

Women, Gender, and Religion

Edited by Susan Calef and Ronald A. Simkins

To Kneel or Not to Kneel

Gendered Nonverbal Behavior in Greek Ritual

Christina A. Clark, Creighton University

Introduction

[1] Classical Greek culture was strongly marked by gender segregation. Generally, the public sphere was associated with men, the domestic, with women. This segregation arises from Greek ideas about the human body and the biological differences between males and females. Although women's bodies and voices were strictly controlled or semi-secluded in most areas of ancient Greek public life, women did have important public roles in one area: religious ritual. While women worshipped both male and female divinities and acted as priestesses in cult even as men acted as priests, performing many of the same activities, Greek ideas about the body affected ritual aspects of nonverbal behavior, especially regarding clothing, voice, and gesture.

[2] Both men and women participated in ancient rituals, aimed at communicating with the gods and achieving other practical goals. Such participation included actions and other forms of nonverbal behavior that communicate meaning without words. Categories of nonverbal behavior pertaining to ritual include gesture, posture, paralanguage (vocal qualities such as pitch and volume), proxemics (the human perception and use of space), significant objects (clothing), and object adaptors (objects used to indicate condition, such as gender, and status, such as priest or priestess). The way in which we use our bodies "speaks" for us; the

objects that we put on them also communicate, especially in terms of gender and social status (for theoretical background, see Bourdieu; on specific behaviors, see Eibl-Eibesfeldt; Knapp and Hall). The importance of significant objects is well-illustrated in our recent presidential race, in which the media contrasted the designer clothing of vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin with Michelle Obama's "J. Crew ensemble" in terms of what messages these outfits sent about the identities and values of the presidential candidates, campaigns, and parties. From infancy, people learn to use their bodies inside their own cultural and socio-economic contexts and to interpret the bodily behavior of others. Nonverbal behaviors convey ideologies of status, gender, ethnicity, and culture. Society shapes particular perceptions and dispositions of the body, which is constructed "in the image of society and a microcosm of the universe" (Bell: 94). These constructions are perceived by individuals as "natural," or as arising from sources of power and order beyond the immediate community, such as gods or tradition.¹

[3] Ritual, a form of social *praxis* and "a strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations," is involved closely with "the objectification and legitimation of an ordering of power" assumed to be both natural and true (the way things really are) (Bell: 170). Feminist scholarship in particular has focused on gender as a fundamental condition of human experience, and as an analytic category for investigating the relationship of the body to identity, language, and power. In ritualized activity, the body is inscribed with social values and so becomes empowered as a cultural actor. For example, in ancient Greek maiden songs performed as ritual dance-events, adolescent girls were made aware of themselves as erotic objects of spectators' gazes (Clark; on Greek maiden choruses, see Calame). Their ritual performance "reinforce[d] their perception of themselves as gendered bodies and accustom[ed] them to accept as natural a male-defined code of gender relations" (Skinner: 75). Thus, ritualization is not merely a passive display of values, but rather is itself an act of production of a ritualized agent, who in turn acts within society (Bell: 96-100). The body is a vehicle for the social construction of reality (see Cooley).

Greek Ideas about the Body: Mythic and Medical

[4] In the Greek tradition, mortal men and mortal women were created at different times and for different purposes, and indeed are different races of humans. From Hesiod's epic poems *Theogony* (570-616) and *Works and Days* (54-105) we learn about the creation of the *genos gynaikeion*, or the race of women. In brief, the god Zeus had the first woman, Pandora, created as a weapon in his contest against the Titan Prometheus. Molded from earth into the likeness of an erotically beautiful young girl, gifted by the gods with clothing, jewelry, and intangible characteristics, crafted "to be a sorrow to men who eat bread" (82), Pandora designedly had a treacherous nature. Before this time, mortal men "had been living on earth free from all evils, free from laborious work, and free from all wearying sicknesses" (90-92). Pandora completed her mission by releasing from a pithos, or storage jar, a host of sicknesses and plagues. Now the world as we know it began: divine and mortal realms were

¹ Bell sees ritualization as "blind" to how it reorders and reinterprets to create a sense of congruence among body, community, and cosmos (109-11, 192). Ideology, a component of ritualized activity, in Bell's view is best understood "as a strategy of power, a process whereby certain social practices or institutions are depicted to be 'natural' and 'right.'"

separated more strongly, life grew hard, and human sexual reproduction came into being. With the birth of children, the cycle of human mortality began as well. This myth links women to birth and death, basic elements of the human condition (and thus is comparable to the biblical myth of Eve).

