

that a festive dinner is served without wine. His opponents are *gourmets!* Indeed, Philo devotes an extraordinarily long digression to the subject of extravagant meals, which encourage license in all fields (*Cont.* 40-64). This must have been a topic of intense Jewish concern in Egypt, and Philo prides himself that the Israelite ancestor Joseph introduced the temperate kind of symposium to Egypt (*De Josepho* 201-6). I think, therefore, that we have every reason to assume that Alexandrian Jews were Philo's intended audience in his treatise on the *Therapeutae*. Unfortunately, the notion of a Roman audience resurfaces on numerous occasions in the book as an explanatory device. It is adduced, for example, to support the argument about the group's supposed antinomianism (137-8). Taylor herself asks how it is that Philo criticises the extreme allegorists for neglecting the law, while not doing so in the case of the *Therapeutae*. The reason, Taylor submits, is the different audience of each passage.

The lasting value of this book is twofold. It explores the status and activities of the *Therapeutrides* in more detail than earlier scholarship, thus reconstructing an important aspect of first-century Judaism. It also raises intriguing questions regarding the spreading of this phenomenon, which thus far cannot be answered with certainty. Beyond these issues related to women, the book is important because it reads one text of Philo against the grain and attempts to reconstruct a type of Judaism that differed in some significant respects from his own. This contributes to our understanding of the diversity of Alexandrian Judaism and may perhaps invite others to recover yet more forms of Judaism between the lines of Philo.

Maren Niehoff

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Shelly Matthews, *First Converts: Rich Pagan Women and the Rhetoric of Mission in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Contraversion: Jews and Other Differences). Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001. 164 pp. ISBN 0 8047 3592 1.

This thin book (the text covers exactly 100 pages) is the fruit of Shelly Matthews' PhD. It is not overly ambitious, as it does not aim to cover a complete topic and leave no stone unturned. Yet its small bulk is no reflection of its quality. Matthews has framed her topic and her sources very precisely, making a decision to deal with Judaism, very early Christianity, mission and gender. Her book stands at the crossroads of all these issues. It is innovative as it applies the theory of gender as a category of analysis to a topic that has been widely researched but never viewed from this angle. With the use of gender categories Matthews takes on single handedly the entire 'new consensus' (p. 3) among prominent scholars of Judaism (such as Shaye Cohen and Martin Goodman), which maintains that Jews did not actively seek to convert their pagan neighbors. She on the other hand maintains 'that Hellenistic Judaism engaged in religious apologetics and propaganda ... and that early Christian missionary activity should be considered an extension of something already occurring in Hellenistic Judaism' (pp. 3-4).

Her methodology works as follows: in every chapter she privileges a given text (or texts) and grounds it against a historical backdrop represented by other documents that highlight specific aspects of the text she has chosen. She then subjects her text to a rhetorical analysis, accounting for the historical *Sitz-im-Leben* that produced the arguments set out by the author of the text. She ends every chapter with an attempt to flesh out the historical reality behind the rhetorical composition because of the 'insight of feminist historians that contemporary movements of liberation require historical memory of the agency of subjected people ... women in the past produced, shaped and sustained social life in general, and ... the marginality of women and subjected men in historical narratives owes to "kyriocentric" processes of composition' (pp. 7-8). In other words, in order to justify her interest in real history, Matthew feels she needs to have recourse to contemporary political concerns. As a historian myself I find this a basic flaw in feminist thinking. Why is it

necessary for a feminist thinker more than it is for a non-feminist one to justify her interest in history? History has a very strong sustaining power of its own and it is about time that we gave it its due. This sentence is part of my own long-standing debate with feminist scholars and activists.

Matthews' book is divided into an introduction and four chapters. It is so evenly divided between a discussion of Judaism and Christianity that the second chapter ends exactly on page 50, exactly half way through the book. Judaism and mission is represented for Matthews by the writings of the historian Josephus, while Christianity and its mission is represented by an analysis of the New Testament Book of Acts. The pattern of choosing a text and analysing it is so central to Matthews' book that even the introduction is represented by a text, though not one taken from these two sources. This text is taken from Juvenal's sixth satire. It represents an old Jewish hag interpreting the law of Jerusalem to any customer for a price. Matthews asks, why a Jew and why a woman? She asks, even though the entire text is highly rhetorical, 'What historical situation inspires a misogynist satirist writing in Rome around the turn of the first century to devote a large portion of a catalogue on women's vices to ridiculing ... Judaism?' (p. 4). She concludes that there must have been some Jewish women missionaries in Rome, for otherwise Juvenal's joke would have been lost on his audience.

In Chapter 1 Matthews analyses Josephus' narrative about the events that led to the expulsion of Jews and Isis worshippers from Rome in 19 CE. She rightly recognizes that duped Roman matrons play a vital role in both events. Fulvia pays money to Jewish scoundrels, who take advantage of her sympathy towards Judaism, and Paulina, a devotee of Isis, is persuaded to sleep with her frustrated suitor in the guise of the Egyptian god Anubis. Matthews then shows how a female freedwoman, who turns out to be the real villain of the story, propels Paulina's downfall. Matthews places this narrative within the genre of seduction stories where gullible women are made to believe they are copulating with gods. Here she highlights the Hellenistic Alexander Romance in which Alexander's mother is tricked in a similar fashion. Next, in her rhetorical analysis Matthews shows how the use of these women by Josephus illustrates his belief that the Jews were unfairly expelled from Rome, because of the actions of men who do not legitimately represent Judaism. In contrast, it had been the entire Isis establishment that collaborated in duping Paulina. Furthermore, Judaism, according to Josephus, attracted the right sort of people – upper-class women – unlike the freed slave woman who participated in the Isis cult. This Matthews contrasts with the description of the same event found in Tacitus, who mentions no women but claims that many of the new adherents of Judaism were descended from slaves. She ends the chapter by claiming that historically 'this representation of the missionary religion ... of rich women serves as an apologetic device to deflect attention from persons of less eminent ranks who participated in Judaism ...' (p. 28).

