

Allison Glazebrook and Barbara Tsakirgis, eds. *Houses of Ill Repute: The Archaeology of Brothels, Houses, and Taverns in the Greek World*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Pp. viii, 256. ISBN: 978-0-8122-4756-5. Hardback. \$69.95

Houses of Ill Repute is a welcome addition to the growing shelf of books on prostitution in the ancient world. Drawing primarily on material evidence, the book offers the first comprehensive assessment of the structures associated with commercial sex and of the methodological complexities involved in distinguishing them from domestic space in ancient Greece. What emerges is a dynamic urban landscape in which commercial and domestic activities intermingled and buildings were continually reshaped and repurposed. All eight chapters are meticulously researched and carefully argued, and build on each other to create a coherent whole, beginning with the definition of the house and ending with the archaeology of the brothel. The intervening chapters offer a range of perspectives on the organization of space, from ceramic assemblages, amphora disposal, and vase painting, to the architecture of large-scale buildings. Thoughtful editing has resulted in a collection of essays that reads more like a single-author book in the scope and shape of its argument.

The volume begins with a chapter by Barbara Tsakirgis that addresses the question, “what is a house?” Although a large number of houses from the Classical and Hellenistic periods have been excavated, there is still much debate about what constitutes domestic space. Identification depends on many factors, including location, date, and socio-economic factors. Examination of domestic assemblages in combination with literary references sheds further light on the house as a social entity. Given the flexibility of space—artisans might reside in their workshops and commercial enterprises might operate in homes (including prostitution!)—it is practically impossible to distinguish houses from other structures.

In the second chapter, Kathleen Lynch takes up the question of whether a brothel can be identified on the basis of ceramic assemblages alone. Using as a case study a refuse deposit in a defunct well near the Athenian Agora (J 2:4), she hypothesizes that domestic assemblages differ from those of brothels, but not in the ways one might imagine. Nearly fifty percent of the well deposit is comprised of equipment related to drinking, demonstrating the importance of sympotic activity to the Greek household. Conversely, the lack of a large number of transport amphora or vessels with commercial marks differentiates the space from shops or taverns. Although Lynch concludes it is not possible to identify a brothel from this type of assemblage, taken into consideration with other factors, it could provide useful evidence for identifying context.

The third chapter by Mark Lawall offers an analysis of patterns of debris in the form of amphora discard to see if they might differentiate private and commercial buildings. Noting the methodological difficulties posed by the various uses and reuses

of amphora, he argues that those with commercial graffiti may indicate a non-domestic context. Households, in contrast, tended to generate far fewer and less substantial fragments. Although the “amphora imprint” of a structure cannot determine its use, it might complement other aspects of the physical record to identify the activities that took place within it.

Bradley Ault in Chapter 4 reexamines the question of the function of famous Building Z in the Athenian Kerameikos, long considered a brothel. His essay provides an accessible, updated summary of Building Z based on the recently published excavation report. Like the excavators, Ault believes some of its features indicate a private residence, even though it is twice the size of an average house. He further argues for a continuity of function based on large amounts of fine ware pottery for consumption of food and wine, loom weights, votive deposits, and jewelry. These objects indicate that the building had a multiplicity of functions from residential to commercial during all of its phases, including dining, drinking, and prostitution. A useful inventory of objects catalogued by room is appended to the chapter.

Chapter 5 by Monika Trümpner moves outside of classical Athens to consider the identification of taverns and brothels in Hellenistic Delos. While the *taberna vinaria* can be positively identified as a place for the sale and consumption of wine, the so-called House of the Lake cannot be interpreted as a purpose-built brothel. Indeed, if the criteria used to identify it as such were applied to all known houses in Delos, 76% would be considered brothels. Instead, multi-use buildings, such as the warehouses on the coast, could have been used by many people, including sex-workers.

In Chapter 6, David Scahill considers the South Stoa at Corinth and its use in the Hellenistic period. Side-stepping the issue of sacred prostitution, he examines the archaeological and architectural evidence to understand the building’s function. In his view, the Stoa was a public building with no commercial dimension, perhaps used for dining and entertaining officials. The presence of multiple wells may indicate purification associated with cult activity, possibly associated with Dionysus and Aphrodite. Although the building shows some of the characteristics typical of a brothel, it probably did not function as one.

Amy Smith in Chapter 7 turns to black and red figure Athenian pottery from 550 to 350 BCE for evidence of non-public interior space. Non-public interior settings may be indicated by objects hanging on an imagined wall or by architectural features such as columns, doors, and windows. Since much of the Greek house consisted of exterior space in the form of porticos and courtyards, however, outdoor scenes may not always represent a public space. Painters exploited the ambiguities inherent in these images to create a range of meanings, with the result that there are no consistent markers of domestic contexts.

In the last chapter, Allison Glazebrook draws on the conclusions of the earlier chapters to construct an archaeology of prostitution. Acknowledging that occupants rather than physical space largely defined a brothel and that all Athenian buildings

served a variety of purposes, she surveys the literary and material sources for non-domestic structures in which women engaged in sex for pay. Typical components of such an establishment include architectural features such as multiple *androns* and entrances; proximity to a port, agora or city-gate; a large number of small rooms; drinking and dining equipment; and personal items associated with women.

Houses of Ill Repute points to the multiple types of evidence and methodologies that can and should be brought to bear on our understanding of the organization of urban space in ancient Greece. More importantly, it dismantles the traditional notion that public and private spheres were clearly demarcated by demonstrating from a variety of viewpoints the interpenetration of activities and spaces in the urban environment. The editors are to be commended for producing what will soon become a standard work for scholars of ancient prostitution, Athenian social history, and the spatial layout of the city.

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