BOOK REVIEW

Rome, Pollution and Propriety: Dirt, Disease and Hygiene in the Eternal City from Antiquity to Modernity. Edited by MARK BRADLEY with KENNETH STOW. British School at Rome Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xx + 320. Hardcover, $103.00. ISBN 978-1-107-01443-5.

Emerging from a 2007 conference at the British School at Rome, this volume was conceived as a tribute to Mary Douglas, whose 1966 study *Purity and Danger* remains one of the most useful and frequently cited works of anthropological theory. Douglas died just a month before her scheduled appearance as the conference's keynote speaker. Many of the papers in this collection include a personal tribute to her along with acknowledgment of her influential theory of pollution as "matter out of place." Those who study history's greatest city must inevitably confront its ceaseless negotiation with filth.

What this volume omits intrigues me as much as what it contains. Carlin Barton, John Bodel, Val Curtis, Pamela Long, Caroline Goodson, Katy Cubitt, and Richard Wrigley, among others, delivered papers that did not see publication. Eccentrically, the resulting volume comprises sections on the ancient and modern city, but not the medieval city, though the conference covered the historical gamut. All scholarly proceedings go under the knife before publication, but this degree of excision seems extreme.

Fortunately most of the published essays are interesting and original. Several of the best (e.g., Katherine Rinne on the remaking of Rome during the Counter Reformation and Dominic Janes on Victorian Protestants in the Catacombs) occupy the latter half of the book dealing with modernity, but readers of this journal will turn more readily to the six essays on ancient Rome. The first two are rather slight and suffer a good deal of overlap. Jack Lennon and Elaine Fantham both lament the lack of a study of Roman constructions of pollution on the order of Robert Parker's *Miasma* (1983), which examines the concept in Greek society. Lennon's essay briefly surveys the categories of religious pollution in Roman society by cause—birth, death, sex, and blood—and the means by which purity was ritually maintained or restored. Fantham focuses on Ovid's *Fasti* and other texts of the Roman canon, analyzing the usage of certain Latin terms associated

with contamination and cleanliness. She notes that *polluere* is used rarely, and only with religious reference; and that the purifying rite of *lustratio* is mostly a preemptive, not a corrective, measure. Uncharacteristically of Fantham's work, the article is somewhat inconclusive and haphazard.

Penelope Davies seeks to account for the manifest changes in emphasis on sanitation and cleanliness over the five-century history of Republican Rome. Beginning with the Cloaca Maxima, and continuing with the early aqueducts and the paving of major streets, Rome was ahead of all ancient cities in engineering the control of disease, dirt, and waste. Yet the city outgrew these amenities; by the late Republic, after long neglect through civil war, as well as an officially sanctioned mistrust of large, personally sponsored building projects—a mistrust codified in an elaborate system of checks and balances—its problems with public health were again acute. Suddenly, from Pompey onward, Rome experienced dramatic improvements. Large, parklike gardens were introduced. Caesar's *Lex Iulia municipalis* reflects an unprecedented interest in magistracies devoted to urban maintenance. Agrippa cleaned the city's sewers, built new aqueducts, and introduced the first *thermae;* Augustus lavishly supplemented his work. Davies' narrative suggests, without declaring outright, that the "kingly" aspect of euergetism, the very thing the Roman establishment feared the most, and that would decisively mark the Republic's demise, was precisely what accounted for wholesale improvements in urban sanitation.

John Hopkins takes a revealing look at the Cloaca Maxima as both a practical urban feature and as an object of religious interest. Drawing on recent archaeological investigations as well as his own observations, he forcefully defends Louise Adams Holland's celebrated proposition that, even long after it was vaulted and disappeared underground, the Cloaca remained a strong sacred presence in the city due to its origins as an open stream whose waters were used in purifying rituals, and the crossing of which required special rites. Mark Bradley's article moves west to the Capitoline Hill. This he regards as a microcosm of the antipodal Roman moral universe, encompassing the "high"—the Capitolium, purest of the pure—and the "low"—the Carcer, Tarpeian Rock, and Gemonian Steps, where the foulest criminals and traitors were punished. Understandably, he seems more interested in literary accounts of the bloody punishments, laced with fetishistic cruelty and language of downward movement, than in the lofty language describing the Capitolium.

Celia Schultz concludes the ancient section with an analysis of the prescribed punishment of unchaste Vestals, burial alive in the *Campus sceleratus.* This

is not sacrifice, or simple execution, as others have argued. Guardians and symbols of the city's purity, Vestal Virgins held a sacred place even if they had sinned, and thus they all merited intramural burial. But the punishment was also a kind of decontamination, not unlike the burial of polluted cult materials. Unchaste Vestals were tainted goods, unworthy to be sacrificial offerings to any god. In fact their crimes were deemed so threatening to the city that human sacrifices *were* offered in expiation, in the form of live burials of Gauls or Greeks. Though rough-hewn in places, the article convinces utterly.

This book continues a laudable trend to regard Rome as a diachronic and decidedly urban organism constantly interacting with its inhabitants, not just an inert stage for events, policies, and personalities.

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