

## BOOK REVIEW

*A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*. Edited by SHARON L. JAMES and SHEILA DILLON. Chichester and Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Pp. xxxiii + 616. Hardcover, £110.00/\$199.95. ISBN 978-1-4051-9284-2.

In their introduction, Sharon L. James and Sheila Dillon state the goal of their companion, “to draw together, in a methodologically self-conscious way, the advances in scholarship since Pomeroy” (1). Towards this end, the volume has an interdisciplinary focus, and the editors challenged each author to articulate his or her methodologies, and to foreground problems faced in interpreting the evidence (1–2). The companion comprises 39 articles in five parts, each of which opens with a brief but illuminating case study. The worldwide cast of 42 authors ranges from junior scholars to senior scholars; three of the contributors are men. The companion avoids a strict separation of Greek and Roman material; each part integrates historical, visual, and literary evidence, and each entry concludes with recommended reading. The limits of space prevent discussion of every contribution; an overview with select examples illustrates the unique strengths of this companion.

Part I, “Women Outside Athens and Rome,” opens with Lauren Talalay’s discussion of the debates surrounding the Mother Goddess theory. Amy R. Gansell’s study on “Women in Ancient Mesopotamia” illustrates a common theme of contributions centered on material culture: she gives a brief summary of the state of the evidence, and then analyzes several examples in depth. Gansell studies three elite tombs that range from the third to the first millennia BCE, and by drawing connections between the iconography of jewelry and other grave goods, demonstrates the ways in which the material contributes to a picture of elite women’s social and public roles. Within Part II, “The Archaic and Classical Periods,” Madeleine M. Henry and Sharon L. James address the relationship of both the Greek polis and the Roman *urbs* to women in an essay that exemplifies the utility of combining Greek and Roman material. Maria A. Liston examines osteological remains for information on disease, diet, age at death, and so forth, and demonstrates the value of combining biocultural data with other evidence; in “Women in Magna Graecia,” Gillian Shepherd warns against making assump-

tions such as the sex of the buried individual based solely on grave goods. The absence of a planned essay on Attic drama is keenly felt, particularly as a forerunner to discussions of Menander and Roman comedy.

Part III, "Women in a Cosmopolitan World: The Hellenistic and Late Republican Periods," begins with two case studies that number among the few contributions addressing non-elite women: Dillon's essay on the Hellenistic Tanagra Figurines, and James' on female slaves in Roman comedy. There is a sense of continuity from T. Corey Brennan's account of the "Generation of 63 BC" to several essays in Part IV, "The Beginnings of Empire." Brennan wonders, "can Terentia exist for us without Cicero?" (365), and the same might be said of many of the wives and mothers central to the late Republic and early Empire. James' case study of Vergil's Dido, Judith P. Hallett's discussion of Augustan Rome, and Alison Keith's essay on Augustan literature each address aspects of the relationship between literary women and social and cultural realities, and question how ancient sources may create images of women as a means to characterize their men.

Maura K. Heyn's case study on "Female Portraiture in Palmyra" initiates the reader into Part V, "From Empire to Christianity," and a few such studies emphasize problems faced in reconciling visual and literary evidence in the search to recover the "lived realities" of women by means of material that, as the editors note, "tends towards the stereotypical and the formulaic" (437). Lindsay Allason-Jones and Emily A. Hemelrijk ask readers to reconsider basic points of departure, from generalizing a homogenous population of women in Roman Britain, to assuming that women in cities of the Latin West were "less affected by Roman culture than men," respectively (485). The companion ends with Ross S. Kraemer's, "Becoming Christian," and a bibliography on "Women in Late Antiquity (Apart from Egypt)," which replaces an essay on the subject.

The results of the methodological and interdisciplinary diversity of the companion are manifold: some overlap is unavoidable (Lucretia finds a place in four chapters), while other women, including Sappho, cry out for greater recognition. A general knowledge of the literary and visual evidence is assumed, especially for a reader interested in engaging with the revisionist perspectives, as well as with recent theories and methodologies present in the current companion. The volume provides the greatest utility for upper-level undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars.

Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (1975) symbolized the onset of a new era in the study of women in antiquity, and volumes of *Arethusa* in 1973

and 1978 complemented her work. Each text had a sense of urgency, and a degree of defensiveness: *Arethusa* 6 (1973) opened with editor J. P. Sullivan apologizing, “Like most things involving the liberation of women this issue of *Arethusa* comes late” (5). By comparison, the current companion reflects a wider variety of methodological, theoretical, and geographical perspectives developed over the last four decades, and many authors conclude with pointed guidance for further research. Among the desiderata, Lora L. Holland calls for the use of new theoretical models for the study of women in Roman religion (213), and Jennifer Sheridan Moss notes, “There has been no extensive study of women in late antique Egypt” (502). Others rally for the increased incorporation of women in course material: Henry and James conclude, “Women’s roles, status, and contributions to ancient Greek and Roman society seem somehow still to be relegated to Women’s Studies and Gender Studies courses. Women have not yet entered history, not yet entered theory” (95).

The volume opens with a series of maps; black and white reproductions appear throughout. This companion without doubt succeeds in its mission, while advocating for the further inclusion of women in antiquity in both scholarship and teaching.

CAITLIN C. GILLESPIE

*University of Pennsylvania*, ccgillespie@gmail.com