
The Feminist Companion to the Bible. 10 Volumes. Ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1993–1995.

1. Song of Songs. ISBN 1-85075-291-5, pp. 288; 2. Genesis. ISBN ~420-9, pp. 404; 3. Ruth. ISBN ~421-7, pp. 220; 4. Judges. ISBN ~462-4, pp. 242; 5. Samuel and Kings. ISBN ~480-2, pp. 286; 6. Exodus to Deuteronomy. ISBN ~463-2, pp. 268; 7. Esther, Judith and Susanna. ISBN ~527-2, pp. 336; 8. The Latter Prophets. ISBN ~515-9, pp. 384; 9. Wisdom Literature. ISBN ~735-6, pp. 264. 10. The Hebrew Bible in the New Testament. ISBN ~754-2, pp. 384.

The Feminist Companion to the Bible series speaks to the long-felt need for feminist critique of the Bible. The fact that Brenner could put together ten volumes in two years is a testimony both to the accumulated murmurings of women's voices, now unmuffled in the discourse, and to the ongoing necessity for those voices to be heard. Not only does this collection of women's voices and perspectives represent the advances in feminist biblical criticism, but it will also provide those working in classrooms and churches with a much needed balance to the usual androcentric pedagogical resources.

In fact, pointing out traditional androcentric "phallacies" in biblical interpretation is one of three feminist "movements" to which Brenner points in her introduction to the series. She draws on the work of Jonathan Culler to speak about various types of feminist criticism. Culler classifies feminist criticism into three moments: one, a recognition of the relationship between women's culture and women's reading; two, the questioning of male readings and misreadings of texts (interpretive fallacies); and three, the exposure of androcentric and phallogocentric biases within the texts themselves. This collection engages all three of these types of feminist criticism rather well. Indeed, the various contributions in this collection are able to nuance these three types of criticism in a way that moves feminist biblical criticism from being simply another type of criticism, to being a very important productive force (apropos for feminism) in biblical studies.

These volumes are productive for women, and biblical studies discourse, in three ways. First, they open a place for women's readings, by taking women's culture seriously. By uncovering women's culture in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., Jonneke Bekkenkamp and Fokkeli van Dijk's "The Canon of the Old Testament and Women's Cultural Traditions," in *Song of Songs*; or Carol Meyers's "Returning Home: Ruth 1:8 and the Gendering of the Book of Ruth," in *Ruth*, which explores the social location of the woman with relation to the household), spaces for women's reading open up, prompted by the reverberating resonances of women's experiences in any age.

Second, these volumes go beyond pointing out androcentric biases to critique the very structures that produce androcentric texts and interpretations (see especially Pamela Milne's "The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture: The Implications of Structuralist Analyses for Feminist Hermeneutics," in *Genesis*; or Alice Keefe's "The Female Body, the Body Politic and the Land: A Sociopolitical Reading of

Hosea 1–2,” in *The Latter Prophets*, which suggests that the hypothesis of Canaan’s fertility cult is a result of the Western bias that equates women with nature and sexuality). These sorts of analyses, which cut away at the root of the androcentric problem, are essential to cultivating a new type of analysis.

Third, these volumes are immensely helpful in regaining a balance in the discourse by bringing women’s perspective to texts and giving women’s experience a voice (see the section on Social Status and Female Sexuality in *Exodus-Deuteronomy*, which treats the judicial texts from women’s perspective; or the volume on the Latter Prophets, which speaks out against violent and pornographic images in texts, considering the violence depicted in texts not as a just desert for lecherous women, but as a situation of oppression).

Finally, *The Feminist Companion* reclaims some of the ground lost to androcentric interpretations, by putting forward counter-interpretations which reveal the damage done to the feminine (see Adrien Janis Bledstein’s “Is Judges a Woman’s Satire on Men who Play God?” in *Judges*, which reconstructs some of the violence against women in Judges as a function of the outrageous genre of satire; or Tina Pippin’s “Jezebel Re-vamped,” in *Samuel and Kings*, which attempts to expose and reverse the damage done to Jezebel’s reputation, and to women identified with her).

