

**Jacqueline Fabre-Serris, Alison Keith, *Women and War in Antiquity*.** Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015. Pp. ix, 341. ISBN 9781421417622. \$55.00.

Whereas the influential volume *Histoire des femmes en Occident 1. L'Antiquité* (ed. by Pauline Schmitt Pantel) assembled groundbreaking texts on the role of women in antiquity written exclusively by French *antiquisants*, the present collection of papers shows the results of an international cooperation. The papers were presented at a first symposium of EuGeStA, the European Network on Gender Studies in Antiquity, held at Université Charles de Gaulle-Lille 3 in 2009. Researchers working at French, German, Swiss, American and Canadian universities focus on war from the perspective of gender, bringing together different scholarly traditions. Furthermore, the editors of the volume highlight their aim to open a “dialogue between historians and literary critics”; one contribution treats material culture, images on Greek vases. The papers issued from the international and interdisciplinary dialogue in Lille investigate the redefinitions of the categories “masculine” and “feminine” in discourses on war.

In contrast to the approach of historical anthropology promoted by the famous “École de Paris” which stressed structures and patterns of gendered behaviour, norms and discourses, the contributions in the present volume focus on a situational analysis of the discourse on gender in a given text passage, without insisting on stable and unchangeable concepts of gender. The book is divided into two parts, “From Words to Deeds: Between Genres and Women” and “War in Historical Context: Discourse, Representation, Stakes”.

The first part opens with the contribution “War, Speech, and the Bow Are Not Women’s Business”. Philippe Rousseau analyses repetitions of verses from the *Iliad* in two passages of the *Odyssey* which serve as connective features of an internal textual organisation of the work. Rousseau argues against generalising interpretations of Hector’s words to Andromache, who urges her to go back home and get on with her female tasks leaving to him “the war which will be the matter for the men” (*Il.* 6. 490–3), as a commonplace view on the subject of the division of tasks between men and women. Instead, he stresses their close links to the narrative situation. The author highlights this Iliadic hypotext in two passages of the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 1.356–9; 21. 350–3) which link speech and bow to war in order to stress that they are linked to the specific situations in both passages and were not meant to tell the audience that war, speech and bow were reserved to men in general. Rousseau analyses convincingly “Homer’s” subtle way of depicting Andromache’s tactical reasoning and Penelope’s intervention at her home by arranging the archery contest for her suitors.

Marella Nappi studies “Women and War in the *Iliad*: Rhetorical and Ethical Implications” and stresses even more explicitly than the preceding article that the female characters in the *Iliad* are at the heart of the war and often involved in the dynamics of the war. Although the women stay in the background, they motivate the heroes, they are both the cause of the war and its victims. Women’s discourses in the

*Iliad* differ from the discourses of fighting heroes. As victims of war they are in an excellent position to judge and predict its consequences, they invest the narrative framework with an emotional involvement.

Therese Fuhrer deepens the study of female perspectives on war in her article “*Teichoskopia: Female Figures Looking on Battles*”. Fuhrer analyses a woman’s gaze from towers and walls to the battlefield in Horace’s *Second Roman Ode*, Helen’s view of her fighting ex-husband and of her current husband in Book 3 of the *Iliad*, Antigone’s gaze in Statius’s Book 7 of his *Thebaid* and Medea’s transformation in Book 6 of Valerius’ Flaccus *Argonautica*. *Teichoskopia* offers an opportunity—as Fuhrer convincingly argues—for a presentation of a specifically female point of view, often transgressing the spatial distance by emotional involvement of the female figures. The author’s narratological analysis centred on focalisation and offers fine examples of gendered presentations of points of view in ancient poetry. Female points of view in the *teichoskopia* often articulate the fears and suffering of women related to the combatants, question the importance of military victory or the perversion of values. The texts, as Fuhrer states, do not formulate any explicit criticism of the wars the women observe, but they enable the reader’s reflection on negative consequences of war.