Chapter 2 is devoted to explaining Josephus' emphasis on links between very prominent Roman women and the Jews. Matthews has put together an impressive catalogue of Roman imperial women of the Julio-Claudian dynasty who are represented by Josephus as supporting the Jewish cause, often against the will of their husbands. These include Livia, Antonia, Agrippina the Younger, Poppaea Sabina and Domitia. Since in the case of two of these women Josephus himself was the beneficiary of this condescension, it is likely that he is using his own experience as a rhetorical tool. Matthews' strong argument is somewhat weakened by her mention of other earlier cases of supposedly royal support of Judaism mentioned in Josephus, such as Pharaoh's daughter saving Moses. Matthews' wish to bolster her arguments has led her astray and into a minefield. She herself has to admit that her argument does not work in the case of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra. A closer look would have shown her that other cases also do not tally well with this pattern. Not just the famous Cleopatra VII, but Cleopatra III too was hostile to the Jews. Furthermore, Pharaoh's daughter is already portrayed in the Bible as Moses' saviour. Thus, Josephus here is hardly innovating. Yet, this criticism notwithstanding, Matthews is right in portraying this element in Josephus' story as an employment of the counter-rhetoric of noble women's beneficence in a

positive light. She argues that this portrayal reflects the real possibilities open to upper-class women to use their resources and influence for a variety of causes. An inscription from Samos, which claims that the privileges Augustus gave to that island were prompted by the intervention of his wife Livia, serves to illustrate the historical reality behind the texts.

In chapter 3 Matthews turns to Acts. Here she takes on the long-standing debate about 'god-fearers'. She chooses a middle ground between those who would have us believe that 'god-fearer' became a technical term describing gentiles sympathetic to Judaism who have not fully converted, and those who think they are nothing more than a rhetorical device in the Book of Acts. While she believes that epigraphic evidence amply proves the first position, she is indeed convinced that god-fearers in Acts are nothing more than rhetorical tools. Luke (the author of Acts) mentions 'high-standing women' coupled with men as the objects of Paul's missionary activity at least three times. Matthews rightly wonders why it is necessary for Luke to mention women at all in these instances, and why he emphasizes their noble status. She answers both questions by claiming that 'women were prominent among early Christian converts' and this 'is suggested by a variety of sources. Luke's appropriation of the topos of high-standing gentile women supporters is his desire to deflect attention from the numerous women of less reputable backgrounds affiliated with Christianity' (p. 71). Luke, according to Matthews, uses the same rhetorical devices employed by Josephus to mask a similar historical situation.

In a chiasmic mood Matthews ends her book with a story from Acts about the town of Philippi, reminiscent of Josephus' stories discussed in chapter 1. Here too a respectable woman, who converts to Christianity, is contrasted with a contemptible slave woman, who does not. Matthews nicely places the story of Lydia's conversion within the framework of Dionysiac missionary traditions. She shows how the worship of Dionysus was intrinsically tied to women and was not always viewed as promiscuous. Her examples include a fascinating reading of a famous text taken from Philo on the sect of the Therapeutai. Lydia's story she contrasts with the story of the possessed slave woman, who identifies Paul as a true servant of God. Luke downplays her prophetic character and, as Matthews shows, casts her in the mould of Apollo's Pythia, viewed negatively by Christian authors, rather than in the tradition of the (positive) biblical prophets and prophetesses. Again as in chapter 1, a positive woman is of high standing while a negative woman is a slave.

In her summation Matthews repeats her conjecture that women served as a rhetorical device for representing Jewish and early Christian missionary activity in antiquity. This fact, she argues, should not deter us from acknowledging 'the powerful roles of women as functionaries and innovators in missionary religions of antiquity'.

In sum, Matthews' book is beautifully written, easy to read and full of exciting historical and literary insights. It is an important contribution to the library of women's history in antiquity.

Tal Ilan

Freie Universität, Berlin

G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville (tr.), J.E. Taylor, R.L. Chapman III (eds.), *The Onomasticon by Eusebius of Caesarea: Palestine in the Fourth Century AD*. Jerusalem: Carta, 2003. 214 pp., 8 maps. ISBN 965 220 500 1.

Eusebius' Greek work, *On the names of the places in the Sacred Scriptures*, usually known as the *Onomasticon*, together with Jerome's Latin translation and revision, are vitally important documents for the study of the Holy Land in late antiquity. Writing some time around the turn of the fourth century (scholars disagree about the date), Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, lists alphabetically some hundreds of sites mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and rather fewer in the New Testament and gives their contemporary identifications. Late in the fourth century Jerome translated the work in Bethlehem, adding to it and updating it in the light of his own local knowledge, so we can