

Rosario LÓPEZ GREGORIS-Luis UNCETA GÓMEZ, eds., *Ideas de mujer. Facetas de lo femenino en la Antigüedad*, Alicante, Centro de Estudios de la Mujer-Universidad de Alicante, 2011, 172 pp. ISBN 978-84-9717-152-6.

This book tackles, with a fresh and innovative approach, a subject about which much has already been written. It is an excellent collection of papers on women in Antiquity and the many different aspects that this topic encompasses. It focuses not only on the important women of Antiquity, but also on the way in which females in general are portrayed in ancient literature, the key issues that affected them in their daily lives (love, death, marriage, work and pregnancy) and other marginal activities in which they were involved, such as magic. There is also a limited amount of reflection on the history and state of affairs of Gender Studies as a whole, which serves as to reinforce the relevance of this book.

The idea for this volume sprang from a meeting that took place at the Autónoma University in Madrid between 25 February and 4 March, 2008, twenty-three years after the first meeting on the role of women in Antiquity was held at the same university. It is made up of contributions from fourteen different academics working in the fields of Classics and Ancient History at the Universities of Malaga, Granada and the Complutense and Autónoma Universities in Madrid.

The first two chapters of the book focus on Gender Studies as a discipline. The first, by Elisa Garrido, provides an overview of the field as a whole, paying particular attention to the advances made in Spain in recent years, whilst the second, by Lourdes Prados, offers a brief summary of the work that has been done on Gender Studies in Archeology in the U.S. and Europe over the last forty years. Garrido is keen to highlight that studies on women still contend with certain difficulties within academia, since many scholars, including women, fail to appreciate its viability as a new scientific field amongst other established areas of research.

The remaining chapters of the book cover a range of different aspects relating to the lives, attitudes and achievements of women living in the ancient world. Although the majority focuses on literature, there are also papers on history, mythology and other issues affecting women of the time.

#### *Important Women in History*

The third chapter of the book, by Marcos Such, informs us that the first writers of history were, in fact, women. The first of these was a so-called “Enheduanna” who lived in Mesopotamia in the third century B.C., and at least two other women at the time (the wife of Šū-Suen and <sup>d</sup>Inanna-KA) are known to have written poetry. We are given a brief overview of what is known of these three women’s lives and it is suggested to us that, contrary to what has been thought until now, some women of the upper classes of the day may have been able to read, write and compose and

play music. Interestingly, the only writings attributed to men from this time are the work of scribes.

The second chapter on the role of women in history is the penultimate of the book and focuses on women and power in ancient Rome. Esperanza Torrego explores some of the historical events in which certain women (Livia, Agrippina the Elder and Agrippina the Younger) were a pivotal force. She also looks at the legal and social situation of women in the Republic and at the beginning of the Roman Empire.

#### *Women in Greek Mythology*

In the fourth chapter, María Eugenia Rodríguez Blanco deals with 'monstrous' females (such as Medea) and female monsters (such as the Gorgons) in Greek mythology. Mythology, as suggests the author, may reflect certain social structures and relationships and, in this way, myths should be considered a source for the study of women in Antiquity. Mythological women are almost always associated with trickery, seduction, fear and death and, as such, myths may give us important information on how the Greeks used females to explore topics with negative connotations.

#### *Marriage and Motherhood*

In the tenth and eleventh chapters of the book, we explore arguably two of the most important issues affecting women in Antiquity: those of marriage and motherhood. The former, as we are told by Leonor Pérez Gómez, was often controlled by the interests of others, such as the families of the couple in question. Love, on the other hand, often arose outside of the institution of marriage. Given that cases of passionate love are often documented in poetry written by men, we have little information about how the women involved in these situations may have felt.

The topic of motherhood is examined in the twelfth chapter by Javier del Hoyo, using some of the epitaphs of women that died in childbirth as well as iconography, medical treatises and literature. The author also looks at other aspects of women's lives, including the age at which girls were married, puberty and attitudes towards sterility and pregnancy. We also look at abortion and breastfeeding in addition to some tributes to women that died in childbirth.

#### *Women in Ancient Literature*

In the fifth chapter of the volume, Helena González Vaquerizo focuses on the way in which females are portrayed through the image of Helen of Troy. The corpus of literature that contains a mention of this famous character is endless and literature,

in general, can teach us important information about the origins of Western attitudes towards women.

The sixth chapter, by Marta González González, looks at female writers as well as the reasons behind the lack of classical literature written by women. Indeed, none of the Greek female authors that we know of (such as Sappho and Corinna) wrote in Athens in the Classical period, with the exception of Hedyla, Mother of Hedylus. The author suggests that, although few in number, female writers seemed to be aware that they were creating their own literary tradition and she goes on to explore some modern female poets that have based their work on their ancient predecessors.

