

Rebecca S. Hancock, *Esther and the Politics of Negotiation: Public and Private Spaces and the Figure of the Female Royal Counselor*. Emerging Scholars Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press (www.fortresspress.com), 2013. Pages, 159. Paper, \$49.00.

Hancock's investigation of the story of Esther sets out to fashion a new paradigm for examining the social phenomenon of gender in the ancient world. Along with issues of power, she sees the gender issue as intertwined with questions of occupation, family identity, and marital partner. This is a study of social history in which the author employs literary and historical sources. While she draws on feminist scholarship, she does not limit her inquiry to standard gender presuppositions or patterns that, she maintains, can obscure significant ancient political realities. She successfully challenges the claim that men always control public space while women are relegated to private space. She also shows that while Esther might not be the rule, she certainly is not the unique exception. This is a very readable and enjoyable book.