotations of “improvement,” while likely also working within local Nipmuc registries of household specific meaning, practice and survival. The Sarah Boston household ceramic assemblage appears rather common and “insignificant” when compared to contemporaneous Euro-American settlers’ sites in the central Massachusetts region. However, rather than taking this observation as evidence of loss, acculturation or passive homogenization at the hands of the emerging capitalist economy and its practices, I argue that these findings are exceedingly significant for the simple fact that they signal the Nipmuc inhabitants of the Sarah Boston Farmstead’s active, knowledgeable and strategic engagement with and participation in the practices and materialities of the colonial and emerging early modern world.

Precolonial Background and Colonial Site History

The history of the Sarah Boston Farmstead and the land where it is located is entangled with the ancestral Nipmuc presence on the landscape that stretches back to at least the Middle and Late Archaic (8000–3700 BP), through the Early and Late Woodland Periods (3000–300 BP) (see Gary 2005, pp. 30–35 for details of diagnostic artifacts recovered from the parcel). At time of colonization, Algonquin-speaking groups, of which the Nipmuc were one, were widespread throughout southern New England. In particular, the Nipmuc inhabited central Massachusetts and northern Connecticut, living a seasonally mobile lifestyle that consisted of movement between larger horticulture-focused inland settlements and smaller hunting/fishing camps in the region (Gary 2005, pp. 12–13). This mobility facilitated the maintenance of the network of

important relationships between the Nipmuc and coastal groups and populations; however it would come to clash with English colonial notions of property, its link to identity and tactics of colonial control (Cronon 1983).

The colonial history of the settlement in Grafton begins with the founding of the third of John Eliot's praying Indian towns, Hassanamesit, in 1654. Eliot's Praying Indian communities were initiated in 1646, and were located predominantly in frontier regions of New England in order to preach Christianity to the Indigenous groups in the region and attempt to force Indigenous people's adoption of English lifeways (Cogley 1999; Doughton 1997; Mrozowski et al. 2009; O'Brien 1997, p. 27). In 1727 the Nipmuc residents of Hassanamesit received land allotments as part of their sale of land to English settlers, who would come to found the town of Grafton. Sarah Robins, the great grandmother of Sarah Boston (the last known occupant of the excavated site), received 106 ac (43 ha) of land on the eastern face of Keith Hill as part of this allotment (Law 2008; Law et al. 2007). The history of this family's colonial habitation is punctuated by documented economic hardships in the form of mounting debts and outright theft of Nipmuc financial assets by the "Guardians of the Indians" entrusted with the capital generated from the land sale. Debt was accrued primarily through purchase of provisions, consumer goods, house repairs, and medical care and was exacerbated by the neglect of the Guardians in paying out the interest from the land sale (Law 2008). Despite a diverse set of income/subsistence generating practices, including working for wages, bartering labor for goods and services at the farms of Grafton's Euro-American settlers and selling baskets in the region (Forbes 1889; Law, et al. 2007, pp. 26–27) that would have provided for subsistence and needs; the inhabitants of the Sarah Boston site—and the Hassanamisco Nipmuc broadly—were forced to sell their landholdings in a piecemeal fashion to make ends meet and keep creditors and encroaching settlers at bay (Den Ouden 2005; Law 2008; O'Brien 1997). Despite such obstacles, the Nipmuc family at the Sarah Boston Farmstead continually lived on their parcel of land until 1854, when the last 20 ac (8 ha) were sold off in a final attempt to alleviate debt (Law, et al. 2007, p. 14).

Consumption, Change, and Continuity

Due to the legacy of acculturation frameworks of culture mentioned above, any study that seeks to explore Indigenous people's consumption and use of mass produced "European" material culture must address discourses of cultural authenticity and "loss" that unfortunately continue to play a role in interpretations of the Native colonial experience. The influence of acculturation frameworks in archaeology at its most simplistic consists of "formulae, both quantitative and qualitative, that used artifact ratios to measure" the level of change (Westernization) against continuity (Indigeneity) (Voss 2005, p. 427). The reliance on cultural and "ethnic markers" of Indigenous culture is used to forward the conflation of continuity with resistance and change with assimilation/cultural loss and in the process to elide the nuances of resistance and the heterogeneous, multiply constituted and shifting positionalities of disparate Indigenous identities (Hall 1994).

In the context of archaeologies of the Indigenous colonial experience, recent scholarship influenced by postcolonial theories has mounted an effective critique of this

approach (Gosden 2005; Liebmann 2008; Silliman 2005, 2009 among others), that has called for a move away from essentialized notions of culture that fuel the fruitless search for “authentically Native” cultural forms and artifacts that “mirror” these essences. Moving beyond such acculturation frameworks requires a reconceptualization of culture and identity as dynamic processes that are continually relationally produced and reproduced by social agents *within* discourse and practice, such that cultures and identities are both manifold and in a continual state of flux that is “never complete, always in process” (Hall 1994, p. 392, 1997, p. 4; McGuire 2002, pp. 91–114; Meskell 2002; Meskell and Preucel 2004, p. 127; Silliman 2005, p. 66). Franz Fanon’s (2004, p. 160) claim that “culture never has the translucency of custom” resonates when directed at the typological production of archaeological cultures underpinning acculturation frameworks that perceive material “customs” as the translucent by-product of cultural essences.

Daniel Miller’s theorization of consumption as an active productive process and not simply as the “logical, deterministic outcome of production” closely articulates with the above discussion and is an appropriate perspective for interpreting the Sarah Boston Farmstead assemblage comprised primarily of consumer goods (Miller 1987, pp. 47–48, 1995; 2001; 2002). By blending the contributions of postcolonial and consumption theories into a single framework, consumption at the Sarah Boston Farmstead can be re-conceptualized as an active strategy in the production of colonial Nipmuc identities, subjectivities and practices that were engaged with and relevant to the broader colonial world from which they emerged. Consumption and subsequent appropriation of material culture represents a tactic by which people are able to perpetuate and (re)construct culture, identities and traditions in a way that is “real” to them, all the while remaining relevant and “modern” through the engagement of changing global material processes and the expectations of the larger society. Thus, there exists a space within the Native consumption of mass produced material culture that allows for the reproduction of cultural forms, albeit in a changed manner, that are reflected in and constituted by new materialities that both engage and negate colonial expectations of “authentic” Native cultural forms. What is produced is a cultural form that is (in the context of the Sarah Boston Farmstead), “authentic” to the Nipmuc inhabitants while projecting a cultural form within the colonial society that cannot be easily negated, as it engages colonial sensibilities surrounding “authentic” cultures and appropriate (material and performative) ways of life. In essence, the “authenticity” of Native cultural forms produced through (in part) consumer goods cannot be negated by the presence of mass produced goods, without also negating the authenticity of all cultural forms that incorporate mass produced goods as part of their materiality. Thus, I argue that the consumption of mass-produced goods by Native people does not entail a “loss” of Native culture. Rather, Nipmuc cultural forms in the colonial period were simply the most recent cultural (re)productions of a heterogenous Nipmuc community produced through and with the materialities of a changing world.

A critical component of this argument is an attempt to move beyond Manichean archaeological approaches to cultural continuity and change towards an approach that stresses the *dialectic* of continuity and change (Nassaney 1989, p. 85). In this light, consumption of mass produced goods by Native people in the colonial period does not represent a rupture with authentic traditions and static cultural essences, but rather becomes part of the process through which Native cultures and communities dynamically

persisted through the colonial period (see Silliman 2009). Western colonial projects embroiled Indigenous people the world over in global scale processes, that imbricated Indigenous lives in a “shared history...of mutual engagement[s] in economic, political and cultural relationships” (Thomas 1991, pp. 3,8). The “shared cultural milieu” (Gosden 2004, pp. 41–81), “middle ground” (White 1991) or “diasporic” space (Lilley 2006) of colonialism abounded with the potential for “creative recontextualization and indeed reauthorship” of objects, practices and subject positions that came to form the basis of emergent colonial Nipmuc subjectivities and identities (Bhabha 2004; Thomas 1991, p. 5).