François Lissarrague turns to Jean-Pierre Vernant’s interpretations of gender conceived as a strict division between women’s and men’s world, citing his famous sentence “Wedding is to the girl what war is to the boy” (Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne*, Paris, 1974, 32). In the chapter “Women Arming Men: Armor and Jewelry” Lissarrague analyses the scenes in which women hand arms to men and the scene in which Polynices gives Harmonia’s necklace to Eriphyle. The author arrives at the conclusion that the shield “corresponds to a mirror just as a helmet corresponds to a necklace”. Thus the objects which are typical for one of the two sexes neatly divide—in Lissarragues’ eyes—the realms of men and women in the discussed images.

Louise Bruit Zaidmann wrote the chapter on “Women and War: From the Theban Cycle to Greek Tragedy”. The author deals with the relationship between men and women in Aeschylus’s *Seven against Thebes* and in Euripides’s *Phoenissae*. Bruit Zaidmann warns against a too simple division between feminine and masculine. Euripides gives a decisive role to female combat in response to the masculine discourse of war. The author underlines that women play an active part in the game of destiny, even if they cannot prevent or alleviate the ruin of their families.

A study of emotions in Seneca’s philosophical and tragic work was undertaken by Jacqueline Fabre-Serris in her chapter on “War after War in Seneca’s *Troades*: A Reflection on Emotions”. Fabre-Serris first discusses some *topoi* on women in Seneca’s *Consolations* (to Marcia and to Helvia), then she compares them with the control of emotions of female figures in Seneca’s tragedy *Troades*. The philosopher refers in his *Consolations* to the weakness of women in theory and to a general opinion on

weakness of women who are supposed to be unable to control their emotions. But Seneca also gives examples of exceptional women whose remarkable virtue has placed them in the company of superior men. The author interprets the female figures in the *Troades* as embodying opinions belonging to both diverging philosophical positions: Whereas Andromache only controls her words while her body language reveals her emotions, Hecuba and Polyxene command their words, body language and deeds as if they possessed a male virtue of self-control.

Federica Bessone presents how Statius links women with love and war in the chapter entitled “Love and War: Feminine Models, Epic Roles, and Gender Identity in Statius’ *Thebaid*”. Statius’ epic challenges distinctions of gender and genres, and Bessone demonstrates how in the *Thebaid* love transforms a woman into a fearless creature and the bravest of warriors; a feature already celebrated in Phaedrus’s eulogy of Eros in Plato’s *Symposium*. The poet creates a new model for female heroism, Statius celebrates Argia, Polynices’s wife, who equals the heroic qualities of the man by showing in misfortune a heroic fidelity to her husband. To the idea that men and women possess the same qualities which was put forward by Seneca, Quintilian and Pliny, Bessone could also have added that the ancient authors applied this denial of ideological polarisation of genres to the men and women of the same social stratum.

Although modern scholars interpret the love-war contrast as articulating an opposition between elegy and epic, Alison Keith shows in her chapter “Elegiac Women and Roman Warfare” how elegiac *puellae* oppose the war on one hand but send their beloved men to the conquest of foreign countries on the other. Thus the author sees the Roman elegists’ representations of their mistresses as both the products and the proponents of the Roman imperial project. According to Keith’s readings, the elegists represent their mistresses as supporters of Rome’s military adventurism in the Mediterranean, greedy of luxury goods which they receive as spoils from the conquered countries. The author demonstrates the ambiguous positions of women and war in the Roman elegy with great expertise, but her interpretation does not say a word about irony which is typical of the Roman erotic elegy. When Propertius assumes that “all women are interested in enriching themselves from the spoils of empire—expensive foreign imports such as silk clothing and gems” (p. 148), it would be interesting to ask in which way this depiction reflects moralistic discourses on luxury and detriment of morals which was thought to be induced by indulging in luxury. Do Propertius and Ovid straightforwardly promote Roman imperialism in their elegies or do they undercut the promoted imperialist ideology when they celebrate sexual spoils (foreign mistresses) of Roman military conquest?