[5] Froma Zeitlin has argued that the pithos is a metaphor for Pandora herself, whose body would generate new human life capable not only of achieving good but also of wreaking havoc. At first an empty vessel, Pandora was ready to be filled in pregnancy. In ancient Greece, “the analogy of a woman to a container permeates everyday customs, rituals, and myths” (Reeder: 195) and appears in material culture as well, in artifacts such as Bronze Age Cycladic nipples ewers (as seen in the Athens Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 877) and Classical jars shaped as female heads (such as the *oinochoe* in St. Petersburg’s State Hermitage Museum, inv. no. b 2103).

[6] Greek medical writers differ in their ideas about male and female bodies. The Hippocratic school presented men and women as separate species (what we might call a “two sex” model), whereas Aristotle considered women imperfect or defective men in what has been termed a “one sex” model (Laqueur: 8). While men’s bodies were hot, dry, and compact, women’s bodies were cool, moist, and spongy (Dean-Jones: chap. 1). Further, women’s bodies, being more porous than men’s, were thought to be more open to outside influences. Thus, women lacked the firm control of bodily boundaries that men had. Women changed shape during pregnancy, and they leaked: blood, tears, and emotion. “Since woman does not bound herself, she must be bounded. This is achieved by organization of her space, prescription of her gestures, ordering of her rituals, imposition of headgear, attendants, and other trappings” (Carson 1990: 156). “Women are pollutable, polluted, and polluting in several ways at once. . . They are intimate with formlessness and the unbounded in their alliance with the wet, the wild, and raw nature. They are, as individuals, comparatively formless themselves, without firm control of personal boundaries . . .” (Carson 1990: 158-59). The Greeks thought that women were especially unable to control their sexuality and natural body processes and so affected the world around them, potentially “polluting” it. The Greek word for pollution, *miasma*, has the basic sense of “defilement” or “impairment of a thing’s integrity” (Parker 2005: 3). This belief in the natural propensity of females to pollute lies behind the sign the Athenian historian Phylarchos noted in a sanctuary of Kronos that read: “No women, dogs, or flies” (*FGrH* 81F33). Of course this does not mean that women had the same social value as dogs or flies, but rather shared with them the capacity to pollute.

[7] Greeks “were constantly involved . . . in a complex range of ritual activities at many different levels of civic organization” (Parker 2005: 379). In general, they worshipped in groups. Some ceremonies were segregated by sex, such as life-cycle rituals that prepared age cohorts for gender specific social roles. “Public rituals of war, athletics, and political life were restricted to adult males, and rituals of reproduction were limited to females” (Cole: 95). Women were given the responsibility of maintaining good relationships with the gods of fertility, so important for agriculture, animal husbandry, and the family (Lyons: 35). “Women’s ritual efforts were focused on reproduction and the health of the family” (Cole: 5). As Cole puts it, women “worshipped in the context of the family, for the sake of the family, or with the goal of reproducing the family. The asymmetrical relationships of family

life were therefore replicated in ritual situations, where even when females worshipped alongside their male relatives or husbands, they did not always share the same privileges or responsibilities” (such as shares of the distributed sacrificial meat, *kreanomia*) (98).

[8] Individuals participated in rituals in a variety of ways: handling sacred objects, walking in processions, dancing in choruses, eating sacrificial meat, or simply watching. Women’s status as polluted affected their participation in ritual. Female pollution was contained not so much in tangible products such as menstruation, but “in the intangible, in . . . female speech and in the feminine gaze. . . [M]uch of what is contained in the area of the female head [was] seen as inherently polluting. The mouth, eyes, ears, and hair [were] all seen as potentially disruptive and dangerous areas of female contamination” (Llewellyn-Jones: 262). This is because of the belief that women had hollow tubes (*bodoi*) that went through their bodies, one end at the mouth, and one at the genitals (see King: 28ff.). Therefore, the head and the genitals were directly connected and both had to be controlled by veils and clothing. The female gaze was dangerous to men and had a violent effect, as the archaic poet Alkman notes when he says that a woman’s gaze is more melting than sleep or death (fr. 3). Homer describes the power of women’s eyes, which emit desire that weakens men by “loosening their knees” in the same way that death does (*Il.* 5.16, 11.579, 15.332, 21.114, 22.335; *Od.* 18.212; see Llewellyn-Jones: 263).