Exploring Native people’s colonial experiences through the changing materialities of Native communities in the colonial period is not a simple endeavor. In particular, there is a problematic disciplinary tendency to privilege the point of origin of mass produced material (Europe) as a way to determine cultural continuity/integrity (and thus authenticity) or change (Silliman 2005, p. 69, 2009). While at times useful, an overriding emphasis on artifact origins (and a concomitant assumption these artifacts are used and mean the same thing in the context of use as in the context of their origin) elides the power of consumption and daily practice to appropriate and re-contextualize “European” objects as “inalienable” Native cultural material (de Certeau 1984; Miller 1987; but see also Weiner 1992). Such a reprivileging of the context of use and the specific meanings of consumed objects by and for Native people serves to advance conceptions of the role of colonial material culture beyond that of a simple cultural trait. From this perspective, new avenues are opened for exploring how and what colonial mass produced objects may have become “inalienable” (Miller 1987) elements—via their participation in meaningful practice—in the production of colonial period Native cultures, traditions, and subjectivities (as per Gosden 2004, p. 81; Harrison 2002; Silliman 2005, p. 68; Thomas 1991).

The removal of the acculturation “blindness” and the associated problematic notions of cultural “authenticity” and continuity, coupled with the shedding of passive notions of consumption, facilitates the exploration of the manifold role mass produced material culture came to play within disparate Native strategies of appropriation, re-authorship and identity formation (Harrison 2002; Loren 2008; Thomas 1991), tradition making (Pezzarossi et al. 2012) and/or “residence” and survival in the colonial world (Baron et al. 1996; Law 2008; Mrozowski et al. 2009; Pezzarossi 2008; Silliman 2005, p. 68). For the purposes of this article, I will be more fully engaging with the resistance/survival modality of Native consumption by interpreting the Sarah Boston Farmstead assemblage through Homi Bhabha’s (1984) concept of “mimicry.” The following section establishes my understanding of mimicry and further develops how this concept can be productively applied to explorations of the strategies, consequences (intended or not) and outcomes of Nipmuc consumer practices at the Sarah Boston Farmstead.

Difference, Mimicry, and Materiality

It is a subtle endeavor to develop an approach to consumption that does not pander to acculturation models of Native consumption, avoids overly fatalistic perspectives of consumption as purely capitalist reification, and is not naively positive about the “liberatory” potential of consumption as survival/resistance. Instead, the idea that

consumption can take form as an active strategy in the face of less than ideal cultural, economic and political climates sets the stage for a discussion of historically employed strategic consumption, and both its enabling and constraining potentials (as per Wurst and McGuire 1999). Theories of consumption and postcoloniality intersect in an important way in their shared attention to and elaboration of the notion of appropriation and recontextualization. Spivak's (1990, p. 228) concept of "catachresis" (in a sense defining discursive appropriation as the "reversing, displacing and seizing [of] the apparatus of value-coding") exposes the incompleteness of discourse and meaning production by highlighting the perpetual potential for the "misuse" and (re)negotiation (or "poaching"; de Certeau 1984, pp. 31,174) of discourse, meanings and practice (see also Morton 2003, p. 34; Prakash 1994, p. 1476). Homi Bhabha (1985, 2004) has elaborated notions of appropriation-via-hybridity that parallel Spivak's catachresis through discussions of the subaltern reinterpretations of texts and their meanings, while Miller (1987) has argued for a reconsideration of consumption *as* appropriation, and thus as the means by which populations subvert the alienation of commodities and the meanings and ideologies they are purported to stand for as part of the process of incorporating them as inalienable cultural material.

Bhabha's (1985) concept of hybridity operates from a theoretical footing that forwards a fluid, contingent, in-process conception of culture and identity that emerges from the continually hybridizing processes of the "Third Space." Moreover, Bhabha's concept of colonial "mimicry" is especially salient to the interpretations of the enabling and constraining of Indigenous or other subaltern population's consumer strategies. Mimicry is defined as: "The desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as *a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed through an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Bhabha 1984, p. 126, emphasis in original).

The importance of the ambivalence and ambiguity of colonial discourse is central to the concept of mimicry in that the ambivalence of colonial discourses of difference articulates both as "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" as well as a marking of "those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility: signs of spectacular resistance" (Bhabha 1984, p. 126, 1985, p. 162; McClintock 1995, pp. 62–64). These conflicting notions of mimicry as a strategy of both the colonizer and the colonized illuminate the "knife edge" that is colonial mimicry. Both "colonial and anti-colonial mimicry are formally identical in their founding ambivalence" that is centered on the "slippage between identity and difference" (McClintock 1995, p. 64). In short, the colonizer's need to "fit" colonized populations and translate their non-Western subjectivities into Western ontologies serves to recast the unknown "Other" as known Western entity, as "almost the same [white], *but not quite*" (Bhabha 1984, p. 126, emphasis in original). This notion of colonized populations as "blurred" copies serves to maintain them as an "Other" in order to justify and legitimize colonial exploitation through their exclusion from the "post-Enlightenment civility" enjoyed by European colonizing populations, despite any similarities in material and immaterial practices (Bhabha 2004, p. 123). However, this non-recognition of subaltern presence through their alterity produces slippages that highlight the ambiguity and constructed nature of notions of difference. The recognition of alterity similarly serves to recognize the presence of manifold

similarities (and thus humanity) beyond the points of difference and may serve as an explosive catalyst for undermining the Othering that legitimizes colonial violence and exploitation through forms of “mimicry” (see also Anzaldúa 1987, pp. 106–108; Bhabha 2004, pp. 128–130).

Bhabha’s notion of mimicry in later work is more fully developed as a potential subaltern strategy of resistance (McClintock 1995, p. 65), and brings it closer to the active notion of mimicry and hybridity that Young (1995) espouses. For the purposes of this paper, I will approach mimicry as an ambivalent subaltern strategy of resistance and explore its deployment as an appropriative practice aimed at undermining colonial discourses of difference through the appropriation of the practice and products of consumption. Yet in keeping with Wurst and McGuire’s (1999) recommendation, it is important not to lose sight of the constraining potential of mimicry as a colonial strategy of naturalizing and sustaining subaltern difference that serves as a legitimizing discourse for the oppression and exploitation of subaltern populations.

In the more active conception of mimicry, the engagement of such colonial cultural practices and materials, and the new Native cultural forms that develop through materialities of the “colonizer,” form a rather threatening “hybrid” cultural form. The threat of this hybrid form is found in that it “conceals no presence or identity behind its mask” as there is no essentialized identity or cultural “essence” cloaked by mimetic acts; it simply is the most recent iteration of subaltern presence/cultural forms in the colonial period (Bhabha 2004, p. 126). As a result, the “mimic” becomes a locus of colonial anxiety, as the recognition of their presence and the absence of an essential “Native” identity behind the mask, marks the subaltern presence as an “authentic” one that highlights the similarities across the colonizer and colonized.

The presence of the subaltern established through the recognition of their alterity (and thus recognition of their “resemblance”) serves to establish and assert the presence of subaltern humanity, thus blurring and confusing the barriers delimiting the colonial self from the colonized other (as per Bhabha 2004). In Bhabha’s words, “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts it” (Bhabha 2004, p. 126). The disruptive capacity of mimicry manifests itself in the perforation and confusion of colonial difference through the undermining of the ambiguous (but “defended”; Silliman 2005, p. 68) “self/other” barrier that lies at the root of any colonial endeavor. Through the confusing of material and performative demarcators of difference, “as Lacan reminds us, mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of *resemblance*” (Bhabha 2004, p. 128, emphasis added) that materially and phenomenologically undermines the discourses of alterity (and thus non-humanity) of colonized populations that legitimize colonial exploitation.

As mentioned above, the mechanism that serves as a catalyst for the transgressive potential of “mimicry” is the *appropriation* of practices and materials of the colonial entity, a similar engine that drives Miller’s (1987) notion of consumption as the means by which populations transgress the alienability of mass produced commodities. In both cases, notions of passivity in consumption as a non-productive activity and in mimicry as a parroting of the colonizer and/or unidirectional acculturation are critiqued. Consumption and mimicry are thus reframed as the active appropriations and re-authorships of agents and collectivities that may be potentially deployed *against* the dominant sector of society in unexpected ways (as per de Certeau 1984). In

making a composite framework from both of these theoretical contributions, an argument can be made for the potential of consumer strategies to elaborate a tactical use of mimicry by colonized populations that subverts “not by rejecting or altering... but by using [colonial structures/materials] with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept” (de Certeau 1984, p. xiii). Silliman (2005, p. 67; 2009) encapsulates this idea by stating that “colonialism becomes a context, albeit out of necessity, in which indigenous people find ways to survive” and in the process elaborate new ways of being Native. I argue that the consumption of mass-produced material culture, specifically ceramics, at the Sarah Boston site is a facet of just such a colonial strategy of mimicry enacted by Nipmuc populations within the context of colonial New England.

