

BOOK REVIEW

Houses of Ill Repute: The Archaeology of Brothels, Houses, and Taverns in the Greek World. Edited by ALLISON GLAZEBROOK and BARBARA TSAKIRGIS Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Pp. viii + 256. Hardcover, \$69.95. ISBN 978-0-8122-4756-5.

This aptly titled collection joins a growing body of literature exploring ancient Greek houses and their associated patterns of social and economic activity, to which one of the editors (Barbara Tsakirgis) and several of the authors (Bradley Ault, Kathleen Lynch and Monika Trümper) have made significant contributions. The editors make the connection explicit in their Introduction. Their goal is articulated as “tackling ... the problem of the identification of private buildings ... through the examination of artifactual assemblages, architectural design, and facilities such as water sources, with a focus on such issues as determining what amount and types of pottery represent a domestic structure versus a non-domestic space such as a tavern or a brothel” (6).

The chapters are indeed nicely focused on this theme, and the challenge of differentiating between domestic and non-domestic contexts is prominent. Tsakirgis lays the foundation, asking (Chapter 1) “What is a House?”, a question which leads her to explore in more detail previous approaches both to Greek housing and (selectively) a wider body of theoretical literature. One issue which could fruitfully have been addressed more directly here is how terms such as ‘public’ and ‘domestic’ should be understood in ancient Greek contexts, where workshops and other facilities are routinely combined with living accommodation. This is important because definitions imposed by modern researchers must govern the results of any attempt to discriminate between them through archaeology or iconography. Referencing such a discussion would have placed some of the later chapters on a firmer footing. For example, Amy Smith (Chapter 7) usefully surveys rare vase paintings depicting architectural space, asking ‘Inside or outside/private or public?’ (167). Initially proposing that such images offer ‘illustrations of home and work life in ancient Athens’ (143) she concludes more cautiously that ‘real life is not shown on ancient Greek vases’ (168). There must, however, be some relationship between the real and iconographic worlds, to enable the viewer to ascribe

meaning to the latter. A key problem is that an individual image may lend itself to multiple interpretations. For example, several of Smith's vessels depict columns: these could indicate any of a range of contexts from the exterior of a civic building such as a stoa, to a domestic interior (most probably the *pastas*, especially where several columns are shown).

The remaining chapters problematize the archaeological identification of contexts associated with prostitution. Most discuss structures traditionally assigned this role in the scholarly literature. A key example is Building Z from the Kerameikos, referred to by several contributors and the focus of Ault's contribution (Chapter 4). Ault challenges the excavators' interpretation that in its first two phases this was a private house, presenting strong arguments for its use as a brothel in each of the first three phases. In a second case-study (Chapter 5), Trümper explores potential locations for prostitution in Hellenistic Delos. Convincingly dismissing previously identified examples, she singles out instead the Granite Palaestra and the warehouses, helpfully invoking a set of general criteria for detecting prostitution spaces, derived from the work of Roman scholars. David Scahill (Chapter 6), also discusses monumental architecture. Picking up a thread running through several chapters which associate prostitution with spaces used for dining and alcohol consumption, he supports Broneer's interpretation of the dining spaces of the South Stoa at Corinth as also fulfilling this role.

Chapters 2 and 3, by Lynch and Mark Lawall respectively, focus on artefacts, rather than architecture, to ask whether it is possible "... to distinguish a brothel or tavern on the basis of its ceramic assemblage alone" (36). Lynch explores factors governing the use and discard of household- and tablewares, comparing percentages of vessels with different forms and functions from her work on Well 2:4 in the Athenian Agora, with those from several other Attic deposits, including Building Z. While intriguing discrepancies emerge between them in almost every functional category, a range of formation processes make these difficult to interpret, as Lynch recognizes. In addition, there is a danger in invoking *a priori* assumptions about the function of each building (house, tavern or brothel), which might lead to circular arguments. This potential for circularity is highlighted by Lawall, who asks whether the number and fragmentation of transport amphoras, as well as inscriptions on them, may help distinguish between domestic, commercial and brothel assemblages. Again, case-studies highlight interesting patterns, but few generalizations are possible. Despite the interpretative difficulties, these two chapters represent a highlight of the volume, offering a new approach which begins to

characterize different combinations and ranges of activities through systematic study and quantification of ceramic data.

Allison Glazebrook's final chapter (8) "Is there An Archaeology of Prostitution?" draws together archaeological, textual and ethnographic sources to develop expectations about how brothels might be characterized through their material remains. The interpretations of her archaeological examples might have been tested more independently against those expectations, and she might have taken more account of the other contributions (for example addressing Trümper's concerns about the identification of the House of the Lake at Delos). Glazebrook's conclusion echoes those of the volume's other contributors that "It is ... naïve to expect the identification of spaces of prostitution in the Greek world to be an easy matter or to find a unique building type for the brothel." (196). In the end, then, there is no single feature which can be used as an index of prostitution: rather, such activity has to be inferred from as wide a range of evidence as possible. Such conclusions are not a weakness, but rather an acknowledgement of the complex challenge posed by interpreting archaeological data-sets. The value of this volume therefore lies in the questions and discussion points it raises for students and scholars interested in ancient housing and prostitution.

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