

Lin Foxhall, *Studying Gender in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xi, 188. ISBN 978-0-521-55739-9.

This volume, from the *Key Themes in Ancient History* series, provides a useful survey of the various ways that evidence from Greek and Roman history and material culture helps shape our understanding of ancient gender constructions. In this regard, it differs from the heavily literary emphasis of much work in ancient gender studies. The book aims at synthesis of the current state of knowledge in several key areas more than advancing any radically new thesis of its own. In keeping with the objectives of the series, it also features an excellent and up-to-date Bibliographic Essay on pp. 160–64.

The first chapter gives a brief overview of the history of scholarship on Greek and Roman gender, which began to generate substantial interest only as recently as the 1970s. The chapter then proceeds to examine our various categories of evidence and the hermeneutic challenges inherent in each: literary texts are almost all authored by elite males, and must be interpreted through the filters of genre and ideology. Legal and philosophical texts tell us what people ought to do rather than what they did. Honorific inscriptions may idealize. It is hard to know how representative of the broader Greco-Roman world evidence from Egyptian papyri may be. Even material remains do not necessarily tell us what women themselves preferred. Despite these obstacles, the book does employ scholarship based on all these sources to reach some careful and prudent inferences.

The second chapter, “Households,” examines philosophical texts and legal evidence concerning marriage, including prevailing marriage ages, adultery, and the problem of *epiklêroi*. The discussions of the Gortyn Code and Augustan marriage legislation are particularly informative. Based on Cicero’s letters and Plutarch’s *On Marriage*, Foxhall suggests that Roman era sources were more likely to portray marriage as an affectionate and even romantic bond. However, this impression may be an accident of preservation; if we had more from Xenophon on marriage or the text of Antimachus of Colophon’s *Lyde*, our estimation of fourth-century Greek marriage might be different.

Special attention is devoted to the question of normative age at marriage. Foxhall correctly points out the flawed assumptions behind Shaw and Saller’s thesis about Roman marriage ages based on commemorative inscriptions; she notes that such late ages of marriage are not consistent with the census data from Roman Egypt. She could have usefully made reference here to A. A. Lelis, W. A. Percy, and B. C. Verstraete, *The Age of Marriage in Ancient Rome* (Lewiston 2003) 73–90 (second edition forthcoming), which advances a similar critique. On the Greek side, however, she is willing to accept the consensus that bridegrooms were significantly older (often 30+) than brides (usually 12–15). This ignores the abundant iconographical evidence of later fifth-century Attic vase painting, which shows youthful, unbearded bridegrooms as normative (see also Xenophon, *Symp.* 2.3, for Critobulus’ marriage while he is still unbearded [4.23]). Male age at marriage particularly may have been variable in response to periods of acute social and political need for multiple children and population growth to recover from

war or plague. I also find questionable the inference that because of the substantial age gap, Greek women had little capacity for “independence” from their husbands; while this might be true at the outset of a Greek marriage, it needs to be balanced by the observation that a wife could be in her prime when her husband becomes aged and invalid. This chapter’s discussion of relative authority within a marriage could be enriched by more attention to Ischomachus’ relation to his wife in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* 7–10: he tells his wife that his ultimate goal is that she should “prove yourself better than I am, to make me your servant” (7.42).

Under the rubric of “Demography,” Chapter Three examines a range of issues, including patrilineal descent, co-residence of brothers’ families in the paternal household, female infanticide, and adolescent sexuality. On the last issue, Foxhall is eminently sensible, recognizing that the clear-cut distinction between *erastês* and *erômenos* that modern critics have inherited from Plato is too simple; in her view, Greek men enjoyed an extended adolescence “full of sex with slaves, prostitutes and their older and younger peers” (p. 58). She cogently interprets remarks of Celsus and Juvenal to suggest that Roman boys were also assumed to be sexually active.

Chapter Four, “Bodies,” looks at medical understandings of gender difference and notes that both Aristotelian and Hippocratic theories might support the notion of gender as a continuum rather than a strict binary (she might also have noted the fragment attributed to Parmenides by Soranus [B18 D-K]); she cites the case of the self-styled “eunuch” Favorinus (more likely born intersex) as one destabilizing traditional categories. The chapter ranges further into typical male and female regimens, Roman portraiture, the Demosthenic *Erotic Essay* (which she believes was intended for delivery in Epicrates’ presence at a symposium), and masculinity in war. Her credence in the erotic organization of the Theban Sacred Band fails to note the skepticism of David Leitao, “The Legend of the Sacred Band,” in M. Nussbaum & J. Sihvola, eds., *The Sleep of Reason* (Chicago 2002). She adduces the female warrior (always characterized as “barbarian”) and the male *cinaedus* as the antitypes of properly gendered bodies.

Chapter Five, “Wealth,” examines the disadvantages of women in inheritance law and commercial transactions, but notes that they did bring with them into marriage an often substantial “trousseau” of textiles, jewelry, and even slaves. Foxhall shows particular interest in the information about women’s occupations as revealed in Roman epitaphs and Edward Harris’ survey of Greek epigraphic and textual evidence (“Workshop, Marketplace and Household,” in P. Cartledge, E. E. Cohen, & L. Foxhall, eds., *Money, Labour and Land* [London 2002]). However, Harris’ work only identifies 27 women, and it is unclear how demographically representative our sources are, given the usual Greek reticence about women in public roles. I believe that both this chapter and Chapter Two could have benefited from deeper engagement with Edward Cohen’s arguments (*The Athenian Nation* [Princeton 2000]) that women and other subaltern groups (metics, slaves, prostitutes) often wielded surprising economic power.

Chapter Six, “Space,” is the most archeological in orientation. After a largely inconclusive discussion of how domestic space is gendered, the chapter focuses on Greek gymnasia and Roman baths as important social spaces. Foxhall finds little evidence of distinctive gymnastic facilities in the archeological record of Athens and other cities before the late fourth-century, and concludes that these were likely multi-functional venues, little more than a park and stoa in the case of the Academy and other public gymnasia. At least in Athens, she argues that these spaces were exclusively male; she shows little interest in the female athletics of Argos and Sparta. In contrast, she argues that Roman baths were a space where both genders (and various social classes) freely mingled without embarrassment.

Chapter Seven examines gender in religion and magic. Foxhall believes that only elite women participated in the Panathenaea, whereas male participation was more democratic. Although most Roman priesthoods were elite offices, she observes that non-senatorial men and women could participate as formal benefactors of a priestly college. She also discusses the Thesmophoria (which she believes to be a deme-level rite), the Bona Dea, and the Bacchanalia at Rome, which were considered a threat only to the extent that their license affected men.

There are naturally some areas, such as education and music, about which one might like to hear more, but this book succeeds in packing a wide range of useful information into a brief format.

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