The Materiality of Colonial Difference and the Discourse of “Domestic Barbarism”

How did a strategy of mimicry operate and how was it made viable in colonial New England contexts? The very potential of mimicry is in many ways contingent on acknowledging the importance of materiality and consumption in constructing and sustaining difference in colonial and capitalist contexts. Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) work on taste and social distinction has explored the ways in which “tastes” in consumption, and the goods consumed, “serve to legitimize social differences” by seeming to naturalize and make evident the “systems of difference” within society (Mullins 2004, p. 196). Consumption and the materiality it represents become “a stage in the process of communication” that serves to produce, and not reflect social difference as it expresses them (Bourdieu 1984, p. 2; Mullins 2004, p. 196). This theorization of consumption dovetails with Douglas and Isherwood’s (1979, p. 59) claim that material culture “makes visible and stable the categories of culture” and thus demands that a spotlight be placed on what objects and specifically what mass produced commodities served as erectors and sustainers of social difference amongst and between colonial populations in New England.

Prior to the turn to scientific racism (McClintock 1995), material culture served as a disproportionately powerful marker in the determination and communication of difference as part of the Othering of subaltern populations that was used to legitimize the exploitation and repression of those populations. McClintock’s concept of “domestic barbarism”—discussed in the context of the racialization of the Irish by the English—is characterized by the linking of domestic disarray to the supposed “degeneracy” and inferiority of populations seen as inhabiting a lower class/status ranking in relation to the (“developed” or modern) West. Domestic disarray, as conceived in discourses of domestic barbarism centers explicitly on the material practices in and pertaining to the home and the domestic sphere that are seen as deviating from higher class Western/English hygiene and domestic practices.

Martin (2004, p. 90) provides further examples of the how the racialized barbarity of the Irish was discursively formed in opposition to (and as part of the formation of) English practice and identity through the analysis of an 1839 pamphlet titled “Chartism” by Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle declares class-based conflict and increasing “disorder” in Britain as a “national crisis” set in motion by the “pestilence” of “degradation and

disorder” introduced by Irish immigrants (Martin 2004, p. 84). Of relevance to this paper however, is Carlyle’s delimitation of “backwards,” unclean or simple material practices as the outward signs of the degraded character of the Irish “race” (Martin 2004, p. 90). In a particularly revealing analysis, Martin details Carlyle’s depictions of Irish individuals clad in soiled rags (see also “Celtic Calibans” cartoon discussed by McClintock 1995, p. 53), the “barbaric” domestic living conditions that are compared to “pighutch[es]” and the simple, bland “root-devouring” diet, devoid of seasoning except for salt, all of which become “a stigmatizing signifier of savagery, or as McClintock puts it: “an iconography of domestic degeneracy” (Martin 2004, p. 90).

McClintock further argues that this “domestic degeneracy” is re-mapped onto Irish bodies “in the absence of skin color as a marker of degeneration” through the “simianizing of physiognomies” thus imbricating theories of scientific racism with the material/technological focus of cultural evolutionary theories, with the effect of producing indelible links between Other cultural/material practices (be they “lower class,” “primitive,” or otherwise “different” and non-Western) and notions of biological race and cultural development that are then slotted into Western formulations of racial/ethnic hierarchy. The point is made that discourses of domestic barbarism serve to “mediate the manifold contradictions of imperial hierarchy” in cases where “skin color as a marker of power was imprecise and inadequate” (McClintock 1995, p. 53) and thus in this attempt at mediation, the slippages of colonial difference and its constructed, arbitrary boundaries are revealed. McClintock’s analysis lays bare one of the critical processes by which colonialism came to be a central part of the domestic space and conversely how the domestic space and its mass produced material accoutrements (such as ceramics) came to inhabit a central place in the discourse of colonialism and the Othering of subaltern populations (McClintock 1995).

The use of material culture as a marker of inferiority, difference and “barbarism” affected Indigenous populations in the New World embroiled in English colonial projects and underpinned colonial discourses of alterity. Goodwin (1999, p. 34) brings out an illustrative example of this in citing Dr. Alexander Hamilton’s 1744 description of an “Indian King” in Rhode Island. “King George’s” elevated status and gentlemanly achievements are described explicitly in material and performative terms, such as his vast land and cattle holdings, the material accoutrements of his “queen” who “goes in a high modish dress in her silks, hoops, stays, and dresses like an English woman,” the education of his children and the “good wine” with which he was able to treat his guests (Bridenbaugh 1948, p. 98).

In this pre-Victorian context no explicit mention is made of the physical features of the Other as an indicator of their inferiority, and yet specific mention is made of the material possessions and manners of King George as allowing him access to the respect befitting a gentleman. However, Goodwin is clear in stating that such respect should not be conflated with “equality” in that King George is still identified through his Indianness. In this case, we are made privy to the colonizer’s use of mimicry, as in essence the “white but not quite” character of King George is in full effect through the palpable Othering that is present in signifying his “Indian” and thus “Other” identity. Of interest is the manner in which the engagement of the material markers of fluid discursive boundaries enables a more “respectful” interaction that can be argued to be exactly the sort of deflection (but not negation) of inequality and colonial scrutiny that subaltern strategies of mimicry may facilitate.

Ceramics and Difference in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century New England

Aspects of the discourse of domestic barbarism appear to already be in play in the pre-Victorian-era and obviously are central to the Victorian-era discourse of difference that is more heavily rooted in scientific racism and commodity racism (McClintock 1995). I argue that the application of this discourse can be extended both temporally and topically to include the earlier preface to the Victorian era and its impact on subaltern populations (such as the Nipmuc) more readily differentiated by racial differences. My argument for the operation of the discourse of domestic barbarism in pre-Victorian contexts is meant to elucidate another layer of discourses of difference beyond perceived physical differences that impacted Indigenous populations. The role of material culture as a manner of creating and sustaining colonial Othering in these contexts played a role at least parallel to that of racial/anatomical features in maintaining the self/other barrier between (and within) colonial populations.

The point in time at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century (when the Sarah Boston Farmstead was inhabited) has been characterized by the “democratization” of access to material culture as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the mass production of commodities and subsequent drop in prices that enabled broader consumption of said commodities across socioeconomic classes (Cook et al. 1996, p. 54; Goodwin 1999, pp. 102–103; Willentz 1990). Refined white earthenware ceramics were one particular commodity previously restricted to only the wealthiest sectors of society that came to be more widely consumed and used in the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Specifically, in the mid-eighteenth century refined white earthenwares, such as Wedgwood’s “Queensware” creamwares, were establishing themselves as an equal to porcelain in both status and price due to their durability, fine craftsmanship, and the shrewd marketing strategies of Josiah Wedgewood (Barker 1999, p. 228; Barker and Majewski 2006, p. 214).

The end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century stands as an interesting period of time, as refined white earthenwares had gone from being a luxury of the “elite” to being “the norm” on most tables in New England and Britain (Barker 1999, 2001). However, a certain amount of ambiguity exists in this transition, as the referential status demarcating quality of ceramic vessels did not disappear with their mass production, as wares such as porcelain never lost their high status connotation despite increased production and widespread use (Barker 2001, p. 81).

The knowledge and ability to consume fashionable ceramics continued to serve as class and status significations in the latter eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culminating with the development of transfer-printed decorative techniques reserved for expensive tablewares and tea sets in early to mid-nineteenth century (Barker and Majewski 2006, p. 216). Modern scholars have embraced the notion that with the democratization of access to refined earthenware characteristic of the “ceramic revolution,” decorative techniques came to be elevated in importance as indicators of class and status (Majewski and O’Brien 1987; Miller 1988, 1991; Mrozowski 2000, 2006). It is no surprise then that with the increased rise in social and economic prominence of ceramics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we observe ceramics continuing to play an important role in producing, maintaining and signifying boundaries of social differentiation (also see Bourdieu 1984; Cook et al. 1996, pp. 54, 59; Mrozowski 2000, p. 287, 2006; Wall 2000).

