

Mark Bradley, ed., *Rome, Pollution and Propriety: Dirt, Disease and Hygiene in the Eternal City from Antiquity to Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xx, 320, ill. 36, maps 3. ISBN: 978-1-107-01443-5.

The influence of Mary Douglas's (1921-2007) seminal anthropological text *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Conceptions of Pollution and Taboo* (1966) has been both wide and longstanding, and seen in many recent publications that have considered notions of pollution, dirt, waste or disease: from Valerio Valeri's *The Forest of Taboos* (1999) to Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox's *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination* (2007). Meanwhile, Douglas's ideas have reached an audience outside the academy through major exhibitions such as the Wellcome Collection's 2007 show *Dirt: The Filthy Reality of Everyday Life* and this year's *Ruin Lust* exhibition at Tate Britain. As Mark Bradley, the editor of this new collection, makes clear, Douglas's influence is felt throughout the book's fifteen chapters. Indeed, the 2007 conference in Rome which informed the papers in the volume was to feature Douglas as the keynote speaker, but she sadly died one month before she was due to present there.

Douglas's definition of dirt as 'matter out of place' was groundbreaking because, coming as it did in the mid-1960s, it shifted notions of purity and pollution away from objective definitions to the social order and cultural systems that establish those definitions. What this book does is to chart the implications of Douglas's conceptualization of dirt in one city - Rome - across an enormous span of history: in broadly chronological order, nearly two thousand years from the history of the city during the Roman Republic to the Fascist period of the 1920s and 1930s. Such temporal breadth has undoubtedly presented a great challenge to the editor and contributing authors (and this is discussed in Bradley and Kenneth Stow's introduction, 1-10), but it has resulted in a volume of work that is unmatched in relation to any given city (for example, London or Paris have yet to see a work of similar ambition). It has also brought together a host of issues in relation to dirt of which Douglas would have been proud: as Judith Goldstein states in her final chapter, 'the aesthetic and the sanitary, the political and the religious, the personal and the public, the moral and the immoral, the legal and the criminal' (263).

The book is divided into two very distinct sections: Part I, 'Antiquity', includes seven chapters on ancient Rome; Part II, 'Modernity', another seven chapters on the city from the fifteenth century to the present day. The glaring omissions in this chronology - late antiquity, the origins of Christianity, and the entire medieval period - are acknowledged in Bradley and Stow's introduction as being the result of much recent work from these perspectives; yet, the temporal gap between the two sections is probably the book's greatest weakness, as it heightens what are clearly quite distinct methodological approaches adopted in the two parts of the book. Thus, the first seven chapters on ancient Rome are methodologically (and temporally) very consistent. Jack Lennon's contribution, 'Pollution, religion, and society in the Roman world' establishes a broad overview of the close connection between pollution and religion in Rome after antiquity, while Elaine Fantham's chapter follows with a focus on how pollution was dealt with in the city (namely, by hiding it). Penelope Davies offers a more focused contribution on the sanitary development of Rome during the period of the Republic, such as the building of new sewers, public gardens, burial sites, and bathing facilities;

while John Hopkins narrows in on that most iconic of ancient Rome's structures, the Cloaca Maxima, exploring its hitherto unacknowledged sacred connotations. Finally Bradley and Celia Schultz provide two chapters on the relationship between pollution and punishment, focusing respectively on the the treatment of Rome's criminals on the Capitoline Hill, and the live burial of unchaste Vestal Virgins.

Taken together, these first seven chapters provide a very detailed and thoroughly-researched picture of what dirt and pollution meant in ancient Rome; yet, I think they fall short of what Bradley presents in the first chapter, 'Approaches to Pollution and Propriety', as the book's ambition to explore the subject in an interdisciplinary context and in direct relation to Douglas's work. In many of these early chapters, Douglas's formulation of dirt is invoked merely as a prelude to largely descriptive analysis, much of which remains firmly rooted in the disciplinary boundaries - and scholarly conversations - between classics and archaeology. Although informative and rigorous, this analysis could have been deepened and broadened to critically engage with Douglas's work. For Douglas's famous maxim - that dirt is 'matter out of place', or a cultural product - leads to an awareness of dirt as a multivalent subject that should then be critically engaged with the ideologies that produce single readings of pollution. That said, the first seven chapters taken together bring to light the richness of the subject of dirt, pollution and the urban in antiquity, particularly Hopkins's reading of the great Rome sewer - the Cloaca Maxima - as a simultaneously profane and sacred space.

The second half of the book is far more successful in taking up the book's interdisciplinary intent and extrapolating Douglas's work, whether seen in: Alessio Assonitis's chapter on Savonarola's fiery rhetoric of pollution against the Church in the fifteenth century; David Gentilcore and Kenneth Stow's respective chapters exploring the critical theme of the effect of disease (bubonic plague) on politics and urban planning in the seventeenth century; Katherine Rinne's analysis of papal efforts to improve sanitation in Counter-Reformation Rome by reform of the city's water supply; and two chapters on visitors' responses to decay and dirt in nineteenth-century Rome, whether its crumbling ruins and slums (Taina Syrjämaa) or its early-Christian catacombs (Dominic Janes). All these chapters highlight the continuing relationship of programs of cleansing and purification in Rome to the city's longstanding associations with dirt and pollution and, unlike many of the earlier chapters, make significant efforts to cross-reference other essays in the volume, particularly those that deal with antiquity, which demonstrates the interdisciplinary intent flagged up by Bradley in the first chapter. They also bring out the often contradictory responses to decay and dirt in Rome in the modern period, thus undermining the ideologies of discourses that insist on only one reading.

The final two chapters provide a bridge to Rome today, considering how transgressive sexual behaviors also need to be analysed when thinking about the city's relationship to dirt and pollution. So, Martina Salvante focuses on a specific case-study from the Fascist era: namely, male prostitution, and its spatial consignment to the city's margins; while Judith L. Goldstein's short concluding chapter assesses the enduring significance of Douglas's approach to pollution by charting the role of dirt and cleanliness in modern Italian crime fiction, particularly novels that deal with the Mafia. Her final clarion call for historians to find the 'grammar' of the system which constructs the distinctions between dirt and cleanliness (263) neatly sums up the ambition of this

collection of essays - one that I would wholeheartedly embrace but which I feel has only been partially realised in this book.

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