[9] Women’s clothing concealed the body, and women’s veils came in a variety of forms to conceal the head to varying degrees. One of the most common veils was the *kredemnon*, which is built from the noun “head” (*karê*) and the verb “to bind” (*deô*) and literally means “head-binder” (Llewellyn-Jones: 28). This word was also used to denote city battlements (*Il.* 16.100) and bottle stoppers (*Od.* 3.392). Anne Carson notes that these three are all vessels of sorts, “whose contents are sealed against dirt and loss” (1999: 89). As such, the *kredemnon* both safeguards women’s chastity and protects men from the debilitating dangers and pollution of female sexuality.

[10] Women’s reproductive processes were considered polluting because birth was one of human life’s dangerous transitions. “Maintaining boundaries between humans and gods required separating those activities that defined the human condition – birth, sexual intercourse, and death – from sacred spaces” (Cole: 113; see also Parker 1983: 32-73, 84-85, 101-3). Thus, ritual purity requirements narrowed the range of female performance. Because women were naturally more permeable than men, they were thought to be less negatively affected by contact with boundary-crossing situations that caused those experiencing them, such as new mothers, corpses, and murderers, to be both polluted themselves and polluting to others (Cole: 105-6). Pollution surrounding birth and death is associated with the “intense early period of the gradual process of assimilating change” and restoring breached boundaries (Parker 1983: 52).

The Gender of Sound (Paralanguage: *ololyge, ololygmata*)

[11] Like their bodies as a whole, women’s voices were by nature different from men’s. “Aristotle tells us that the high-pitched voice of the female is one evidence of her evil disposition, for creatures who are brave or just (like lions, bulls, roosters and the human male) have large deep voices” (Carson 1994: 10). In keeping with the masculine virtue of *sophrosyne* (prudence and soundness of mind), men were expected to control their speech and

utterances. Women, lacking *sophrosyne* by nature and acquiring only a modicum of it through training, were especially suited to voice emotional cries (Carson 1994: 17). “For,” as the tragedian Euripides writes, “it is a woman’s inborn pleasure always to have her current emotions coming up to her mouth and out through her tongue” (*Andromache* 94-55, translation in Carson 1994: 18). Thus, while women in public were ideally silent, women’s voices played an important part in Greek ritual. For example, the way in which Greek men perceived the qualities of women’s voices contributed to the gendered paralanguage at the heart of animal sacrifice. During this central ritual of ancient religion, at the moment at which the priest with a sacrificial knife cut the throat of the victim, women uttered the high, piercing cry known as the *olobyge*, which the historian Herodotus thought had originated in Libya (4.189.3; see *Od.* 3.450; Eitrem: III.44-53, Burkert: 56; Dillon 242-43). The *olobyge* accompanies the throat-cutting at the “crucial moment of mediation between mortals and gods” (Goff: 42). Sometimes called a cry of joy or sorrow, Jan Bremmer instead describes it as “a cry at the moment that tension was broken” (136-37; see Garvie). The *olobyge* attracted divine attention and was also used to greet gods (such as Pan in Euripides’ *Med.* 1173). In a fragment of Euripides’ *Erechtheus* (351 N²), someone commands: “Raise the *olobyge*, women, so that the goddess will come as a helper to the city holding her golden Gorgon-shield” (Pulleyn’s translation, slightly modified). Women also used the cry when praying to divinities. In Book 6 of the *Iliad*, the Trojan women make an offering to Athena in hopes of stopping the terrible Diomedes and other Greeks in battle: “with an *olobyge*, they all held up their hands to Athena” (301). At *Odyssey* 4.767, Penelope prays to Athena: “thus having spoken, she *olobyge’d* and the goddess heard her prayer.” This ritual cry was also a common feature of women’s festivals (often held outside city limits), and part of daily life, uttered at the moment of children’s births (Theoc. 17.64; Carson 1994: 16-17; see also McClure: 52-53; Cole: 117–18). However, it also appears as a component of one important civic festival, the Panatheneia. During the *pannychis*, or all night festival, one heard *olobygmata* and the beat of feet on the windy hill as the maiden choruses performed the rite (Parker 2005: 257). Such “all nighters” were a form of festival activity in which women played the main parts as men watched, and are attested for at least eleven state festivals and two district festivals in Athens (Parker 2005: 166). While the cry is used in several contexts, what is striking about it, as Pulleyn notes, is that “it is a purely female thing” (180). In contrast, men made a different ritual noise in different contexts from women’s, mostly having to do with military or athletic situations. As Heliiodorus remarks, “Women cry *olobyge*, men cry *alalala*” (3.5; see McClure: 53-54).