Moreover, this so called democratization of access to similar goods did not entail any kind of instant leveling of class inequality (as per Wurst and McGuire 1999, p. 197), but rather only further spurred the process of distinction by the upper classes that sought to create a discourse disconnecting social status from the ability to consume material culture previously used as class and status referents (Bourdieu 1984; Goodwin 1999, pp. 107–108). Indeed, in New England the increased access to commodities came under the sway of ever-changing “fashion” which served to accelerate consumption as part of strategies of social competition within late eighteenth-century colonial New England society (see also Appadurai 1986, p. 32; Bourdieu 1984; Miller 1987, p. 126; Mrozowski 2006; Pendery 1992, p. 64 for discussion of the role of fashion as method of distinction in consumer society saturated with commodity access). That being said, the time period immediately after this so-called democratization of access was one of social flux. This point in history represents a time when social boundaries and the materials used to express these divisions were especially susceptible to being appropriated and rendered ineffectual by strategic consumption strategies able to “blur” the material demarcators of social boundaries (see Purser 1992, p. 111). Loren (2003) has shown this kind of strategy to be possible with clothing and dress styles; hence, it is not much of a leap to think of ceramics as having the same potential when considering the major influence ceramics played in the daily practice and social distinction of the world’s increasingly globalized populations (Barker 2001, p. 73). It is worth considering the potential tactics of “social closure” (Carrier and Heyman 1997) that came into effect as a result of the widespread availability to these previously restricted types of commodities (e.g. Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of “distinction”). Examples of class-based social closure are observed in the emplacement of sumptuary laws and other moralistic discourses concerned with the impropriety of consumer “extravagances” of the lower classes that were seen as straying from their “true” social positions and identities (Goodwin 1999, pp. 112,113).

The incomplete shift away from material possessions as demarcators of status and colonial difference and towards racialized notions of the body in the nineteenth century is characterized by the collusion of class- and race-based discourses of difference onto Indigenous and other colonial subaltern populations. Underpinned by the notion of inherent biological flaws of inferior races, the subaltern consumption of colonial material culture and participation in practices associated with social mobility and status are “deferred”/differed (in the spirit of Derrida 1978) and pushed onto a separate social circuit that does not engage and operate within the broader societal arena of social distinction and prestige of the dominant classes (as per Bourdieu 1984 although adding a consideration of the operation of racial discourses within the processes of distinction). The supposed insurmountable alterity of the subaltern, established as genetic, biological factors linked to essentialized notions of identity and/or “character” (Goodwin 1999, p. 112), reframe subaltern uses of colonial material culture as improper or anachronistic performances (in the spirit of Fabian 1983) or as “insubstantial facade[s] contradicting their objective identit[ies]” (Mullins 1999, p. 169). In essence, the racialization of difference comes to pre-emptively exclude Indigenous people and other subaltern populations from the “explicit and implied civil privileges of consumption [that] harbored the potential to subvert a host of racial inequalities in political, labor and consumer space” through the assumption that “consumer culture’s prospects were

exclusive to Whites” (Mullins 1999, p. 169). The temporal context of the Sarah Boston Farmstead situates the primary occupation of the site within this shift from the material demarcation of difference and later explicitly reasoned anatomical demarcators of status and difference, and thus serves as the ideal context for exploring the articulation of these changing processes of differentiation with local Nipmuc practice and experience.

Archaeology of the Sarah Boston Farmstead

To date, the Fiske Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Massachusetts Boston has pursued intensive excavations at the Sarah Boston farmstead over the course of seven summers (2006–12) (Fig. 1). The excavations were focused within the boundaries delineated on historic parcel maps of Keith Hill as having belonged to Sarah Robins and her descendants from the mid 1700’s to at least 1835 when it was sold by the daughter of Sarah Boston, after her mother’s death (see Law et al. 2007). Excavations have consisted of 2×2 m test units placed in areas of heavy concentrations of material culture (mainly refined ceramic, glass, and some native style lithic artifacts) previously identified in the Phase I subsurface survey of the entire Sarah Robins parcel carried out by the Fiske Center in 2004–05 (Gary 2005). At the conclusion of the 2006 field season (which is the focus of this article) 17 excavation units had been completed, amounting to a total excavation area of 68 m^2 . The remains of the cellar hole of the house (Feature 37) were located directly

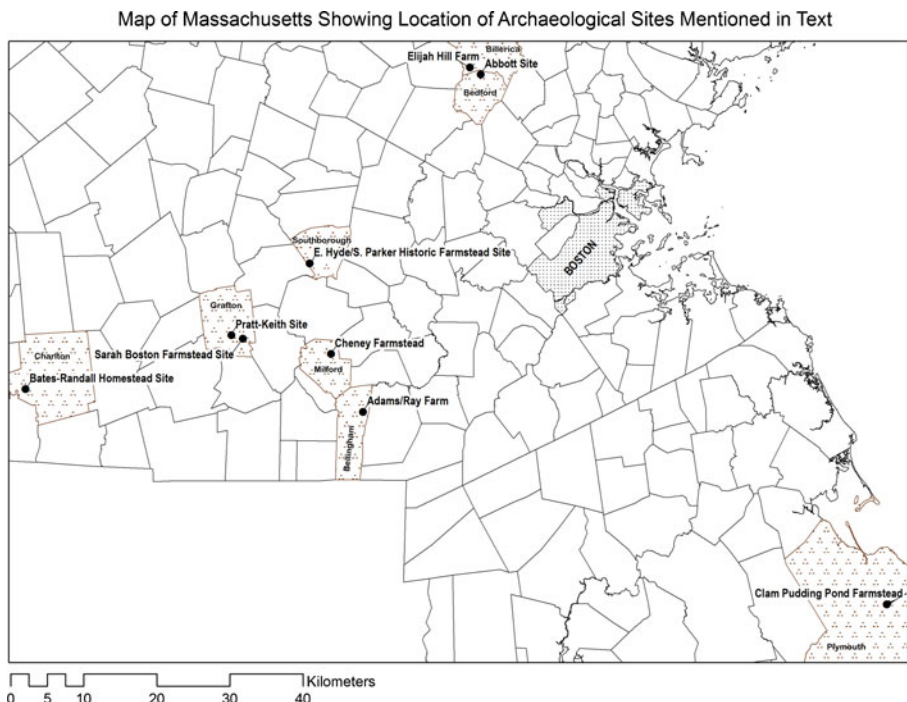


Fig. 1 Marker indicating the location of the Sarah Boston Farmstead Site in the town of Grafton, Massachusetts, plus all other sites mentioned in the text

beneath a large apple tree growing between test units B4 and B5 and a refuse disposal area was located nearby in unit C14. The complete exposure and excavation of Feature 37 is ongoing, and the feature is thus far represented by dark organic feature fill yielding generally heavy artifact concentrations and numerous architectural remains such as bricks, nails, and large iron implements of the home. The deeper deposits/levels in F37 were characterized by larger overall artifact size consistent with a primary or secondary depositional episode spared the heavier tertiary disturbance of repeated plowing that impacted other parts of the site (Law et al. 2007; Pezzarossi 2008). However, shallower levels in the cellar hole feature fill appear to be in part the result of plowing-in of surrounding refuse disposal areas of the homestead, as a lack of stratigraphy and artifact cross-mending across arbitrary 10 cm excavation levels support this contention. As a result of the lack of vertical provenance control that the plowing has caused, the site assemblage has been interpreted as a single analytical unit, despite the long occupational history of the parcel and (likely) of this homestead.

Results of the Ceramic Analysis

This paper focuses exclusively on the analysis of the 2006 field season's ceramic assemblage at the Sarah Boston Farmstead site, which consists of 23,677 sherds and a preliminary minimum vessel count (MVC) of 219 identified vessels (for details see Pezzarossi 2008). The Mean Ceramic Date calculation for the assemblage yielded a date of 1795, which can be modified into a more useful date range by the addition of 15 years for acquisition "time lag" considerations as well as possible heirlooming practices (Adams 2003). Thus a range between 1780 and 1810 stands as a reasonable period of time in which the bulk of the ceramic assemblage was acquired and subsequently utilized, although we know from documentary sources and recovered artifacts in the vicinity of the cellar (i.e., salt-glazed stonewares, mid-eighteenth century coins) that the homestead/parcel was likely inhabited from at least 1750, if not earlier. This date range falls well within the occupation of the site by Sarah Burnee Philips and her daughter Sarah "Boston" Philips, who were likely living in the same homestead sometime between 1780 and 1812 (Law et al. 2007).

