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Reviewed Work: *Images of Women in Antiquity* by Averil Cameron, Amélie Kuhrt

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**Comments**
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This collection of essays, primarily by British scholars, differs from those of Foley and the editors of *Arethusa* in its greater emphasis on social and cultural history than on literary criticism, and in its unusually broad definition of antiquity: it includes discussions of women not only in classical Greece and Rome but also in the ancient Assyrian, Babylonian, Hittite, Hurrian, and Egyptian kingdoms, as well as the Byzantine empire, the Celtic middle ages, the *Old Testament* tradition, the Jewish communities of Graeco-Roman Palestine, and early Syrian Christianity. The essays are arranged in categories such as "Women and Power" or "Women in Religion and Cult" to promote comparisons between the different cultures. While the essays vary considerably in approach, they generally share the scrupulous methodological self-consciousness, large debt to structural anthropology, and caution in drawing conclusions concerning the experiences of women from evidence that is fragmentary, often fictional, and produced largely by men, that are hallmarks of recent work in this field.

Somewhat against the spirit of the collection I will concentrate on those essays that are most directly useful to classicists. In the opening essay Ruth Padel skillfully delineates the tendency of Greek men to locate exclusively in women the human susceptibility to unruly impulses that the culture defined as daemonic and attempted to control. Mary Lefkowitz surveys examples from Greek and Roman literature and myth to show that women who acted prominently in public life did so within well-defined limits and won approval only if they were acting on behalf of a male relative. Susan Walker presents the archaeological evidence—unfortunately rather inconclusive—for the view of women's relations to space within the house suggested by literary sources. Dyfri Williams outlines some of the difficulties of using vase paintings as a source for the lives of classical Athenian women, concluding that vase paintings, like the literary sources, present a male perspective on a male-dominated world. Helen King explores the responses of Greek medical writers to symptoms perceived as a threat to the smooth conversion of the untamed parthenos into a fully socialized gyne, and uncovers a set of associations between parthenoi, the goddess Artemis, and death by strangulation. Sarah Pomeroy uses the inscriptions listing immigrant mercenaries on the Delphinion at Miletus as evidence that this Hellenistic community preferred male to female children and exposed or neglected their female offspring. Riet van Bremen documents the newly prominent public role of female members of the wealthy elite in Greek cities of the 2nd century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D., and concludes that this was due neither to greater legal rights for women nor to economic decline in the Greek cities but to an increasingly domestic conception of the nature of public action.

Of the essays devoted to other ancient cultures, several represent the first systematic survey of the evidence for women in a particular society and should be particularly valuable to specialists. But because they are not written from a comparative perspective, their usefulness for comparative purposes is limited. A student of women in classical Greece or Rome often stands to learn more from a
designedly cross-cultural study of some aspect of women's behavior or conceptions of women than from a study focusing on another ancient culture which had little or no direct historical connection with classical Greece or Rome, and for which the evidence is even more scanty and difficult to interpret than for those societies.

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The latest in MacMullen's often chatty and humorous discourses on the social history of the Empire from 100-400, Christianizing the Roman Empire should be read as a companion to his earlier Paganism in the Roman Empire. Together, the books provide a much-needed perspective on Graeco-Roman religiosity as a social and cultural phenomenon, a perspective frequently obscured by more traditional and exhaustive church historians, such as Henry Chadwick and W. H. C. Frend.

Investigating the reasons for conversion to Christianity in the Empire, MacMullen gives due weight to Christian miracle-working and exorcism, in the context of the power-struggle between Christ and other daimones. While "church" historians in the stricter sense endeavor to express the uniqueness of Christian belief in theological terms, MacMullen neatly sums it up by: "Urgency, evangelism, and the demand that the believer deny the title of god to all but one. . ." (p.110). His emphasis on the importance of Constantine's conversion and the prestige which the imperial patronage, psychological and material, lent to a church largely quiescent prior to 313 and the Edict of Milan, may, to some readers, appear inordinate. Imperial patronage of cults (as, for example, that of the Severi) is, in itself, no guarantee of their perpetuity. Nonetheless, MacMullen rightly sees that the continued patronage of the emperors (with the notable exception of Julian) enabled Christian evangelists and apologists to "come out of the closet", take the offensive, and to make paganism materially less rewarding and socially less prestigious.

MacMullen's analysis is best when it avoids psychologizing of the sort which attempts to second-guess the fourth-century mind. Such statements as "But the thought must have been there" (p. 115) are unsatisfactory substitutes for an admitted lack of documentation of the motives for conversion. Indeed, MacMullen displays a cheerful naivete about both the psychology of conversion and about the sociology of religion, a naivete which creates a largely unnecessary first chapter. His historical second-guesses, while often leaps in the dark, again due to lack of documentation, are more plausible. Church historians might jib at MacMullen's stress upon fear and the hope of material reward as causes of conversion, but historians of religion and classical historians alike will find Christianizing the Roman Empire not only provocative but indispensable to their understanding of a complex period and a complex subject.

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