Funeral Rites: Lamentations and Gestures

[12] Women’s ability to withstand polluting, liminal situations led them to take on the primary role in funeral ritual. In particular, by bridging the worlds of life and death, by preparing the body for burial and performing laments for the dead, women protected their male family members from death’s taint (Cole: 119; Johnston 1999: 101-2).² “The religious ceremonies of mourning and farewell to the dead were simple, probably the oldest and least

² Suter summarizes the many different functions that funeral ritual fulfilled, which include kinswomen’s performing the correct gendered behavior, regardless of their true emotions, and constructing their household’s public face during the ceremonies (5-9).

changing art-form in Greece” (Vermeule: 12). At the moment of death, when the *psyche*, or soul, left the body, the person became a “starting dead person” (*ton thanonta*). The process of death was not complete until the body had been washed and prepared, the *prothesis* or vigil wake performed, and the deposition of body or bones and ash had occurred. Only then would Hades accept the “completely dead” person (*ton tetbneiôta*) (Vermeule: 12). Women were in charge of the first two processes. After washing, anointing with oil, and dressing the body, women closed the eyes, bound shut the jaws with a chin strap, and straightened the limbs for display. During the wake, the female family members improvised a funeral lament called a *goös*, which the dead were thought to be able to hear (Alexiou: 11-13, 102-3, 225-26; Holst-Warhaft: 146-47; Vermeule: 14; Johnston 1999: 101; cf. Seremetakis: 116-20 for a modern Greek comparison). The woman who took the lead in singing the *goös* usually held the corpse’s head between her hands, as we see the goddess Thetis do to the hero Achilles when she foresaw his death in *Iliad* 18.71, and as Andromache does to dead Hektor in *Iliad* 24.714-76. Performed at wakes, which usually occurred at home in the Archaic and Classical periods, *gooi* expressed both the pain the women and other family members felt and the negative effect that the death would have on the living.³ These songs also could be used to rouse listeners to vengeance, such as the chorus of lamenting women does for Orestes (*Aes. Lib.* 306-475; see Johnston 1999: 101-2; Alexiou: 11-15; Holst-Warhaft: chap. 3; Seaford: chap. 3; Foley). We can see a good example of such lament in Homer’s *Iliad*, when the Trojans regain Hektor’s body for burial (24.714-76).

[13] There are many representations of wakes and processions to cemeteries on Greek pottery, from late Geometric vase-painting onward (see Oakley). In addition to performing *gooi*, female kin performed another type of gendered nonverbal behavior: mourning gestures. The women stand close around the corpse, with one holding the head while the others raise their hands over the corpse, tearing at their clothes, striking their heads, beating their breasts, tearing out their hair, and lacerating their cheeks until the blood ran, as Briseis (*Il.* 19.282-85) and the slave women (*Il.* 18.28-31) do for dead Patroklos (see Vermeule: 14, Garland: 141-42; Foley: 110-11; Stears). These gestures may begin before the funeral, in reaction to the death of a loved one. For example, when Andromache sees her husband Hektor’s body being dragged behind Achilles’ chariot (*Il.* 22.467-72),

. . . she tears from her head the various coverings that conceal her hair, including the *keredemnon* that had been given to her by the goddess Aphrodite on her wedding day. It is a vivid symbol of the intense grief she feels at her sudden loss . . . but it is more than just a conventional gesture of mourning; with the death of her husband Andromache is suddenly unprotected and is made by Homer for literary purposes to act out her downfall symbolically with the removal of her veil. She knows what lies ahead of her is the threat of sexual violation and slavery and the fearful prospect of becoming a concubine to one of her conquerors (Llewellyn-Jones: 130-31).

³ Sourvinou–Inwood connects funeral laments, which express people’s “involvement with the deceased, and their participation in his death,” to grave monument inscriptions which function as re-enactments “of the ritual behavior which had helped confer value on the deceased at the moment of his separation from the world of the living, confer value on his life” (177). The inscriptions validate the deceased’s memory.

In another example, the chorus of female slaves comes onstage in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* singing: "I came in haste out of the house to carry libations, hurt by the hard stroke of hands. My cheeks show bright, ripped in the bloody furrows of nails gashing the skin . . . And in my grief, with splitting weft of ragtorn linen across my heart's brave show of robes came sound of my hands' strokes in sorrows whence smiles are fled" (22-31).