Alison Sharrock discusses in her chapter on “Warrior Women in Roman Epic” the complexity of gender roles in Roman epic. Sharrock starts with a demonstration of contrasts between Camilla and other warrior women in the *Aeneid* by stressing Vergil’s complexity and sensitivity in creating models for a woman warrior; Camilla

sets the tone for a kind of gender equality of warriors in the *Aeneid*. Afterwards the author discusses Ovid's eroticising presentation of women warriors in his *Metamorphoses* followed by women warriors in Statius's *Thebaid*, Silius Italicus's *Punic war* and in Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*. Sharrock highlights how difficult it is for a woman to enter a man's world on equal terms, even in fiction. The ancient poets had explored different modes of women's equality with men on a battlefield long before the political world started to think about it, so the author concludes.

The second part of the book is entitled "Women and war in historical context: Discourse, Representation, Stakes". Pierre Ducrey explores "War in the Feminine in Ancient Greece" and underlines that this issue enriches the historiography of war in antiquity. Not only female deities but also female mythological figures are depicted as taking part in wars. The author presents mythical and historical accounts of women participating in wars, sometimes seeing to logistical matters, preparing food, and entertaining the troops. Women could have supported war according to Hero of Alexandria by donating their hair for catapults. In my opinion, the author should have reflected more extensively on the boundary between mythic and historic accounts in texts and in images.

Stella Georgoudi continues with an examination of mythic and historical accounts on women's participation in war in her chapter "To Act, not Submit: Women's Attitudes in Situations of War in Ancient Greece". The author examines the modern historiography which interprets women's involvement in war (and in the rituals of the *polis*) as an inversion of a norm or a reversal of the normality according to which war was exclusively a man's task. Georgoudi argues that the narrations on women's interventions in war reveal the concepts of women's participation, collaboration, cooperation, and complementarity. The different forms of women's intervention in war reveal the idea that in defense of city and country a collective effort can be made by both men and women.

Whereas Pascal Payen demonstrates that the division between the sexes was the overall basis for the organisation of societies in the ancient Greek world in his chapter "Women's Wars, Censored Wars? A Few Greek Hypotheses (Eighth to Fourth Centuries BCE)", Violaine Sebillotte Cuchet argues in her chapter "The Warrior Queens of Caria (Fifth to Fourth Centuries BCE): Archeology, History, and Historiography" that the sex-based division should not be taken literally. Sebillotte underlines that the strict division of genders is a product of the rhetorical and ideological filters in texts and concentrates on accounts in which royal women blur the usual categories of gender.

In the chapter "Fulvia : The Representation of an Elite Roman Woman Warrior" Judith Hallett examines different literary images of Fulvia who was in turn the wife of Publius Clodius Pulcher, Gaius Scribonius Curio and Mark Antony. Hallett focuses on the description of Fulvia as a kind of woman warrior, because she took part in the Perusine war against Octavian in 41 BCE and was reputed to be a commanding

personality and portrayed as seeking to exercise control over men outside her marriage. The author analyses the literary strategies of denigration of Fulvia as well as positive representations of her to highlight the problematic issue of distinguishing between allegedly factual history and imaginative poetry as evidence for the lived realities and public images of Roman women. Hallett examines in an interdisciplinary way both the historical context of Fulvia's literary representations and the literary techniques adopted in the texts. Fulvia was characterised in a wide range of literary genres, in political invective in epigrams (Martial 11.20 quotes an epigram of Octavian on Fulvia) and in orations (Cicero attacks in his *Philippics* not only Mark Antony but his wife Fulvia too) as well as in the Roman elegy. Hallett argues that these texts strongly influenced the later biographers and historians writing on Fulvia. Nevertheless, Cornelius Nepos as a contemporary witness offers in his biography of Atticus a completely different, sympathetic portrayal of Fulvia. Therefore Judith Hallett invites the reader to explore the complex intersections between historical reality and literary fiction and to recognize to which degree the images of mythical and historical Roman women are literary constructions.