The results of the MVC analysis show a ceramic assemblage consisting of a mix of varying ceramic wares, decorative styles and vessel forms consistent with assemblages of "European-American" colonial sites in New England. As a whole, the assemblage shows a rather substantial economic investment in ceramics, especially in decorated tableware ceramics commonly used in food/drink consumption and entertaining. Of the 219 vessels, a variety of ware types were represented (Fig. 2); however, the majority were either coarse red earthenwares ($n=71$; 32 % of assemblage) or refined white earthenwares ($n=124$; 57 % of assemblage). Porcelain, the most expensive ware type at the time (Miller 1988) made up only 5 % of the assemblage ($n=11$); the rather expensive imported refined stonewares only accounted for 4 % of the assemblage ($n=9$) and locally made buff-bodied stonewares only 0.5 % ($n=1$).

Decorated refined white earthenware vessels comprised 62 % of the MVC for earthenware vessels with the remaining 38 % classified as undecorated/indeterminate. Among the decorated wares, under-glaze hand-painted decoration and shell-edge

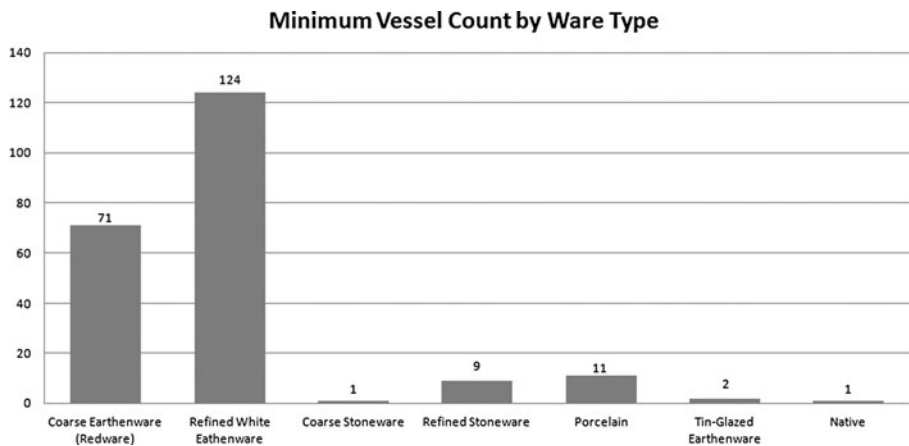


Fig. 2 Minimum vessel count by ware type (Excluding Indeterminate/undecorated vessel estimate)

decoration, identified by George Miller (Miller 1988), as Type 2 of 4 in terms of expense, were the most prevalent with 26.7 % ($n=58$) and 21.2 % ($n=46$) respectively (see Table 1). Transfer-printed wares, the most expensive and fashionable at the time the site was occupied (Miller 1988) made up 7.4 % ($n=16$) of the assemblage. In addition, a variety of rather specialized tableware vessel forms were identified within the assemblage, specifically: various sizes of plates, tea pots, tea cups and bowls, tankards, two large serving platters, eight large serving bowls and a pitcher (Table 2).

Table 1 Minimum ceramic vessel count by decoration type

Decoration type	Vessels	% of decorated types
Underglaze hand-painted decoration	58	26.7
Shell-edged decoration	46	21.2
Brown lead-glazed redware	33	15.2
Transfer-printed decoration	16	7.4
Interior and exterior brown-glazed redware	13	6.0
Jackfield-type redware	8	3.7
Molded decoration	8	3.7
Slipware	8	3.7
Interior and exterior black lead-glazed redware	7	3.2
Machine-turned decoration	5	2.3
Overglaze hand-painted decoration	5	2.3
Black lead-glazed redware	4	1.8
Slip-trailed decoration	3	1.4
Black basalt	1	0.5
“fish scale” molded decoration	1	0.5
Jackfield	1	0.5
Total	217	100.0

Table 2 Minimum vessel count by vessel form, refined by quantitative rim diameter minimum vessel count

Vessel form ^a	# of vessels	% of identified
Pan/pudding	13	12.3
Tea cup	13	12.3
Plate	9	8.5
Serving bowl	8	7.5
Cup	8	7.5
Mug	8	7.5
Bowl	6	5.7
Tea bowl	6	5.7
Tea pot	5	4.7
Saucer	4	3.8
Punch bowl	4	3.8
Basin	3	2.8
Milk pan	3	2.8
Pitcher	3	2.8
Tankard	3	2.8
Bottle	2	1.9
Chamber pot	2	1.9
Pot	2	1.9
Serving plate	2	1.9
Flask/costrel	2	1.9
Total	106	100.0

^aVessels whose form is indeterminate are excluded; $n=113$

Interpretation of Ceramic Analysis

It appears that this expenditure on more expensive decorated and specialized ceramics was carried out in spite of economic difficulties and the mounting debts faced by this Nipmuc family. Hand painting (including under- and over-glaze wares) was clearly the most dominant decorative style represented in the ceramic assemblage. The archaeological work has shown that a concerted effort was made on the part of the inhabitants to acquire hand-painted refined white earthenwares, such as blue painted pearlware “China Glazes” or “chinoiserie” (Miller and Hunter 2001) over other more expensive wares such as transfer printed earthenwares, stonewares, and imported porcelains and speaks to a certain level of frugality being practiced as far as the decorated tablewares procured.

Mark Groover (2003, p. 237) has argued that such a pronounced presence of moderately priced decorated ceramics, such as hand-painted wares, represents an attempt to be frugal while still participating in the social activities necessitating such decorated tablewares and is thus no less indicative of the knowledge of and investment in fashionable trends in ceramics (Bednarchuk 2006, p. 19). These consumer strategies expose more than thriftiness and making do (de Certeau 1984), as they similarly finger the underlying consumer “savoir” of the inhabitants of the Sarah Boston Farmstead evident in the knowledgeable engagement and appropriation of the “cipher or code” of colonial material signification of gentility and “proper” domesticity (Bourdieu 1984, p. 2). Yet, the mismatch of decorative styles introduces an acknowledgement of the economic

hardship facing the inhabitants of this homestead that must be considered in our interpretations, as it implies an improvised or piece-meal participation in colonial period domesticity (Weiss 2012).

The possibility exists that these decorated tableware vessels may have in fact been used predominantly in family meals and not for entertaining. However, working from Wall's (2000) research on the types of plates utilized in family meals versus entertaining and the local histories of Grafton that laud Sarah Boston's entertaining prowess (Taft *n.d.*, p. 67), the prevalence of decorated flatware and hollowware sherds and vessels examined in this section have been interpreted as likely deployed during social gatherings. Thus, the archaeology shows that despite documented economic hardships, evidenced by repeated sale of family land to repay debts for medical care and provisions, the Nipmuc inhabitants continued investing in mid-priced (or "Level 3" ceramics as per Miller 1988, p. 174) wares for entertaining and/or family meals despite the availability of other less expensive decorated and undecorated coarse and refined earthenwares. Moreover, social pressures and obligations (within the Hassanamesit Nipmuc community and between the Nipmuc and the settler community) that may have necessitated the purchase and deployment of said material culture and concomitant practices are worth considering as an additional important influence in the financial and social investment in entertaining. In addition, the diversity in tableware forms discussed above implies knowledge of and participation in more "formal" segmented dining practices by the site's inhabitants (Mrozowski 2000, p. 288; see Table 2). Taken in conjunction with the sheer quantity of tablewares recovered on site, the ceramic assemblage as a whole speaks to the importance of social gatherings and commensality to the Sarah Boston household and the vital role that ceramic objects played in said gatherings, be they with members of the Nipmuc community and/or Euro-American neighbors (see Allard 2010; Law and Pezzarossi 2009; Pezzarossi et al. 2012). Moreover, the character of the ceramic assemblage, abundance of cutlery (10 forks and 10 knives in 2006–07 season alone) and evidence culled from food remains (see Allard 2010; Law 2008; Pezzarossi et al. 2012) indicates that food preparation and eating had the potential to be (but perhaps not in the expected manner evoked by Euro-American entertaining practices) carried out in the more "formal" segmented manner that was an integral part of entertaining practices in fashion at the time and that required the types of use-specific ceramic and metal accouterments recovered at the Sarah Boston Farmstead (see also Pezzarossi 2008; Pezzarossi et al. 2012). As argued elsewhere (Pezzarossi et al. 2012, p. 222), the social and community gathering function of the Sarah Boston household would have facilitated the maintenance of Nipmuc community cohesion in the face of colonial pressures in the form of land dispossession and community dispersion (Law 2008). In addition, documentary sources indicate that Sarah Boston was especially well known in the Grafton local histories for the hospitality she extended to her Euro-American neighbors (Pezzarossi et al. 2012, p. 222; Taft *n.d.*, pp. 6–7), and thus speaks to the use of entertaining as a means of bridging differences and establishing relationships outside of the Nipmuc community.