[14] In wakes, men stand further back, away from the pollution of death, and maintain more rigidly formal postures, raising one arm in mourning gesture. Thus, men have an essentially optical relationship with the corpse and to the ceremony, whereas women have close spatial proximity as well as acoustic and tactile intimacy with the dead – they stay close to the dead, caress the dead, talk to the dead. Some scholars have interpreted women's gestures and paralanguage in this context as echoing the experience of death for the now silent corpse: in carrying out this ritual nonverbal behavior, women become corporeal texts, iconic representatives of the dead in the world of the living.⁴ This behavior, on the part of women, is transgressive also in that it breaks the gender constraints that characterize the world of the living: women's silence, modesty in dress, and bodily calm. In rural areas of modern Greece, mourning is still gendered female. Kinswomen mourn dead members of their family in much the same way as women did in ancient Greece – with improvised laments and gestures of grief (see Danforth; Holst-Warhaft; Sermetakis).

[15] In the Geometric and Archaic periods, the *ekphora*, or procession to the cemetery for burial, was a magnificent public affair, with the corpse displayed on a bier drawn by horses, followed by the kinswomen, professional mourners, and armed men. During the procession the women wailed and tore their clothing, but did not sing formal laments. Beginning in the sixth century, many city-states passed laws restricting or prohibiting these types of funeral rituals. The sheer number of such laws is proof of the rituals' social and political power, now considered harmful or offensive to the changing societies in which "controlled and rational behaviour has established itself as a vital ingredient of true masculinity" (van Wees: 45). Women's emotional cries and gestures were now felt to need control and confinement as much as possible to the domestic sphere. According to Plutarch (*Life of Solon* 12b), Solon's restrictive legislation in Athens arose as a direct result of a blood-feud between two clans, which arose when Megakles massacred Kylon and his co-conspirators, who, having failed in their attempted *coup d'état*, had taken refuge at one of Athens' most sacred altars. The families were still feuding some 30 years later, in Solon's time. Solon passed laws "forbidding everything disorderly and excessive in women's festivals, processions, and funeral rites." By doing so, Solon brought to an end the barbaric excesses for which women were held to be

⁴ Corbeill argues that in ancient Rome, because it was vital for men to maintain control (*imperium*) over themselves and others, women performed the expressive mourning actions and gestures. While men were charged with maintaining community continuity and family status, women were concerned with the fate of the individual corpse, "effecting the successful separation of the corpse from living society and directing it to its new phase of existence" (69-70). The Romans thought that women's bodies contained substances like milk and menstrual fluid that could be used to cure or harm. For example, one could guarantee immortality by feeding an adult at the breast. In funeral rituals, Roman women would make offerings of their milk and blood to the dead, to nourish them and to help them make the transition from life to afterlife. Corbeill notes that Roman funeral ritual inverts birth ritual. Therefore, the gestures of mourning women celebrate the life-giving and healing powers of the female body, rather than degrading them.

chiefly responsible. His legislation specified how many offerings could be left for the dead and how many female mourners could be present. He outlawed bewailing anyone except the corpse for whom the funeral was being held. Women were not allowed to walk about other people's graves unaccompanied. Any woman found guilty of breaking such laws was punished by the *gynaikonomoi*, officials who supervised women (*Life of Solon* 21; Dillon: 271-72). Demosthenes tells us (43.62) that under the new laws, wakes were to take place indoors – what had been an extravagant public ceremony was now to be a subdued, private affair getting as little attention as possible. At Delphi, they outlawed wailing in the procession – women now had to trail behind the corpse in silence. They were not allowed to stop the procession to wail at turnings of the road or in front of other people's houses (Sokolowski 1969: 77; Dillon: 274). In Gambreion, a city in Asia Minor near Pergamon, they outlawed the tearing of clothes (Sokolowski 1955: 16, Dareste no. 3; Dillon: 272-73).

[16] These restrictions began in the more advanced city-states where a new society was emerging. Of course, these laws were primarily aimed at the rich aristocracy. The restrictions on women show that their former prominence in such rituals was no longer considered desirable. The ban on their ritual practices implies that they could arouse dangerous emotions in people. Scholars see these restrictions as part of an attempt to break the power of aristocratic clan cults, and to replace them with state cults and hero cults, transferring loyalty from clans to the city-state (see Loraux). As the performers of funeral rites, women had control of something that in the Archaic period played a vital part in the religious and social life of the clan. Perhaps, in their roles as corporeal texts expressing verbally and nonverbally the experiences of the dead, they posed a social threat. In the inflammable atmosphere of blood feuds, women could stir up revenge killings by gathering in large numbers in the public cemeteries to lament their clan dead and call to mind previous atrocities. Although the act of revenge fell to the men, the women maintained the consciousness of the need for vengeance by constant lamentation and invocation of the dead at the tomb. They could build up a frenzy of emotion. At this time also the state removed the responsibility for punishment for homicide from the clan to the state. Only close family members were allowed to prosecute a homicide, the same members who could mourn under the new laws. Perhaps the state prohibited such public kin mourning not only to break aristocratic clan political power and subsume it into the *polis* structure, but also to take this form of cultural power away from women at a time when women's lives were being tightly restricted in a variety of ways. That said, the gender differentiation in which women played the leading role in death rituals, expressing grief emotionally and bodily, "has been a feature of Greek culture from Mycenaean to modern times" (van Wees: 19). The importance of this female ritual role may be reflected for us in the fact that one of the first preserved human figures "drawn in post-Mycenaean Greek art is a mourning woman" (van Wees: 19, referencing Coldstream: 21).

