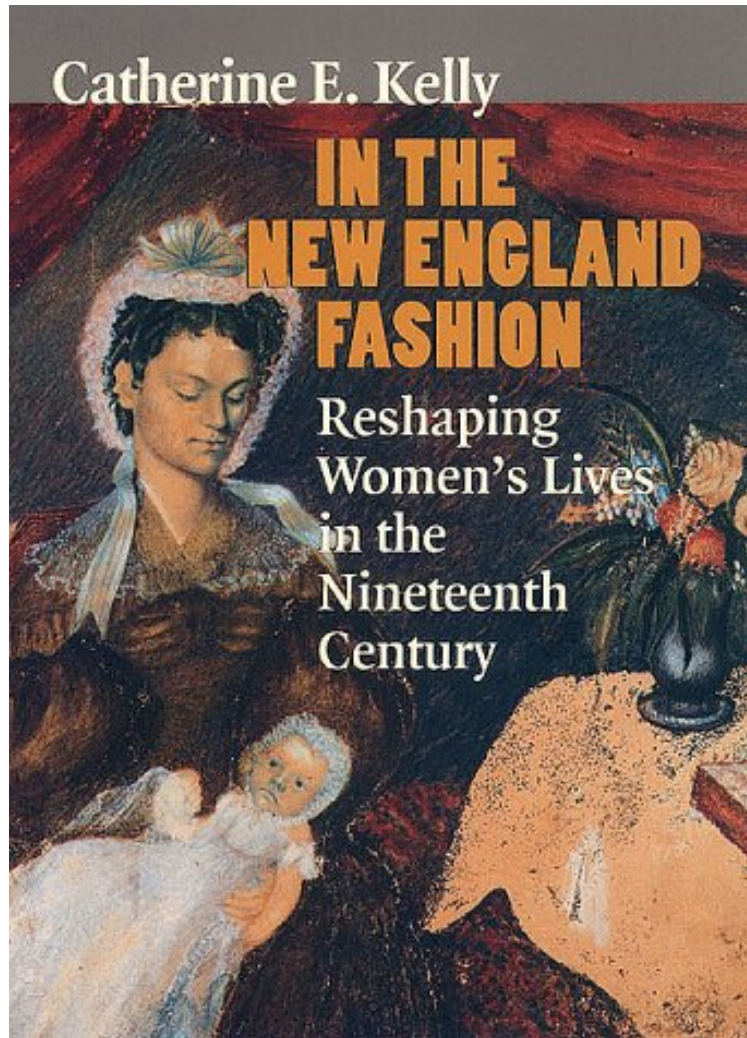


(Mobile ebook) In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Womens' Lives in the Nineteenth Century

# In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Womens' Lives in the Nineteenth Century

Catherine E. Kelly

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**Catherine E. Kelly : In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Womens' Lives in the Nineteenth Century** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Womens' Lives in the Nineteenth Century:

In the first half of the nineteenth century, rural New England society underwent a radical transformation as the traditional household economy gave way to an encroaching market culture. Drawing on a wide array of diaries, letters,

and published writings by women in this society, Catherine E. Kelly describes their attempts to make sense of the changes in their world by elaborating values connected to rural life. In her hands, the narratives reveal the dramatic ways female lives were reshaped during the antebellum period and the women's own contribution to those developments. Equally important, she demonstrates how these writings afford a fuller understanding of the capitalist transformation of the countryside and the origins of the Northern middle class. Provincial women exalted rural life for its republican simplicity while condemning that of the city for its aristocratic pretension. The idyllic nature of the former was ascribed to the financial independence that the household economy had long provided those in the farming community. Kelly examines how the juxtaposition of rural virtue to urban vice served as a cautionary defense against the new realities of the capitalist market society. She finds that women responded to the transition to capitalism by upholding a set of values which point toward the creation of a provincial bourgeoisie.

"Kelly's work is concerned, above all, with the place of women in the period. The reader will find fascinating sections of the book dealing with domestic tasks and responsibilities, paid and unpaid work, education, courtship and marriage, the transformation of love, private and public sociability, and fashion and consumption. . . This is a well-analyzed, carefully researched study. . . "Billie Barnes Jensen, San Jose State University, *History: The of New Books*. Fall, 1999."With complexity and thoughtfulness the author addresses middle-class formation, rural capitalism, separate spheres ideology, and the contours of the affectionate family. . . . This provocative book demands consideration for its creative thinking alone."Lisa Wilson, Connecticut College, New London, CT. *The Journal of American History*, September, 2000."This rich written legacy first spelled out the superiority of rural life over urban society as a way of clarifying economic change. . . This fine study should stimulate other scholars to pursue and evaluate Kelly's methods and insights."Mary H. Blewett, University of Massachusetts. *American Historical* , April 2001"Kelly pushes the boundaries of labor, social, and women's history to challenge a number of core conclusions about the transformation to a market society in the antebellum North. . . . Reading letters and diaries, friendship and commonplace books, and published prose and poetry for what they reveal about both experience and representation, Kelly insists that we take women seriously as actors and thinkers, whose daily lives and the meanings they made of them at once signified and effected important changes in gender and class identities, roles, and relations."Crista DeLuzio (Southern Methodist University), *Modernism/modernity*, September 2002"Catherine Kelly's book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the transition to capitalism and class formation in the ante-bellum period. Kelly makes a strong case that provincial middle-class formation followed patterns distinct from those discerned by scholars of the urban bourgeoisie. She provides a subtle account of changes over time, of the interactions between ideologies and forms of representation, and of the role of women's own self-fashioning in bringing about social change and class formation."Christopher Clark, University of Warwick