

Ideał i antyideał kobiety w literaturze greckiej i rzymskiej,
ed. A. Marchewka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego,
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The recent decades brought a lively discussion on the position of women in the history of the world. One of the most disregarded social groups in historiography became appreciated – women have returned to history. Both individuals and groups of women of historical significance came into focus. Furthermore, the impact of women on historical events is studied. The inseparable element of studies on the history of women is a belief that the traditional records of history minimised or ignored the contribution of women in the history of humanity and the impact they had on it. In this respect the history of women is often a form of historical revisionism, which attempts to challenge or broaden the traditional historical consensus.

This new approach to the role of women in history is reflected well by the term 'herstory'. It is history written from a feminist perspective, emphasising the role of a woman or told from a woman's point of view. The main purpose of herstory is to lead women out of the oblivion of historical records. The neologism originating from the 'her' and 'story' word play is a manifestation of feminist criticism of conventional historiography which is written as 'his story' – i.e. from a man's point of view.

One of the main postulates of feminist historiography is, as I mentioned earlier, revisionism of sources, which assumes repeated analysis of historical texts with regard to the female part of history. The publication *Ideał i antyideał kobiety w literaturze greckiej i rzymskiej* published in 2018, edited by Anna Marchewka, is doubtlessly in line with this trend. The articles it includes relate to recognised and broadly discussed antique works. However, the authors reach for them with new questions and research problems, referring to the above-mentioned history of women. Owing to this new perspective – on the seemingly worked out sources – the reader receives answers to many questions regarding the life of women in the ancient times.

It is worth mentioning that this publication is an aftermath of a conference organised at the University of Gdańsk, 'Image of an ideal

woman in Greek and Roman literature', which took place in 2016 and the pretext for its organisation was the 30th anniversary of inauguration of classical philology studies at the University of Gdańsk.

The publication is a set of 24 articles, divided into two parts. The first one is dedicated to Greek literature, the second one deals with Roman literature. Both parts present images of women recognised as ideal, which can be confronted by the reader with the anti-ideals presented by the authors.

In the first part, 'pars Graeca', particular researchers conjure up the image of a woman as a mother (i.a. *Obraz matki w Iliadzie: studium słowa i gestu* by Ilon Chruściak, pp. 11–25), a beautiful seductress, or an ascetic as in the case of the article authored by Katarzyna Wojtalik *Udowodnić świętość – kreowanie wizerunku doskonałej ascetki na przełomie IV i V wieku* (pp. 175–187). One of the main advantages of this publication is that the reader can follow the fates of women, their perception over the centuries – starting from the times described by Homer in *Iliad*, ending with late ancient times. This part analyses both women as individuals, e.g. Andromache, Helena (*Kobiety i wojna, czyli o Trojankach Eurypidesa*, Joanna Rostropowicz, pp. 53–62), Sappho (*Safona – ideał kobiety czy kobiecości*, Daria Węsierska, pp. 27–40), and as a group, e.g. in Plato's dialogues, discussed by Anna Głodowska – *Platon i kobiety. Obraz kobiet w platońskich dialogach* (pp. 97–110). It is characteristic that the chronological profile of the age is presented here, as a result of which the evolution of the image of an ideal woman is presented over the years. What is also surprising is that it depends on the point of view of the authors, which is proven perfectly by the example of Andromache. She is presented as an anti-ideal of a mother, as the fate of her husband and submission to men are more important. This in turn, however, makes her an ideal of a wife. This publication forces us to reflect on whether we can discuss a single ideal of a woman at all or whether it should be perceived through the prism of a role that a woman should play according to the society – ideal mother, ideal wife, ideal scholar, etc.

The second part, 'pars Latina', presents a model and an anti-model of a woman in the Roman cultural circle, which definitely differs from the Greek one, especially with respect to the position of women in a society. The division of the book into two parts is therefore suitable not only due to the literary aspect.