Gendered Posture: Kneeling

[17] In addition to the mourning gestures that represent the violence and disorder of death, there was another category of gesture that was gendered female: kneeling in prayer. A Greek, when praying, normally would stand upright with both hands raised above the head, palms facing upward and forward (*cheiras anateinein*). Indeed, they thought that all human beings did

so: “All human beings stretch out hands to the sky when making prayers” (Aristotle, *De mundo* 400^a 16-17; see Plut. *Phil.* and *Tit.* 2-3; Cole: 114).⁵ Plato asserts that if you preferred to raise only one hand in prayer, you would raise the right to pray to the Olympians and the left to pray to the chthonians (*Leg.* 717a). However, there is both monumental and literary evidence that in some situations, certain Greeks knelt in prayer, sometimes on their own behalf, most often on behalf of others (van Straten 1974: 177 n. 142). Van Straten shows that most, if not all, of kneeling worshippers are female, praying to deities whom they thought more closely concerned with human affairs – divinities considered as *sôtêres* (saviors) and *epêkooi* (listeners, those who give heed) such as Zeus, Demeter, Artemis, Herakles, and Asklepios. Van Straten argues that kneeling in close proximity to healing deities in the Classical period expresses not just submission and supplication but also a feeling of emotional closeness between these worshippers and gods. “In sickness, when the personal need for the gods is felt most poignantly, their nearness may be experienced most clearly” (1993: 258). Representations of this physical proximity and emotional closeness disappear in the Hellenistic period in which the relationship between humans and gods becomes more vertical, like that between an absolute monarch and subjects. Still, the number of reliefs with kneeling worshippers is small. Out of several hundred surviving Classical Attic votive reliefs, only twenty or so depict kneeling worshippers at all, and none shows a male kneeling before a god (van Straten 1974).⁶ The rarity of this gesture among males and its association with females is underscored by a vase-painting depicting Ajax kneeling and praying just before his suicide. This great hero, having been driven mad by Athena and in that effeminized state of having lost control of himself, committed acts that destroyed both his glory and his masculinity (Pulley: 190). In literature, the evidence is similar. In Greek tragedy, only women kneel, whereas in Greek comedy, only slaves do. Both kneel only when the situation is dire (Aesch. *Sept.* 111; Eur. *Alc.* 162–64; Aristophanes *Eq.* 30–31; see Cole, 116–17).

[18] There are, however, a few references in literature to kneeling men. The first appears in Xenophon’s *Anabasis*. Born in 430 BCE, Xenophon was an Athenian general who wrote this account of rescuing an army of Greek mercenaries in Asia Minor. At the sudden sound of a sneeze, a literally ominous occurrence, his entire army fell to their knees in fright to supplicate Zeus Soter (3.2.9). Given Telemachos’ portentous sneeze in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*, foretelling the imminent slaughter of the suitors, they were probably wise to do so! The second mention of a man kneeling in worship is Theophrastus’ account of the superstitious man (*deisidaimon*, *Char.* 16.5). Excessively anxious about ritual observance, he behaves more like a woman than a man, to judge by Polybios, who describes a kneeling man (*gonupetôn*) as acting like a woman (*gunaikisdomenos*, 3.2.15.7–8).

[19] Kneeling seems to be associated with *hiketeia*, or supplication, “in general reserved for urgent prayers . . . addressed to deities that were close to the common people, and who

⁵ Morris analyzes a cluster of Minoan gestures found in terracotta figurines from peak sanctuaries, which “all revolve around the general pattern of arm bent at the elbow and raised in front of the body.” Interpreting them as “gestures of worship,” Morris proposes that although we do not know exactly what they signify, “the different gestures depict purposeful ritual performances” (250).

