
**Wives and Chamberpots**

Here's a good book. Cole (C) really knows her variously interlinked subjects well, and has planned the suite of themes meticulously. She writes crisp and on the button, with minimal allowance for rumination. (The book ends abruptly, without formal or other conclusion. The reader could wish she had chanced her arm and taken that opportunity to lay out the methodological lessons she'd draw from the results of her own procedures over against others,' both in the genealogy of scholarship and in terms of trends in the field. An eight-page Glossary of Greek Terms ... could easily have been sacrificed.)

C's terrain ranges over Greek texts from the corpora of Hesiod, Homeric Hymns and Hippocrates, through the sets of Greek tragedy (esp. *Septem*, *Oedipus Rex* and *At Colonus*, *Ion* and *I.T.*), to topographic heirlooms from Pausanias' pilgrimage; but its particular forte is the archaeological, and above all the epigraphic, store of data on the *habitus* and praxis of Greek collective life in classical times. (Greece here is largely the time-free anthropological construct of the grand tradition of social-psychological Hellenophilia; and Greece here is to all intents and purposes mainland and Aegean Hellas, while the communities concerned are conceived as 'classic' versions of the polis). The agenda is symbological in orientation, so that the messy sinks and stained pans of the Greek sanctuary and scullery are not deployed so as to fragment and differentiate 'the Greek Experience' so often passed off as homogeneity by (literary-historical) teachers of 'high' culture; rather, noticeboards and *ex voto* junk are deftly woven into a series of expositions of socially cohesive institutions and their apparatus of axiological-deontological naturalization. (We are to read rules, glosses, imaginative dramatizations, and
provocative presentations as so many activations, consolidations, reifications; contestation, dispute, parody are not to count, it seems, as part of the Ancient Greek Experience; the collective here precisely does not include systemic critique, adaptation and adjustment, or even revisionary rumination from within: to prove the rule, 'If we look beyond [Heraklitos' (sic)] scorn, we can see the logic of the practice he despises' (140: see below, ad calcem). This 'imaginary' Hellas was, and is, decidedly tribal—where self-contradictions will turn out to be 'apparent'—and you know it all makes sense because ... it must. If in doubt, squirt a piglet.)

C works convincingly through the mental gymnastics and corporeal palaver that effected 'Claiming a Homeland', worked into shape 'Ritual Space', and cemented a townsfolk by 'Inventing the Center'. She guides us around pollution and purification, where perirrhanterion and prytaneion governed protocol, with visits to colourful Colophon and Thracian Thasos, a cameo for Athenian bouphony, and stop-overs down on Delos and up at Delphi. These compact chapters on the propriative animation of spatiality land us in a hydrological propriety, with sanctified boundaries, in the forcefield of radiated authority. But the book has in its sights the stamping ground of a chosen hero-cult: as an offering to Jack Winkler, C's olim envisaged epigraphically-fuelled 'Article on gender and Greek ritual practice' homes on its expanded target of 'a project about the body [with the dummy-] title Watery Bodies', delivering on the excitement generated by a brainstorming session back in the late 1980s; presumably on the traditional back of the envelope, certainly over ritual 'paper plate piled high with [semiotic] French fries ... dipped into ketchup' (ix). So this Body Criticism volume really kicks in with chapters 4 and 5, 'The Ritual Body' and 'The Plague of Infertility', where C carefully plots out the gender-lines of power apportioned through the variously intersecting and mutually defined arenas of ritual performance that shaped life and lives, and brings out the logic that foregathered fertility and family, blood and childbirth, corpses and ordure, and swept them together into an anti-empire of culpability, shame, and (this bit is me) subordinated segregation. No, C doesn't do emotive qualifiers—rather, she
manages to write powerfully without them—when bringing out, for example, the assignment of social (in)audibility through the (dis)qualification of gendered oath behaviour and language.

Because C’s excursions to Dodona, Epidauros, Hermai, and eventually Brauron expose the ‘cool’ cultural conspiracy to exorcise ‘Women, dogs, and flies’, her Greek Experience can—must—work outside ‘hot’ history, listening and searching hard for the noise and off-scourings that manifest deep-structure / long-duration orchestration of social space. Ultimately, she takes us off hunting (with) Artemis—taking to pieces the ‘Landscapes of Artemis’ before finally pulling them together and ‘Domesticating Artemis’ (sc. where she does all the domesticating that needs doing, even if this involves effeminating her and hers). It is not clear why Artemis should count as ‘a test case’ (5), but I guess C just means that she has reserved her studies of Demeter (and, let’s hope, other female principles besides) for follow-up vindication of the whole expanded field. At present, the tour of Artemis’ remote cult centres away at the mountain passes or, if in the city, then pegged to boundary-crossing, to mobilization and to metropolis, leaves us with vivid tableaux of the life-cycle according to Greek culture, hung on the chances of placation by women bidding for healthy babies, children, girls, brides, and wives (all the woman-hours and hopes stacked up in those heaps of textile dedications, empire of the epinetron)—leaves us, that is, only too successfully secluded from the rest of the structural power blocs competing for prevalence in the city stakes.

Now C’s text features the special attraction of epigraphy: Colophon extending its walls; Thasos keeping its streets clean, clear, and efficiently accessing the town centre and Cos keeping its priestesses at it keeping themselves clean; men peppering Dodona’s oracle with their myriad infertility agonies and women piling at Brauron all their dresses and coverlets, belts, cloaks, tunics, headgear, veils, shawls; at Miletus, hoarded treasure of old, useless, frayèd, worn out, garments symbolic of continuing success in managing to be born and to give birth. (Besides a dozen more less magnificent but still telling inscriptions, and hundreds decked in the 1200+
footnotes.) But hey this is a body book about Landscapes which has 3 preliminary maps but not one single solitary illustration. (Text can’t do ‘A recently published relief from a sanctuary of Artemis at Echinos, illustrates ... The new relief shows ...’, p. 213—published, that is, in everyone’s vademecum, MDAI[A] ...) And look this is a book, too, about Greek habitation of Social and Ritual Space which not only shows us no Greek (key terms are all efficiently transliterated and, as noticed, duly glossed) but gives us not one photograph, or even a squeeze, of inscriptionality, though we all know nothing can touch the physical materiality of writing on stone, inset in wall or proud on its plaque, for affectively communicating the Experience of Ancient Greece, and Susan Cole is a rare expert. I expect teachers of Classics to find her a trusty friend, guaranteed to earth symbolic theory securely in material culture (and vice versa), minus the usual frills and blah. But how I wish she had allowed herself, and been allowed, to show us the gear, the wear, and the tear, in this gendered bodyscape. We have so many dire texts that are stunningly illustrated: the jacket’s wonderful Ernst only rubs mud on mud (139).

John Henderson
King’s College, Cambridge