

RECENSIONS

Jessica M. Keady, *Vulnerability and Valour: A Gendered Analysis of Everyday Life in the Dead Sea Scrolls Communities* (Library of Second Temple Studies 91; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), pp. 204 + xi. £ 85.00. ISBN 978-0-5676-7224-7.

This book is based on Keady's doctoral thesis and demonstrates that the Qumran evidence on purification rules sheds light on the lives of ordinary men and women in the late Second Temple era. In Keady's analysis, which pays equal attention to both sexes, these ordinary people stand for "the non-elite members of the DSS communities" on whom "strict halakhic interpretations of purity rules" were imposed (p. 11). Rejecting systemic and abstract approaches to impurity, Keady promotes a dynamic notion of purity and highlights non-elite experiences. To achieve this goal, she draws on a range of methodological and theoretical frameworks, including masculinity studies and especially the idea of hegemonic masculinity as well as the notions of embodiment and spacial dynamics. In line with recent discussion, gender is regarded as performative and constantly changing in essence.

The book consists of seven chapters. Following the introduction, ch. 2 reviews previous research on (im)purity and gender from the discovery of the DSS to the present date. Although significant development has taken place with respect to both, Keady shows that it is time to bring the themes of gender and purity together. Ch. 3 offers theoretical discussion on masculinity, embodiment, and everyday life. Keady argues that a dynamic understanding of masculinity is relevant regarding (im)purity; theories of embodiment can illustrate functional and social bodies of both men and women, and everyday life is a worthy topic of study on its own. While addressing the latter, she employs Susie Scott's approach which concentrates on three aspects of everyday life: its mundane nature, repetitive routines, and the effect of breaking rituals. Keady proceeds to ask: How did purification laws influence people's daily life? What kinds of routines pertain to them? What about the social effect of breaking such social/religious laws? The rest of the chapters tackle these questions and integrate the theoretical discussion into the textual analysis of the DSS.

Ch. 4 explores constructions of ideal masculinity that are meant to serve as models for the men of the DSS communities. Concentrating on the literary

evidence of the Community Rule and the War Scroll, Keady teases out the vulnerability of the impure male in particular: the state of impurity can be seen as a loss of masculinity and ideal masculinity was inaccessible to the ordinary male. More specifically, Keady argues that “the inability to achieve a state of perfection alongside daily life left the male vulnerable to social situations and when impure his status would be unstable” (p. 78). Some differences between the selected primary sources are also traced: 1QS focuses on moral perfection, while 1QM stresses physical obedience. 1QS depicts the men as being ranked against each other, whereas 1QM implies the presence of women.

Ch. 5 addresses impure women from the viewpoint of embodiment and daily life, claiming that they were empowered and controlled in comparison with the impure men. This argument is built on the fact that the leaking of female bodies is anticipated while that of male bodies is more unpredictable and thus less controlled. Impurity was surely private and personal to both sexes, but it had more social effects on men who regularly took part in communal activities: impurity prevented a man from carrying out his normal functions, thus disrupting the daily life and creating a social collapse of some kind. This leads Keady to conclude that the state of impurity could reverse the expected gender roles, making the man more vulnerable than the woman, which gives a potentially neutralizing dimension to the male impurity.

Ch. 6 analyses the dynamics between impure men and women by focusing on spaces in the everyday life of the DSS communities. How are purity and impurity related to communal spaces? Based on her reading of the Temple Scroll, Keady considers mundane impurity to affect men’s daily life by restricting their spatial presence in their communities; although the spaces discussed in the text are imagined, they could have influenced the reality of spaces. The Rule of the Congregation, in turn, sheds light on “the micro-levels of communal life through education and life-cycles” (p. 177). Notably, it depicts both sexes as taking part in education, even if the focus eventually shifts to men. Finally, moving from texts to archaeology, Keady points out how physical and spatial isolation of impure people would have broken down daily routines.

The brief conclusion in ch. 7 recapitulates the book’s aim to grasp the dynamic nature of both gender and purity in the DSS. Keady indeed offers a fresh voice to the discussion, managing to show that men’s position can potentially be more vulnerable than that of impure women. While the chosen focus on embodiment and the everyday is very welcome, I would have enjoyed reading more methodological reflection on the study of lived religion in the context of ancient Judaism, a dead religion of some kind, considering the recent publications on lived religion in religious studies (esp. Robert Orsi), biblical studies (esp. Susan Niditch), and classical philology (esp. Jörg Rüpke). The discussion on gender could also have been set in the broader cultural context of the Hellenistic East (yet see Keady’s brief remarks on Greco-Roman ideals on pp. 82–84). Finally, the fair amount of metatext makes the book slightly repetitive at times, while the analyses of the primary sources could perhaps have been more detailed. Nevertheless, Keady succeeds to communicate a stimulating perspective that hopefully shapes and reorients the study of the DSS.

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