⁶ In Roman prayer, conventions differed. People could appeal to the gods with outstretched hands, with hands raised to the lips, by kneeling, or even by lying prostrate (see Johnston 2004: 366–67).

could be trusted not to stand aloof, but to hear their invocations and come to their aid” (van Straten 1974: 184). Kneeling is a ritual act of last resort, pursued by those in victim positions, who fall down on their knees and grasp a divinity’s statue, if one is available (Alroth: 12-21). Kneeling is above all a sign of submission, appropriate for girls and women, inappropriate in most cases for free men. Women, children, slaves and foreigners supplicate in abundance in Greek culture; “no other religious practice . . . has so humble as well as diverse a cast of participants” (Naiden: 19).

Conclusion

[20] Robert Parker argues that Greek men and women related differently to the gods, that “women as a group appear to act on the gods more directly than men” (2005: 166, 270). For example, in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, women were able to appease “the angry goddess by their all-night devotions” (292-93). Women were expected to intercede with the gods on behalf of their families and their city-states because their permeable bodies were more open to the influence of the nonhuman. Female bodies, and especially wombs, symbolized “for Greek culture what is dark, unknown, and potentially dangerous,” making them best suited for “making contact, on behalf of men, with the unpredictable aspects of divinity” (Goff: 50; see also Padel 1983; 1992: 106-13). Women’s nonverbal behavior in ritual reflects these ideas: women uttered emotional shrieks to greet divinities, to get their attention, or to mark the important transition from life to death in animal sacrifice. In addition, women improvised laments in funerals to express grief and to appease the dead. Women’s bodies, associated with and polluted by the transitional events of birth and death, made them suitable agents for preparing corpses for burial, for representing the disorder of death on their bodies via mourning gestures, and for kneeling in submission to the gods to make their prayers on behalf of their families more powerful and effective. The polluting power of women’s bodies meant that they had to be tightly controlled, bounded both sartorially and spatially. Ideally contained within the domestic sphere and veiled when they emerged into the public sphere, women’s liminality allowed them special prominence in ritual even as it justified their marginal status “as only partial members of the human community” (Goff: 42; see Carson 1999: 89; Levine; Llewellyn-Jones).

Bibliography

Aeschylus

1953 *Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides*. Translated by Richard Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Alexiou, M.

2002 *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*. Second edition. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Alroth, B.

1992 “Changing Modes of Representation of Cult Images.” Pp. 9-46 in *The Iconography of Greek Cult in the Archaic and Classical Periods*. Edited by R. Hägg. Kernos Supplement 1. Athens and Liege: Université de Liège, Centre international d’étude de la religion grecque antique.

- Bell, C.
1992 *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blundell, S., editor
1998 *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*. New York: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P.
1990 *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bremmer, J.
2007 "Greek Normative Animal Sacrifice." Pp. 132-44 in *A Companion to Greek Religion*. Edited by Daniel Ogden. Malden: Wiley–Blackwell.
- Brown, S.
1997 "Ways of Seeing" Women in Antiquity: An Introduction to Feminism in Classical Archaeology and Ancient Art History." Pp. 12-42 in *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*. Edited by A. O. Koloski–Ostrow and C. L. Lyons. New York: Routledge.
- Burkert, W.
1985 *Greek Religion*. Translated by J. Raffan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Calame, C.
1997 *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Cameron, A., and A. Kuhrt, editors
1983 *Images of Women in Antiquity*. London: Routledge.
- Carson, A.
1990 "Putting Her in Her Place: Women, Dirt, and Desire." Pp. 135-69 in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*. Edited by D. Halperin, J. Winkler, and F. Zeitlin. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
1994 "The Gender of Sound." *Thamyris* 1: 10-31.
1999 "Dirt and Desire: The Phenomenology of Female Pollution in Antiquity." Pp. 77-100 in *Constructions of the Classical Body*. Edited by J. I. Porter. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Clark, C. A.
1996 "The Gendering of the Body in Alcman's *Partheneion* 1: Narrative, Sex, and Social Order in Archaic Sparta." *Helios* 23.2: 143-72.
- Coldstream, N.
1968 *Greek Geometric Pottery*. London: Methuen.
- Cole, S.
2004 *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cooley, P. M.
1994 *Religious Imagination and the Body: A Feminist Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Corbeill, A.
2004 *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Danforth, L.
1982 *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dareste, R., B. Haussoullier, T. Reinarch
1892-1904 *Recueil des inscriptions juridiques grecques 1–ii*. Paris: Leroux.
- Dean Jones, L.
1993 *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Deubner, L.
1941 *Olohyge und Verwandtes*. Abh. Preuss. Akad. Wiss. I. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.
- Dillon, M.
2002 *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion*. Malden: Routledge.
- Eibl-Eibesfeldt, I.
1975 *Ethology: The Biology of Behavior*. New York: Thomson Learning.
- Eitrem, S.
1919 *Beiträge zur griechischen Religionsgeschichte*. 3 Volumes. Kristiana: J. Dybwad.
- Foley, H.
1993 "The Politics of Tragic Lamentation." Pp. 101-43 in *Abstracts from Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis: Papers from the Greek Drama Conference, Nottingham 18–20 July 1990*. Edited by A. H. Sommerstein, S. Halliwell, J. Henderson, and B. Zimmerman. Bari: Levante Editori.
- Gaca, K.
2003 *The Making of Fornication*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Garland, R.
1985 *The Greek Way of Death*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Garvie, A. F.
1986 *Choephoroi/Aeschylus*, with an Introduction and Commentary. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goff, B.
2004 *Citizen Bacchae: Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hesiod
1991 *Hesiod*. Translated by Richard Lattimore. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Holst-Warhaft, G.
1992 *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature*. London: Routledge.