Comparative Analysis of Ceramic Assemblage

Comparing the Sarah Boston Farmstead site assemblage to other sites in the region is a critical step to the analysis of the motivation behind and effects of the consumer

strategies pursued by the inhabitants of the Sarah Boston household. In particular, the theoretical framework developed above (centered as it is on the operation and efficacy of colonial mimicry when pursued as a material strategy) requires that some parallels and similarities in consumption patterns, material culture and practice be demonstrated between the Sarah Boston household and Euro-American settler households archaeologically. This section pulls together data from various local and regional archaeological sites contemporaneous to the Sarah Boston Farmstead site (all on file at the Massachusetts Historical Commission) in order to carry out a comparative analysis of recovered material culture. The data below provides evidence in support of the contention that the Sarah Boston Farmstead assemblage is in many ways indistinguishable from local contemporary Euro-American households, and in some cases displays a more intensive, knowledgeable—yet strategically frugal—engagement with dining and entertaining practices of the period than observed at neighboring farmsteads and households. It is this apparent comparative insignificance that signals the potential operation of a subversive strategy and/or unintended effect of “mimicry” (Bhabha 1984) that may have served to deflect race and class-based inequality (de Certeau 1984) and associated discourses of “barbarity” and degeneracy (Martin 2004; McClintock 1995, p. 53).

While full scale excavation projects in Grafton are rare, Fragola and Ritchie’s (1998) CRM survey report on the excavations at the Pratt-Keith farmstead provide a useful comparative site for the Sarah Boston Farmstead (see Fig. 1 for location of comparative sites). Located less than 1.5 km to the west of Keith Hill and the Sarah Boston Farmstead in Grafton, the Pratt-Keith site was inhabited by the descendants of Thomas Pratt, one of the original 40 Euro-American proprietors who acquired 176 ac (71 ha) of land in Grafton/Hassanamesit between 1728 and 1731 (Fragola and Ritchie 1998; Pierce 1879).

The Pratt-Keith site dates to the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries (abandoned 1805–20), and yields a MCD of 1794, compared to the Sarah Boston Farmstead MCD of 1796. The parcel where the Sarah Boston Farmstead site is located was occupied from at least 1727 by Sarah Robins, and continuously occupied until the mid-1800 s. However, no obvious remnants of an early, pre-1750 occupation (except for smatterings of early to mid-eighteenth-century material) have been located at the Sarah Boston Farmstead site, indicating (as the MCD does) that the structures excavated at the site likely dates to the late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century occupation of the site, while the components associated with the earliest colonial occupation of the parcel are likely elsewhere. The Pratt-Keith site’s earliest occupation mirrors the Sarah Boston Farmstead, as the parcel where the site is located was included in the same allotments made as part of the 1727 sale of land to English proprietors that saw Sarah Robin acquire the parcel on which the Sarah Boston Farmstead would be built. The Pratt-Keith site, like the Sarah Boston site, appears to have been continuously occupied—first by the Pratt family and then starting in 1801 by the Keith family—until sometime within the first two decades of the nineteenth century (Fragola and Ritchie 1998, p. 43). As a result, the Sarah Boston site, and the Pratt-Keith site overlap considerably in both the time period they were occupied and the amount of time they were occupied. However, it is important to note that while Fragola and Ritchie (1998, p. 35) claim the first 2 decades of the nineteenth century as the likely period of abandonment of the Pratt-Keith site, they make an argument for its abandonment as early as 1805, meaning the Sarah Boston Farmstead site (unoccupied after Sarah

Boston's death in 1835) was likely occupied anywhere from 15 to 30 years longer than the Pratt-Keith site, meaning artifact density discrepancies between the sites, while still drastic, must be tempered with a consideration of the longer depositional history of the Sarah Boston Farmstead site. All in all, multiple lines of evidence support the contention that both sites were contemporaneous for at least the first 75–100 years of their occupation, while the tight correspondence of their MCD's indicate that the bulk of artifacts recovered at the sites were likely purchased, used and discarded within roughly contemporaneous time frames.

Unfortunately no MVC was carried out for the Pratt-Keith site; only sherd counts are available for comparative analysis. A total of nine 0.5×2 m excavation units were completed, for a total excavated area of 22 m^2 . In these excavations, a total of 613 ceramic artifacts were recovered, indicating an average artifact density/ m^2 of 27.86. In comparison, the Sarah Boston Farmstead yielded 23,677 ceramic artifacts in 68 m^2 , indicating an average ceramic artifact density/ m^2 of 348.19. This more than ten-fold disparity indicates a drastic difference in the number of ceramic artifacts needed, purchased, used and discarded over the occupation of the Sarah Boston Farmstead, an observation that lends support to the notion of the Sarah Boston Farmstead serving as a larger community gathering place that likely needed greater numbers of artifacts to accommodate frequent guests, and account for the breakages that become more common with greater use.

A comparison of ware types (by sherd) between Sarah Boston Farmstead and Pratt-Keith Farmstead site yield an interesting result (Fig. 3). Both sites are considered “farms” in documentary sources, yet the disparity of coarse red earthenware highlight an important difference in use/activity at the sites potentially linked to the dual farm and community center role of the Sarah Boston Farmstead: 51 % of the ceramic sherds from the Sarah Boston Farmstead are refined white earthenwares, compared to only 23 % refined earthenwares at Pratt-Keith. Redwares dominate the Pratt-Keith assemblage, as a full 75 % of all ceramic sherds were redwares, likely used for cooking, dairying, food storage or other such utilitarian uses. This analysis provides insight into the dominant activities at the both sites, as the Pratt-Keith ceramics hint at a more functional assemblage focused on

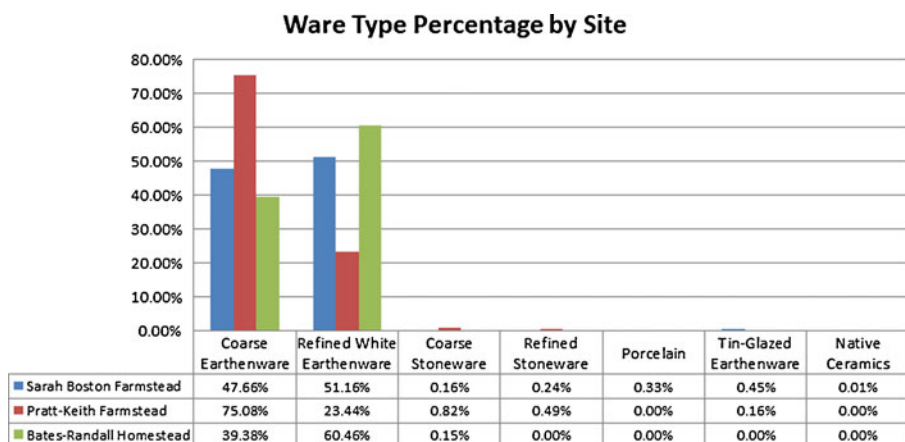


Fig. 3 Comparison of ware type abundance between Sarah Boston Farmstead, Pratt-Keith Farmstead and Bates-Randall Homestead

farm activities and subsistence, with only a limited investment in entertainment/commensality and more formal dining practices. In contrast, the Sarah Boston Farmstead assemblage indicates a much greater investment in such entertaining/dining tablewares, providing further evidence of the likely role of the household as a gathering place for the Nipmuc community (see Law and Pezzarossi 2009; Pezzarossi, et al. 2012).