The seventh chapter, by Pilar Hualde, looks at 'abandoned' women in Classical literature, exploring the traditional idea that many women in Classical literature are seduced, and sometimes even used and abandoned by men (as is Dido by Aeneas, for example). She also examines the portrayal of the female as a 'Seducer' throughout Greek and Latin literature.

The eighth chapter, by Emilio Crespo, focuses on the heroines of Greek novels written in Classical Antiquity and the different types of love explored in these novels, arguing that the passionate love that arises between male and female characters in Western fiction, which is both long-lasting and mutual (with the female as an equal to the male), has its origins in the Greek novel.

In the ninth chapter, Francisco García Jurado examines the character of the Matron and the Prostitute in Roman Comedy and the ways in which they are portrayed in various fragments of the works of Plautus, Titinius and Afranius. Mimy Flores also explores the representation of women in literature in the tenth chapter: this time, the focus is on the women to whom elegiac poets direct their work, exploring their qualities and characteristics. Alongside the positive elements attributed to women in poetry, such as physical beauty, we also see some interesting negative traits: namely greed, fickleness and cruelty towards lovers.

The final chapter of the book, written by one of the editors, Luis Unceta, focuses on females that practiced magic in the ancient world. Having defined the concepts of magic and witchcraft, he examines the literary representation of the Witch in Antiquity using, in particular, Roman sources.

To conclude, then, this collection of papers offers a fascinating insight into the lives, attitudes and achievements of women in Antiquity. There is no doubt that it represents a welcome contribution to research in this area as well as that of Gender Studies as a whole. The editors explain in their prologue that their aim is not to provide an exhaustive study and this allows them to delve into a wide range of topics that are all mutually complementary. The result is an enthralling read for all those interested in women in Antiquity, whilst the photographs included in some articles also make the book visually attractive. The clear way in which it is written and put

together, with the extensive bibliography at the end of the book and detailed contents page at the beginning, ensure that it is accessible to all kinds of reader.

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Enrique MONTERO CARTELLE, *Tipología de la literatura médica latina. Antigüedad, Edad Media, Renacimiento*, Oporto, Brepols, 2010, 243 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-53513-5.

Il libro è occasionato dalla necessità di introdurre i dottorandi, interessati a lavorare nel settore, alla letteratura medica di lingua latina, soprattutto quella prodotta nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento. In effetti il libro di Montero Cartelle (M.C.) rappresenta la prima presentazione e descrizione organica della letteratura medica in lingua latina scritta nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento. Lo studio è "esterno", così lo definisce lo stesso autore, nel senso che non si occupa primariamente degli aspetti dottrinali di questa vasta letteratura (peraltro non del tutto ignorati), ma piuttosto della sua tipologia, in rapporto alle differenti finalità, domanda sociale, preparazione culturale dei singoli autori. Lo studio non intende prendere in considerazione tutta la produzione dell'epoca, vastissima e, in alcuni casi, ancora allo stato manoscritto, ma piuttosto individuare i vari generi o tipologie, e presentarne i principali autori.

Il libro si articola in tre capitoli: 1. La letteratura medica latina classica; 2. La letteratura medica latina medievale; 3. La letteratura medica latina del Rinascimento. I tre capitoli sono organizzati secondo uno schema che si ripete: il contesto culturale della letteratura medica del periodo; gli autori più significativi e i vari generi; il livello letterario e linguistico. Un bibliografia molto ampia, come anche gli indici dei nomi antichi e moderni concludono il volume.

Il libro, all'interno dei limiti e degli obiettivi che l'autore si è posto, presenta dei pregi e delle utilità estremamente importanti che vanno sottolineati. In estrema sintesi, in particolare, i seguenti.

1. Chiarezza espositiva: l'organizzazione logica e coerente degli argomenti dal generale al particolare, come anche il periodare semplice, ma non piatto, rendono la lettura facile e gradevole.

2. Periodizzazioni globalmente fondate e convincenti: quando il M.C. ad esempio distingue all'interno della medicina medievale due periodi: secoli IV-X e secoli XI-XIV, è particolarmente convincente, perché in effetti non si limita esclusivamente a considerare i contenuti medici della letteratura del periodo, ma il suo contesto, economico, ideologico, culturale.

3. Presentazione di scritti importanti e significativi, ignorati dal pubblico dei non specialisti e talora anche da costoro: tra gli scritti di interesse, pressoché o del