Stéphane Benoist examines in the chapter on "Women and Imperium in Rome: Imperial Perspectives" some exceptional feminine figures. In his first section he deals with Lucretia, Dido, Cloelia, and Boudicca as representatives of masculine discourse which exalts the virility of only a few women. These figures intervene in legitimate struggles against tyrants, they figure as subjects of an exemplary rhetorical discourse of positive eulogium, whereas the tyrants are depicted in terms of negative invective. Benoist then turns to Tacitus' rhetoric on women of the imperial family in his *Annals*, in which the historian depicts the irruption of women in the military sphere to signal not only their misconduct but also the dysfunction of masculine political institutions. Benoist should have mentioned that Thomas Späth (*Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit bei Tacitus. Zur Konstruktion der Geschlechter in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Frankfurt/M. & New York, 1994) proposed similar conclusions, namely that women play an essential role in the *Annals* when the author denigrates the *principes* and calls into question the legitimacy of their authority. In the third part of the paper, the titulature of Roman empresses is discussed to shed light on the dynastic dimension of the principate. In the fourth part of the paper Benoist highlights that positive images of powerful women in the *Historia Augusta* present a reaction to male failures.

"The Feminine Side of War in Claudian's Epics" is a discussion on gender discourses in Claudian's Panegyric. Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer examines how the *Panegyrici* refer to women in war and where the feminine appears at a symbolic level. The author demonstrates that Claudian establishes a discourse concerning a rigid gender dichotomy. According to Harich-Schwarzbauer, Claudian's depiction of the transgression of women into the male domain of war is due to anxiety over the instability of the social order in the fifth century CE.

The chapters of the book vary immensely in their scope and approach to the ancient sources. Nevertheless, they offer a rich image of the neglected issue of

interventions of women in war in ancient literary texts (and in some images). The book demonstrates a change in the gender historiography in Classics which was accomplished in the last years. Some scholars who concentrate on women in the Greek world (Georgoudi, Sebillotte Cuchet) distance themselves from the idea of strict gender division which was often highlighted by Jean-Pierre Vernant and Nicole Loraux to trace the intersections and converging points common to men and women in war. Some contributors highlight rhetorical techniques, they demonstrate how rhetorical strategies of texts distort literary images of men and women. Such biased representations serve to demonstrate issues which transcend the questions of gender. Often they are only alluded to in order to instigate the reader's further reflection.

General points of view on gender division are challenged in many chapters of the book. The authors demonstrate the immense importance of conducting a situative analysis instead of stressing any overall gendered structures. The structuralistic paradigm of historiography dealt with women's active participation in realms of life which were considered as restricted to men only as "an exception to the rule" or "a reversal of normality". The historiography and literary interpretations presented in the book *Women and War in Antiquity* favour new models of interpretation, which examine many texts in which men and women are depicted as differing from the ideal of a binary and clear division of gender roles. In my opinion, the authors could have stressed this feature of the ancient texts more clearly. It could be highlighted that many ancient texts explicitly state norms and ideals of binary division of gender roles, however, such normative discourses are often undercut by presentations of actions of men and women which blur the clear division of gender norms. Already the concept of blurring gender concepts does imply itself an existence—at least in imagination—of a clear gender division. The chapters e.g. on transgressions of gender norms like in Seneca's *Troades*, Tacitus's *Annals* or on Claudian's *Panegyric* could not make any sense without a reference to a stable set of norms of femininity and masculinity. It is crucial to emphasize the difference between normative texts and texts which offer literary representations of individual mythic or historic figures. Additionally, the blurring between historic and mythical accounts on men and women is another problematic issue, as Judith Hallett reminds us in this volume.

The authors devote their studies to the blurring of gender concepts, the superimposition of social over gender roles, the actions of individual women, the ideas of collective action of both genders. Some authors adopt narratology as a fruitful approach to the ancient texts which exposes female points of view in texts written by men. By adopting this approach they reveal that the texts encourage the reader to further reflections on issues linked to women's points of view.

The book is a rich volume of various recent research methods which invite us to study women in antiquity in further realms considered as non-female.

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