In general, the Sarah Boston Farmstead ceramic assemblage compares more favorably with mixed use (blacksmithing and agricultural) homesteads such as the contemporaneous Bates-Randall Homestead Site (Fig. 3) located 30 km to the west in nearby Charlton, Massachusetts (Cherau et al. 1997); as both show a greater percentage of the assemblage dedicated to refined white earthenwares, albeit in higher levels at Bates-Randall; a trend that is similarly visible in comparable (based on excavation methodology and level of detail of ceramic analysis) regional sites identified in the gray literature, albeit of 15–30 years later in time (Fig. 4; additional data culled from Clements 1999; Gillis et al. 2009; Heitert and Deaton 2002; King et al. 1992; Macpherson and Leveillee 2000; Ritchie et al. 2008).

Finally, when exploring differences in the types of decorated refined white earthenwares between the Cheney Farmstead, Clam Pudding Pond Farmstead and Abbott site (all local sites (see Fig. 1) reporting ceramic decoration information), we see a clear pattern in the popularity of hand-painted decorated refined white earthenwares, as they are the most popular type of decorated ceramic in 75 % of the sites (Fig. 5).

Transfer prints appear in nearly identical frequency at the Sarah Boston Farmstead and two other sites (~23 %), while they are of lesser importance at the Abbott site (10.4 %). Finally, edged wares are sizable portions of the assemblage of only the Sarah Boston Farmstead and the Abbott site, where they comprise 21 % and 41 % of the assemblages, respectively. The importance of edged and hand-painted wares—the two frugal decorated ware options—at the Sarah Boston Farmstead (66 % of the decorated assemblage) is of note, as this observation provides an additional line of evidence that supports the contention of a frugal investment in decorated wares noted in the analysis of the MVC, yet shows it to be perhaps not unique to the Sarah Boston Farmstead but a common regional practice.

Beyond this frugal economic investment in ceramics for entertaining, however, what appears to be the most significant aspect of the ceramic assemblage is its apparent “insignificance” or commonness (as far as ware and decoration types), when compared to assemblages from European-American sites (see above). I propose moving beyond an interpretation that this insignificance is a result of the homogenizing processes of mass consumption (as per Miller 1987; Mullins 2004) or as “evidence” of Nipmuc assimilation and cultural loss and towards a critical exploration of the motivation for and effects of the consumer choices, strategies, and/or tactics put in motion by the Nipmuc inhabitants of the household. These interventions, be they “active” strategies of resistance, or the resistance-“effects” (*sensu* Coronil 2007) of aesthetic choices spurred by the inhabitants growing knowledge and recontextualization of emerging regional and global tastes and practices, actively constructed the ceramic assemblage that constituted one instance of emerging colonial Nipmuc materialities.

Discussion and Conclusions

On many levels the findings of an “insignificant” or common ceramic assemblage is rather exciting in that it speaks powerfully to how successful the Nipmuc were in

Ware Type Percentage by Site

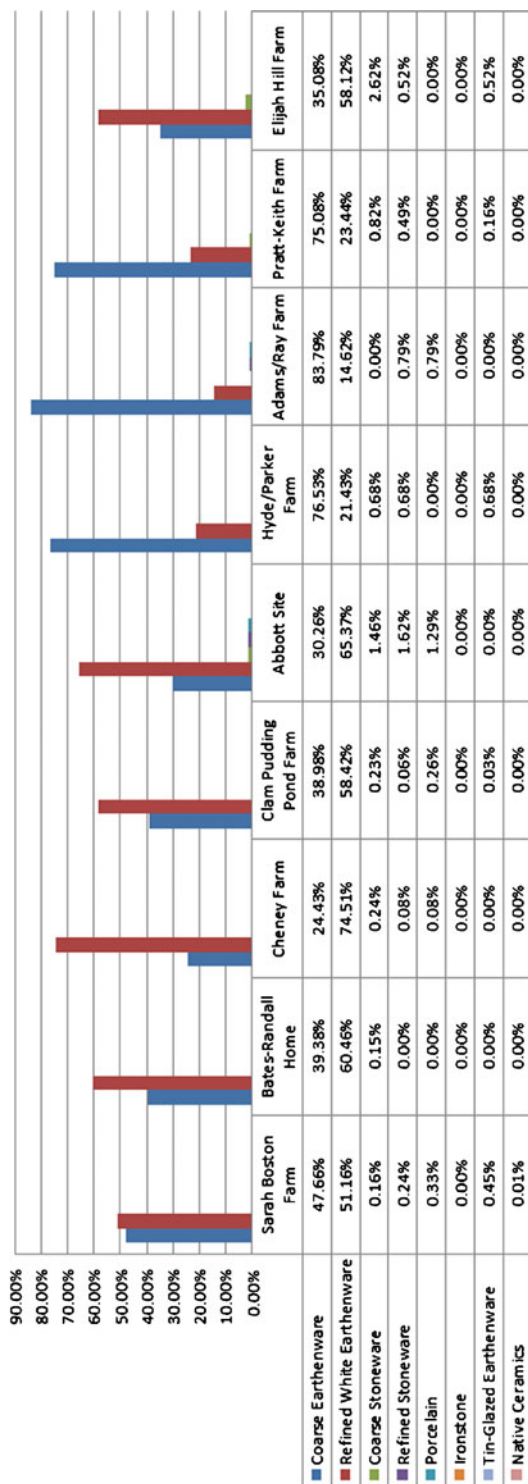


Fig. 4 Comparison of ware type abundance (by sherd) between Sarah Boston Farmstead, and multiple regional sites (Cheney Farmstead, Milford, MA; Clam Pudding Pond Farmstead, Plymouth, MA; Abbott Site, Bedford, MA; Elijah Hill Farmstead, Billerica, MA; Longshadow and Adams/Ray Farmstead, Bellingham, MA; E.Hyde/S.Parker Farmstead, Southborough, MA)

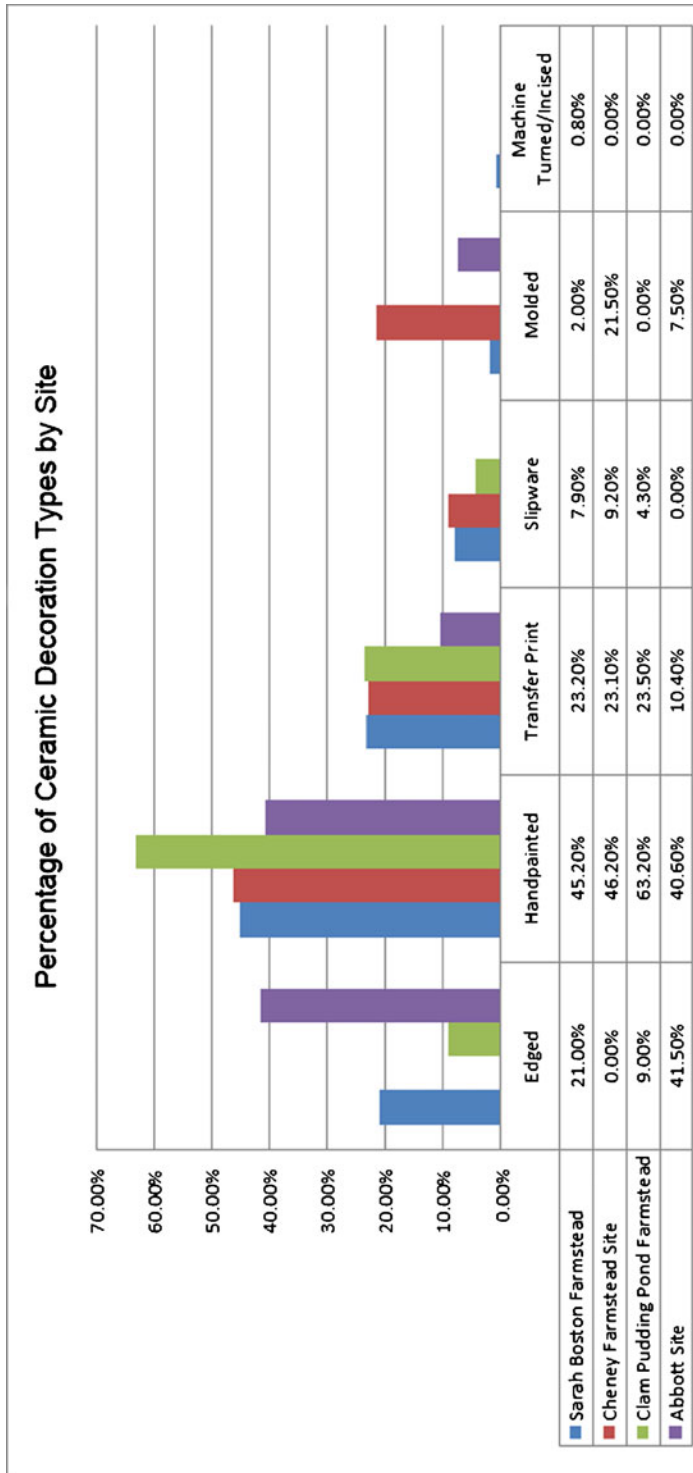


Fig. 5 Comparison of refined white earthenware decoration type abundance (by sherd) between Sarah Boston Farmstead, and regional Massachusetts sites reporting decoration type frequency: Cheney Farmstead, Milford, MA; Clam Pudding Pond Farmstead, Plymouth, MA; and Abbott Sites, Bedford, MA

