

## BOOK REVIEW

*Women's Life in Greece and Rome*. By MARY R. LEFKOWITZ and MAUREEN B. FANT. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. Pp. xxxiv + 457. Paper, \$32.00. ISBN 978-1-4214-2113-1.

Anyone who has taken or taught a course on women in the ancient world in the past thirty-five years likely has at least a passing familiarity with Lefkowitz and Fant's *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (hereafter WLGR). Along with Sarah Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (1975), WLGR in its original 1982 incarnation made it possible for faculty who were interested (and able to persuade their deans) to offer a course on the history and culture of ancient women without resorting to that most hateful of all entities, the coursepack. In the years since its initial publication, this excellent volume has gone through (now) four editions, and its longevity is perhaps the best testament to its quality. If you are in doubt as to the thoroughness of its scope or the thoughtfulness of its authors, I refer you to a host of reviews of the first three editions, which bear more than adequate witness to WLGR's merits.<sup>1</sup>

To my mind, more pressing than revisiting its merits are two questions: do we need a 4<sup>th</sup> edition? And if so, is WLGR the textbook you should adopt for your class? The answers to those two questions are a bit more complicated and form the substance of this review.

First, do we need a 4<sup>th</sup> edition? Perhaps not, but it is such a substantial improvement over the 3<sup>rd</sup> that we should all rejoice that we have it. The salient change is the incorporation of the material from the appendix of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition into the body of the 4<sup>th</sup> (e.g. what was §6A, Sappho on old age, in the appendix [p. 367], now appears as §8 with the rest of Sappho's poetry [p.5]), making it a much more compelling and useful volume. Other changes are, on the whole, beneficial, though perhaps not earthshaking: notes now appear after each chapter, spacing of notes is

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, S. Pomeroy, *CO* 61 (1983–84): 68, N. Fischer *CR* 34 (1984): 247–254, R. Frakes *CB* 68.2 (1992): 127, and F. Hobden *BMCR* 2006.

improved, the bibliography has been shortened and modestly updated, full bibliographic citations now appear in the notes, section headings within chapters are clearly marked, eighteen new images have been added, all images are integrated into the text, and footnotes have been removed where a parenthetical reference serves equally well. In addition, over fifty new entries have been added.

As perhaps with any textbook revision, there are some things to keep an eye out for. A comparison of one chapter, “Legal Status in the Roman World,” as presented in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> editions highlights some of these issues. Some foreign words are italicized but others are not for unclear reasons (e.g. *prytanis* in §173 but *strategus* in §179). In some places formatting is inconsistent (e.g. the introduction to Julian marriage law [p. 127]). One entry (§170) has been completely retranslated, much improving its intelligibility. Yet few substantive changes have been made, even where it might substantially improve students’ understanding (do any of yours know what an exchequer is [note 60]?). And a few things just slipped through the cracks, like adding a full bibliographic entry for Crook (note 63). None of this is likely to derail students, though it would benefit even the experienced instructor to take a close look.

To the second question—should you buy this volume or assign it as part of your class? WLGR is of unquestionable value for anyone wanting a fuller sense of the scope of the lives of women in antiquity. An undergraduate, early graduate student, or non-specialist who wishes to read up on this topic could not do better. If you are someone who has been using the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (or the on-line version) for class—or, like me, who switched away from WLGR—I think you have a number of further considerations.<sup>2</sup> Price is one. WLGR retails for \$32, which, honestly, should be considered a bargain, and Bloomsbury should be commended. Yet, I’m acutely aware that textbook prices hit students hard—and few will find this adequate as the sole textbook for your course. If you are adding a historical survey and primary texts, you should explore whether the online WLGR (<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/wlgr/>) might suffice. Likewise, a course like “Ancient Gender and Sexuality” might these days be better served by Marilyn Skinner’s or Kirk Ormand’s textbooks, Thomas Hubbard’s sourcebook

<sup>2</sup> I use Bonnie MacLachlan’s *Women in Ancient Greece* (Bloomsbury 2012) and *Women in Ancient Rome* (Bloomsbury 2013), which have fewer primary sources but sufficient context so that I no longer require a separate history textbook.

on ancient homosexuality, or a slimmer sourcebook, and supplemented by these (and other) online sources.<sup>3</sup>

What struck me most forcefully as I began writing this review is really still the paucity of choices available. Whenever I sit down to revise a course on Roman civilization or mythology or ancient art, the choices are not only abundant but seem to multiply exponentially each year. Courses such as “Ancient Women” and “Gender & Sexuality in Antiquity” have become staples of our programs and university curricula, but it says something that the three standard textbooks for these classes are now 42, 35 and 22 years old respectively.<sup>4</sup> Johanna Hannick recently published on the way that female classicists seem to shy away from writing the “big” book—the sweeping comprehensive historical survey.<sup>5</sup> And perhaps there is something of that here.

I can't emphasize enough how excellent all these works are—including WLGR. They are surely still being used not merely because there is little else out there, but largely because their eminent authors chose to devote their energies to the creation of such excellent teaching tools. And yet ... we have come a long way since 1975 or 1982 or 1995. Given feminism's focus these days on intersectionality, it is odd that we are not seeing teaching tools that move beyond a second-wave approach which primarily emphasizes the visibility of women. New research in non-binary and transgendered sexuality, as well as publications on ancient notions of race, ethnicity, environment, class and the body (including wounded, diseased, and differently abled bodies) could potentially inform a textbook on women in the ancient world in ways that would speak powerfully to our students. Textbooks that take into account material culture—moving beyond sex segregation in the floor plan of a house or the figural representation of females—likewise could appreciably enrich current offerings. So much excellent, sophisticated work has been done in all these areas by our colleagues in the past twenty years, including the way that these areas of study had an impact on ancient women. It would be exciting to

<sup>3</sup> Marilyn Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (Blackwell 2005), Kirk Ormand, *Controlling Desires: Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Praeger 2008), Thomas Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (University of California 2003), Marguerite Johnson and Terry Ryan, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook* (Routledge 2005), Jennifer Larson, *Greek and Roman Sexualities: A Sourcebook* (Bloomsbury 2012).

<sup>4</sup> In addition to WLGR and Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, the standard textbook is Elaine Fantham, et al. *Women in the Classical World* (Oxford 1995).

<sup>5</sup> <https://eidolon.pub/more-women-classicists-need-to-write-big-cc1994ad1747>

see new textbooks, sourcebooks or resources that incorporate some of these new perspectives for the next generation of students (perhaps even Open Source?), since textbooks especially need to speak to the readers we have, not the readers we wish we had or used to have. The new edition of WLGR is great, but I'm hoping it is seen by my colleagues who are engaged in the teaching of this rich and meaningful material not as a full stop, but as an invitation.

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