While these volumes certainly provide valuable critique which opens up the biblical studies discourse, I cannot help wishing that they had opened just a little further to ideas of current feminist theory. For instance, I was surprised at the minimal amount of feminist theory utilized in the papers on Ruth (why not interact with lesbian theory?). Or, to take another example, why is there so little reference to current discussions on pornography in the parts dealing with pornography? It was surprising to find in the bibliography of this volume only one reference to Catherine MacKinnon (and an article in *Ms.* at that) who has written so much and been so influential in the debate on pornography. (Especially objectionable are Robert Carroll’s sweeping comments on pornography in “Desire under the Terebiths—On Pornographic Representation in the Prophets—A Response.” To be fair, he does footnote some current sources, but his comments are disturbing in that they dismiss pornography as an issue of particular feminist concern, largely because there is debate within feminism on the subject. He does not engage with specific theorists on the matter, but rather proposes his own view of what constitutes pornography in the biblical text.) Perhaps the next feminist series will be able to interact more thoroughly with feminist theory produced outside of biblical studies.

The volumes do, however, contain several essays that use current critical theory very effectively in service of feminist reading. As might be expected, the articles by Mieke Bal, reprinted in a number of the volumes, are sophisticated in their use of theory. Her work typically combines psychoanalysis (using the work of Freud and Lacan) with narratology to illuminate biblical texts, or interpretations of biblical texts (see especially “Myth a la lettre” in *Genesis*; or “Heroism and Proper Names” in *Ruth*). Similarly the essays by Jan Tarlin and Timothy Beal (“Toward a ‘Female’ Reading of the Elijah Cycle: Ideology and Gender in the Interpretation of 1 Kings 17–19, 21 and 2 Kings 1–2:1” in *Samuel and Kings*; and

"Tracing Esther's Beginnings" in *Esther, Judith and Susanna*) use theory as a way of illuminating texts. Tarlin builds on the work of Althusser, Lacan and Silvermann to show how the Elijah stories challenge the construction of readers as male 'subjects'. Beal uses Derrida's notion of erasure to show how the erasure marks, left by the removal of Vashti, point to the patriarchal order of the text, and expose "the limits and rupture-points in the order of patriarchal domination" (110) in the text. These sorts of readings are exciting and show that feminist biblical study is constantly growing in depth and scope.

The one volume in this series which I found disappointing is *Esther, Judith and Susanna*. While many of the papers in this volume are enjoyable (especially those that deal with gender differentiation, castration, and Holofernes's decapitation), I found the grouping of these three biblical women in one volume specifically problematic. Why these three? In Brenner's introduction to this volume, she lists several similarities between the three stories: all are relatively late, all depict Jewish women in a situation of foreign rule, all three texts make women visible. But then she goes on to compare them in terms of their ability to cause destruction, and their sexual behavior (they are all beautiful and in each case the story revolves in some way around their sexuality). But it seems strange that in a series of feminist writings, these women are grouped along traditional stereotypical/dualist lines (women as sexual beings; harbingers of death). Without some sort of exposition to justify this choice as one deliberately designed to highlight the androcentric biases in the three texts, it seems as though the volume supports the idea that groupings along traditional axes are normative.

Despite this oversight, it must be said that this collection is well organized, and user-friendly. The sections are clearly defined, and papers grouped accordingly. As well, each volume has an excellent bibliography (while one might wish for a little more current feminist theory, the biblical studies material is quite comprehensive) which compiles the references in the footnotes of the various papers. All in all, the *The Feminist Companion to the Bible* is a valuable resource for scholars, ministers, and students alike.

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Patriarchal Politics and Christoph Kress, 1484–1535, of Nuremberg. By Jonathan W. Zophy. *Studies in German Thought and History. Volume 14.* Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992. ISBN 0-7734-9605-X. Pp. 291.

A monograph that comes with a good working bibliography and a general index deserves a scholar's attention. Whether it sustains interest beyond that depends on the subject matter, the writing style, the accuracy of the material, and the validity of the analysis. Zophy's descriptive analysis of the city of Nuremberg viewed through the career of one of its prominent citizens during a period of fifty-one years, 1484–1535, has several features to commend itself to the student of