navigating the capitalist economy in order to engage the colonial cultural mainstream including the dominant material and cultural practices acted out all around them, as well as by them. In addition, this conclusion further undermines the local Grafton histories that perpetuate a remnant of colonial discourse citing Indigenous people's maladroit weathering of the impact of colonization as the cause of their supposed disappearance and "extinction" (Forbes 1889). The "insignificance" of the archaeological assemblage is indeed quite significant, as it serves to highlight the active and adroit Nipmuc engagement and navigation of the "white consumer space" of the emerging capitalist colonial world (as per Mullins 2004, p. 201) and moves beyond the appropriation of objects, and towards the Indigenous appropriation and engagement of both the space and practice of consumption.

The possibility of consumption to serve as a "deflector" of inequality for subaltern populations articulates the potential of consumption and mass produced commodities to undermine the materially buttressed social barriers (exemplified in the indexed material culture, practices and conditions of difference and alterity that constitute the discourse of "domestic barbarism"; McClintock 1995) erected within society that instantiate and maintain difference and hierarchy. The discursive social boundaries that maintain unequal power relations, such as race, class and gender lines—all of which are intertwined in the colonial projects "othering" of Indigenous people—are not entirely "rigid" and unmoving, but rather fluid and flexible in nature (Goodwin 1999; Mrozowski 2000, 2006). This flexibility allows for a certain amount of ambiguity within social boundaries that de Certeau (1984, p. 13) characterizes as a potential point for the subversion of a facet of the dominant population's power over marginalized people. The discursive character of class boundaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are similarly characterized by their fluid and ambiguous nature, in effect creating the potential for just the sort of subversion that de Certeau claims is possible. Thus, a consumer strategy employed by Indigenous people centered on exploiting the ambiguous boundaries between social groups has the potential to alleviate discrimination and inequality in the sociopolitical arena via the appropriation of the materiality that structures the racist and classist social boundaries that enable the colonizer/colonized social relation.

It bears considering however, that perhaps the consumer patterns at the Sarah Boston Farmstead were in fact not the product of an active Nipmuc strategy aimed at undermining difference, but rather the unintended consequences of the Sarah Boston Farmstead inhabitant's engagement, knowledge and participation in broader trends, fashions and associated practices. While it is difficult to prove one or the other, of importance is the *effects* spawned by the consumer choices that in either case resulted in a rather "insignificant" ceramic assemblage and associated domestic and commensal practices that may have blurred materially-defined race, class and status based differences.

The concepts of mimicry and camouflage capture the spirit of this argument of ambiguity. I interpret and work from Homi Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" in a manner that does not imply the "parroting" of the colonizer; rather "mimicry" speaks to the double-edged process whereby the marginalizing "colonial...desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha 1984, p. 126; emphasis in original; see also Huddart 2006, p. 40) articulates itself as a subaltern appropriation of the colonizers' trappings and practices. Mimicry as

part of a strategy/tactics of resistance serves to confuse certain demarcators used by the dominant sectors of society to identify and “Other” subaltern populations (Bhabha 1985, p. 154).

This engagement of colonial material culture represents an avenue for Indigenous people to imbed themselves in the emerging capitalist colonial world in such a way as to remain relevant and visible in the face of oppression, racism, and marginalization (see also Brighton 1996; Cook et al. 1996, p. 59; Mullins 1999). This discussion of the potential deployment of consumption of mass-produced material culture as part of the manifold Indigenous colonial survival strategies appears on the surface as rather hopeful, if not overly optimistic, and must be tempered with the recommendations offered by Wurst and McGuire (1999) concerning the perils of exclusively stressing consumer agency or the positive aspects of consumption. Some of the restraining aspects of such consumer strategies, specific to the context of this archaeological exploration, must be acknowledged. Most prominent is the sadly ironic fact that the liquidation of portions of this Nipmuc family’s land assets in 1797, 1802, and 1816 coincide with likely ceramic acquisition events between 1795 and 1810 attested to by the dates rendered from the ceramic analysis (Earle 1652–1863; Law et al. 2007). This observation serves to lay bare the dialectic relationship between the pursuit of consumption as a survival strategy and its negative impact on an important Nipmuc social and economic power base: their land.

The fact that the Sarah Boston household pursued such a strategy (indeed only one of the various strategies of colonial residence and survival pursued by Nipmuc individuals; see Izard 1999) despite the high cost of the forced sale of land assets which catalyzed Nipmuc land dispossession, hints at the rather seductive and tangible social and personal benefits such consumption must have represented for them. The ceramic analysis has also yielded insight into the role that frugality played in the consumption strategy of the Nipmuc inhabitants of the Sarah Boston site, and in effect serves to mute the critique that rampant, unreflective overspending spurred the economic hardships and land dispossession faced by the Nipmuc. The analysis hints at the subtle negotiation that took place as part of household consumption strategies, such that available funds were carefully invested in material goods in order to enable a more sustainable engagement of the capitalist colonial world through the consumer space and the materialities of said context.

A key part of this household’s consumer endeavor may potentially lie in alleviating inequality and marginalization through the undermining of divisive social boundaries (Baron et al. 1996, pp. 585–586; Mullins 1999; Purser 1999) and as such can be considered to be, at least on some level, a strategy meant to facilitate survival within the harsh colonial world. However, these social divisions (especially as they pertain to the intermingled class, race and gender marginalizing discourses affecting Indigenous people) are not static barriers that contain monolithic segments of the population, but are best characterized as fluid boundaries redolent with ambiguity (Mrozowski 2000, 2006). It is this fluidity of social boundaries that fosters the potential perforation of such divisive structures as a means of muting their alienating effects. Indeed, in light of the discussion of domestic barbarism and degeneracy discussed previously (McClintock 1995), the consumer strategy and/or effects of the Sarah Boston Farmstead site’s inhabitants knowledgeable consumption patterns would have directly contradicted and undermined any attempt to cast the inhabitants as “barbaric” on the basis of their

material practices and domestic conditions (although as mentioned, this did not stop later Victorian local historians and writers from projecting Western ideas of native “barbarism” on Sarah Boston, making the archaeology a critical tool for speaking back to these local histories; see Taft [n.d.](#), p. 6). From this approach we are able to move towards an understanding of how active strategies of appropriation—or the unintended consequences of the knowledgeable engagement of the space and practice of consumption—have the potential to undermine the self/other barrier upon which the objectification and marginalization of colonial endeavors articulate (Bhabha [1985](#), pp. 155–160).

The Sarah Boston Farmstead is an especially salient case study for interrogating such a strategy of Indigenous “residence” (Silliman [2005](#)) in the colonial world. While it is not argued that consumption has the potential to negate inequality, it is feasible to “deflect” some of it by working from within, and “escape the system without leaving it” (de Certeau [1984](#), p. 13). The above discussion argued that the Nipmuc inhabitants of the Sarah Boston site were pursuing such a strategy through their ceramic assemblage by “being mottled...against a mottled background” (Lacan cited in Bhabha [1985](#), p. 162). In so doing, the Nipmuc inhabitants’ dexterous navigation of the ambiguity inherent to the social boundaries determined to marginalize them is underscored, as is the effort to render systems of colonial differences ineffective and survive oppression, all the while securing the Nipmuc community’s persistence “within a maelstrom of change” (Law et al. [2006](#)).

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