and artistic representations, Robb posits an evolving symbolic language that reflects asymmetries between male concepts of dominance, prestige, and violence, and female concepts of sexual desirability and beauty. Questioning such "tidy" and almost stereotypical conclusions, however, Robb proceeds to deconstruct his own inferences. One of the more theoretically sophisticated contributions in the volume, his chapter offers an excellent, if all too brief, discussion of the ambiguities and complexities scholars confront in extracting gender from the archaeological record.

Two authors, Larissa Bonfante and Beth Cohen, deal with perceptions and presentations of the female breast. The former contrasts the Greek aversion to portrayals of the breast with its frequency in Italic images. The latter focuses primarily on fifth-century depictions, determining when and how the female breast is exposed in Greek art. Cohen devises a fourfold typology that she combines with other lines of data to reinterpret the Barberini Suppliant as the wounded Cassandra. Cohen's analysis provides a good framework for understanding images that divest the female breast of clothes, their association with violated or victimized women, and the possible role of the viewer.

The paper that will undoubtedly spark the most controversy is that by John Younger, who challenges the reader to consider, once again, the Parthenon frieze. Younger's provocative chapter proposes that sexualized and homoerotic messages are broadcast by certain compositional figures. For example, he interprets the child holding the peplos as a young boy paired in a homoerotic relationship with the older, facing male. Similarly, the neighboring matron-maiden pair are understood as a kind of female corollary, though not necessarily with all of the sexual overtones. Younger's interpretations may strike a raw nerve with some readers precisely because he asks us to find eroticism in a monument that we have been trained to see as embodying civic, religious, and political—not sexual—meanings. While not all of Younger's arguments are equally convincing, I applaud his efforts to mesh the political with the sexual and to contemplate how sexuality and desire might have played out in this most emblematic of Greek buildings.

The relationships of power, sexuality, and desire are also underscored in Nanette Salomon's nuanced and perceptive paper on the Knidia. Salomon's feminist reading of Praxiteles' Aphrodite concentrates on the multivalence of the *pudica* gesture. As Salomon observes, "the hand that points also covers and that which covers also points" (204). Through a series of well-reasoned observations, Salomon situates the statue within a fourth-century political discourse, which she suggests effectively tried to legitimate sexual desire among males, control female eroticism, and endorse sexual shame among women.

The remaining chapters address various subjects. Both Francine Viret Bernal and Jane McIntosh Snyder identify specific mechanisms in Attic vase paintings that are employed to reinforce and regulate women's roles. Bernal concentrates on visual metaphors and double entendres that communicate Clytemnestra's—and by extension all women's—threat to Greek established order; Snyder considers the few extant images of Sappho that, through gesture and gaze, intentionally mute the poet's voice. Joan Reilly reinterprets the naked and limbless images on fifth- and fourth-century grave stelae and Aileen Ajootian traces the permutations of hermaphroditic portrayals as both powerful religious symbols and images intended to elicit a voyeuristic experience. The last chapter, by Koloski-Ostrow, draws upon feminist interpretations of visual pleasure in analyzing two Pompeian houses. She views the paintings and architecture of these spaces as intentionally "staged" to communicate control, domination, and the violence of power, all of which reinforce the authority of the *patronus*.

Although the contributors to *Naked Truths* are indeed peering into and illuminating darkened corners, the light cast is uneven. While it is almost unavoidable that a volume based on symposia papers will suffer from varying quality among chapters, I would have preferred greater overall consistency, more tightly constructed arguments, and more rigorous attempts to wed theoretical constructs to the archaeological evidence. Though not overly distracting, there are some errors in spelling and inconsistencies in transliterations. These criticisms aside, *Naked Truths* is a refreshing contribution to the field and invites readers to examine new and significant questions. The essays are all genuinely stimulating and as a collective body offer a thoroughly welcome and important addition to the regrettably small stack of books devoted exclusively to the topic of gender and material culture in the classical world.

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MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION: THE MATERIAL FOUNDATIONS, by *Daniel T. Potts*. Pp. xxi + 366, figs. 126, tables 16. Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1997. $62.50. ISBN 0-8014-3339-8.

This book presents a picture of Mesopotamian civilization radically different from the usual treatments of the subject, which concentrate on art, architecture, history, and literature. The first 120 pages contain an examination of such fundamentals as geomorphology, climate, demography, agricultural economics, and the availability and use of raw materials. Three chapters about watercraft, pottery production, and metal production follow, while the final third of the book discusses an odd assortment of not obviously related subjects, such as religion, kinship, burials, sealing practices, borrowings from the East, and the extent of Hellenization in Mesopotamia.

The geographical focus is southern Mesopotamia, and, although precedence is given to evidence from the third millennium B.C., the author has used information from all periods, and indeed some of the most interesting observations gathered in this book derive from the later periods. In the ingenuous preface and acknowledgments, Potts confesses that he had thought of calling the book *My Mesopotamia*, like Peter Ustinov's *My Russia*, and sets out his aim to make students of archaeology aware of the useful evidence about material culture contained in the rich

textual record for Mesopotamia. He had hoped the book "would read something like an ethnography of ancient Mesopotamia," but, as he himself admits, he "was not able to realise that hope" (vii). There is much to admire in this book. The appeal for a holistic approach to the study of ancient Mesopotamian culture exploiting all possible sources (including archaeological, textual, ethnographic, and scientific) is a worthy goal. This book is a stimulating read for specialists, but I have many reservations about the way it is written, the idiosyncratic nature of its content, and the quality of the information included.