- Johnston, S. I.
1999 *The Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
2004 *Religions of the Ancient World: a Guide*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- King, H.
1998 *Hippocrates' Women. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*. London: Routledge.
- Knapp M., and J. Hall
1992 *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Lacqueur, T.
1990 *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Levine, M. M.
1995 "The Gendered Grammar of Ancient Mediterranean Hair." Pp. 76-130 in *Off With Her Head! The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*. Edited by H. Eilberg-Schwartz and W. Doniger. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Llewellyn-Jones, L.
2003 *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece*. Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales.
- Loraux, N.
1986 *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lyons, D.
2007 "The Scandal of Women's Ritual." Pp. 29-51 in *Finding Persephone: Women's Rituals in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Edited by M. Parca and A. Tzanetou. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- McClure, L.
1999 *Spoken Like A Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Morris, C.
2001 "The Language of Gesture in Minoan Religion." Pp. 245-51 in *POTNIA. Deities and Religion in the Aegean Bronze Age [Aegaeum 22]*. Edited by R. Laffineur and R. Hägg. Liège/Austin: Université de Liège, Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique.
- Naiden, F. S.
2006 *Ancient Supplication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Oakley, J. H.
2008 "Women in Athenian Ritual and Funerary Art." Pp. 334-41 in *Worshipping Women: Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens*. Edited by N. Kaltsas and A. Shapiro. New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA).
- Padel, R.
1983 "Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons." Pp. 3-19 in *Images of Women in Antiquity*. Edited by A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt. London: Routledge.
1992 *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Parker, R.
1983 *Miasma*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2005 *Polytheism and Society at Athens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pulley. S.
1997 *Prayer in Greek Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Reeder, E. D., editor
1995 *Pandora: Women in Ancient Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Seaford, R.
1994 *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seremetakis, C. N.
1991 *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Skinner, M. B.
2005 *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sokolowski, F.
1955 *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure*. Paris: E. De Boccard.
1969 *Lois sacrées des cités des grecques*. Paris: E. De Boccard.
- Sourvinou-Inwood, C.
1995 "Reading" *Greek Death*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stears, K.
1998 "Death Becomes Her: Gender and Athenian Death Ritual." Pp. 113-27 in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*. Edited by S. Blundell and M. Williamson. London: Routledge.
- Suter, A., editor
2008 *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- van Straten, F. T.
1974 "Did the Greeks Kneel before their Gods?" *Bulletin Antieke beschaving*: 159-89.

- 1993 "Images of Gods and Men in a Changing Society: Self-identity in Hellenistic Religion." Pp 248-65 in *Images and Ideologies: Self-definition in the Hellenistic World*. Edited by A. W. Bulloch, E. S. Gruen, A. A. Long, and A. Stewart. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- van Wees, H.
1998 "A Brief History of Tears: Gender Differentiation in Archaic Greece." Pp. 10-53 in *When Men Were Men*. Edited by L. Foxhall and J. Salmon. London: Routledge.
- Vermeule, E.
1979 *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- von Staden, H.
1992 "Women and Dirt." *Helios* 19: 7-30.
- Zeitlin, F.
1995 "The Economics of Hesiod's Pandora." Pp. 49-56 in *Pandora: Women in Ancient Greece*. Edited by E. D. Reeder. Princeton: Princeton University Press.