In the second part the reader can discover what the model of an ideal Roman woman was according to Cicero, which the article *Idealna Rzymianka według Marka Tulliusza Cyncerona. Między topiką a rzeczywistością* by Agnieszka Dziuba is dedicated to (pp. 209–217). Furthermore, it presents what friendship was in the circle of patrician women (*Starożytnie źródła*

o przyjaźni kobiet rzymskich, Adriana Grzelak-Krzymianowska, pp. 249–262), and how the image of a step-mother was presented in declamations (*Kobiety w rzymskich deklamacjach – postać macochy*, Magdalena Nowak, pp. 277–288). In a way similar to the first part, it presents a broad range of relations, in which the main role is played by women in a collective sense, and individual characteristics, e.g. Sempronia, whose portrayal is presented to the readers by Gregor Pebežin – *That Woman with the Spirit of a Man – Sallust’s Portrayal of Sempronia and Her Virtues* (pp. 219–232). These accounts show the life of women from the times of the Roman republic until the 5th century A.D., as a result of which they are a valuable source of knowledge on the transformations which occurred in the society in that period and therefore the role of a woman in the world at that time.

Based on the studies collected in the volume a reader can draw conclusions which will help him or her to indicate his or her own ideal of an antique woman. Of course, this book does not provide a specific recipe for a model of a woman, but owing to the multitude of the presented works and their heroines it brings forward the image of an ideal woman according to the quoted antique authors to the reader. Over the years emerged an idea of an ideal woman, especially with respect to a model mother and wife. This publication does not duplicate this restrictive pattern. Instead, it shows us that the frameworks of a stereotype could be more flexible. It should be emphasised that the authors present a literary-only image of a woman. This is particularly important, taking into account the fact that this image was created by men. The antique period is a time of a certain silence of women. The sources concerning them are a product of men, who speak on their behalf. This results in our perspective on women through the eyes of men. We are often dealing with descriptions created dozens of years later. Systematic dampening of the voices of ancient women not only manifested the prejudices against them, but it also reflected how underestimated their value was. A. Freisenbruch compared it metaphorically to ‘painting with a thick brush, superficially, with basic colours’. A woman presented in a distorting mirror of male rhetoric more often reveals more of a man’s imagination than of her true image. Presented in Greek and Roman literature, the ideal and anti-ideal of a woman is therefore one that was imagined by the men of that time. To some a model of a woman was the loyal and submissive Andromache, to others the intelligent and beautiful Sappho, whereas to some others the one leading ascetic life – Melania.

This book does not exhaust the subject of the ideal and the anti-ideal of a woman in Greek and Roman literature, but it is a good guide to this problem and introduces the reader to the issues related to the image of

a woman in historical works. It constitutes a perfect encouragement to further reflections on this matter.

Another advantage of this publication are its extensive, multilingual references. The publications it contains refer to the most recent achievements of the scholars of antiquity, juxtaposed with articles and monographs which constitute academic output which is already well known to the community.

The authors are researchers from different academic circles. It should be noted that the articles presented in the book were written both by recognised authorities in the field of classical philology, but also by young adepts, who as a result of this cooperation probably had an opportunity to broaden their methodology of research.

The only problem with the structure is the lack of consistency in the form of presentation of translated fragments of the quoted antique works. In some articles they are listed directly under the original text, in other cases they are provided in the annotations or are not available in the work at all. This is probably related to the form of the book (co-authored publication), but to a reader who is not a classical philologist, but is interested in the issue of image of women, it can be a hindrance. However, this does not disturb the reception in a way that would disqualify it.

To summarise, *Ideal i antyideal kobiety w literaturze greckiej i rzymskiej* is a noteworthy collection. It should be of interest not only to researchers of antiquity, not only to classical philologists, but also to historians, philologists, and culture experts associated with gender studies. This is one of the few publications in Polish which presents a literary portrayal of a woman from a broader perspective, presenting different profiles of women of the ancient times. Significantly, they are presented from different points of view, not limited to a single author, therefore a reader can confront different views of particular writers.

Particular articles, due to a different level of academic 'progression' are different in terms of reception. Some of them may remain in memory for a longer, other for a shorter period of time, depending on research interests. All of them, however, form a cohesive whole, forming a background for further reflections on the ideal of a woman in literature and the literary image of women over the ages.

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