Potts is a leading and prolific expert on the archaeology of the Arabian Gulf, and his monumental survey, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity* (Oxford 1990), despite its unusable bibliographical reference system, is the standard work on the subject. His knowledge and experience of Mesopotamian archaeology and of the cuneiform texts are not so well established, and this publication is his first substantial contribution to this field.

The book is neither an introduction nor a handbook. A reader cannot turn to it to find out specific information, and there is no attempt to guide the reader to further literature. Nor does it present a balanced picture of the current state of knowledge. For example, the differences between various varieties of wheat and barley are described and illustrated, but the vitally important date palm is treated very briefly. Equids and camels, which transformed the way of life of the inhabitants of the Near East, are hardly mentioned, but there is a detailed discussion of the less important mongoose. Shells and shellfish appear only in the context of their possible importation from the Harappan culture. Neither fish nor beer is included in the chapter on ancient Mesopotamian agriculture and diet.

Regrettably there are many omissions, inaccuracies, irrelevancies, inconsistencies, misleading references, disputed opinions, and inadequate illustrations in this book. There is not enough space in this review to draw attention to all the problems, but some brief remarks on the chapter on pottery production may alert the prospective reader to the danger of accepting the text as authoritative.

Potts decided to write this book in 1993 when he realized that his students at the University of Sydney were not aware of the German publication of two cuneiform texts recording the production of two state-owned pottery workshops during the Third Dynasty of Ur (Ur III). In these texts, the vessels are classified by function and by capacity. Potts recommends that archaeologists should adopt a similar form of classification, and should reconstruct a functional understanding of Mesopotamian ceramics. He does not recognize that most excavators of sites in Mesopotamia are struggling to deal with an incredible quantity of potsherds, whose function and capacity cannot be determined. The publication of such fragmentary material must be based on characteristics that can be recorded, such as fabric, shape, and decoration. Furthermore, archaeologists recognize pottery sherds as valuable indicators of date and of cultural affiliation, and the establishment of the geographical and chronological range of particular types and assemblages is therefore the prime aim of many pottery analyses.

Only in rare cases (apart from finds in graves) is it possible to restore complete vessels and to estimate the capacity of the vessels. It is surprising, therefore, that there is no reference to one of the few investigations of the function of a Mesopotamian pottery assemblage that did indeed classify the vessels by form and capacity (M. Roaf, "Social Organization and Social Activities at Tell Madhhur," in E.F. Henrickson and I. Thuesen eds., *Upon this Foundation: The Ubaid Reconsidered* [Copenhagen 1989] 91–146).

Potts fails to reconcile the evidence of the texts with that of excavated pottery. This is not only because there are real difficulties in identifying the names in the texts with the vessels found in excavation, but also because he is not a specialist in Ur III pottery and repeats the attributions made by Delougaz more than 40 years ago. More recent excavations at sites such as Nippur have shown that more than half of the pots illustrated in Potts's figures VI.17 and VI.18 do not belong in a typical Ur III assemblage. Even more surprising (given his emphasis on the importance of the capacity of vessels) is the way that Potts has photocopied the illustrations published by Delougaz at scales varying from 1:10 to 4:5, has reduced them to ca. 80%, and has reproduced them without any indication of size, so that a vessel 48 cm high appears smaller than one 7 cm high on the same figure (e.g., D556.640 and A545.360 on fig. VI.17).

Fortunately, W. Sallaberger has written a more detailed and more satisfactory discussion of the textual sources (*Der babylonische Töpfer und seine Gefässe nach Urkunden altsumerischer bis altbabylonischer Zeit sowie lexikalischen und literarischen Zeugnissen*, Ghent 1996), in which he gives plausible identifications of the ancient names of the most common Old Babylonian pottery vessels. The improved interpretations proposed by Sallaberger show how rapidly advances are being made in this field.

I would like to conclude this review by stressing the good qualities of this book. It contains a wealth of interesting information derived from wide reading in the field. There is a rich bibliography with about 1,500 entries. Even though much of the information is undigested and repeated without evaluation, discerning readers will be grateful to the author for bringing it to their attention. The way that he uses all types of data is a model to be followed by all archaeologists, especially those working in Mesopotamia, where the textual sources are so abundant and informative. Finally, it is always good to have a new approach to an old subject. There has been too little discussion of the nature of Mesopotamian archaeology and, as Potts has convincingly shown, the foundations have been too often ignored in favor of studies of monumental art and architecture. If this book redresses the balance and stimulates other scholars to carry out further research into the aspects that Potts has correctly identified as fundamental for the understanding of Mesopotamian civilization, its publication will have served a useful purpose.

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