

Jessica Hughes, *VOTIVE BODY PARTS IN GREEK AND ROMAN RELIGION*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xiv + 219, illus., map. ISBN 9781107157835 hb. £75.00.

We are always warned not to judge a book by its appearance, and this holds true for Jessica Hughes' outstanding monograph on votive body parts found in different regions of the Greek and Roman world, dating from the fifth century B.C. to the third century A.D. At first glance the book is slim and a quick flick through it reveals 74 images and four tables that seemingly detract from the written narrative. Nonetheless, this is deceptive. H. presents well-structured, clearly illustrated and detailed arguments through the employment of a unique comparative analysis, demonstrating the multivalent meanings votives held for those who used and viewed them. The study also adds to our awareness of how the body was understood in the past.

The text is structured chronologically and divided into case studies focusing on four different regions of the ancient world. This arrangement allows for a clear comparison of the materials. It also shows both how votive practices developed over time and how ideas about them changed according to different cultural perspectives. The monograph has four main chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion. The introduction provides a history of the analyses made about the artefacts, explaining that they were examined as art, evidence for medical conditions and as substitutions for sacrificial animals, for example. H. expands on this and introduces the notion of bodily fragmentation, a theme that runs throughout her work.

The first case study explores votive remains from fifth and fourth century B.C. Greek Asklepieia. The chapter begins with discussions about the objects' materiality and display in sanctuaries. Since the main interpretation of the artefacts is that they were used as either a request for or offerings of thanks for healing a particular part of the body, H also mentions how they symbolise interaction between deities and mortals. The focus of the chapter, however, considers the objects in relation to contemporary theories about the body found in medical texts, treatises on foetal development and artistic representations of piecemeal bodies. H maintains the medical concept of the *locus affectus*, indicating that the body was considered fragmented when ill, is represented in the offerings. Interestingly, she also finds that the votives are similar to images of *sparagmos*, or the dismemberment of the body in Dionysian rituals, and argues that the objects also represented the pain associated with illness and/or divine power over the mortal body. The chapter concludes with a discussion explaining how the fragmented body was believed to return to a state of wholeness when health was restored.

The third chapter explores votives found at sites in Italy, dating from the seventh to fourth centuries B.C. The Etrusco-Italic votives were found to be similar to the Greek ones seen at Corinth. Both sets were made of terracotta and represented a similar range of body parts, such as

eyes, arms and genitalia. A distinct difference is noted, however. The objects from Italy have a number of representations of the interior of the body, such as uteri, hearts and intestines. Although the votives appear to have been introduced by the Greeks, H asserts that the Italian objects likely represented animal and possibly even human sacrifice thought to have occurred in some of the sanctuaries. She convincingly argues that the absence of the polyvisceral representations in Greek sanctuaries related to Greek concepts of purity, thus informing us of different understandings of the body between the two geographical regions.

Moving away from the Mediterranean, votives from later Iron Age/early Roman period Gaul are studied in Chapter Four. H observes that the time of their appearance and their materiality are significant for how they were understood. They only appear in the region after Roman occupation, but were commonly made of wood and placed in springs, which are signs of earlier traditions being maintained. Heads were regular finds, and might have been symbolic of the Gallic practice of decapitating and displaying their enemies' heads on their horses. To H, the violence associated with the decapitations could also have been symbolic of the horrors of Roman warfare and colonization experienced by the indigenous population, which was then attached to these artefacts.

The fourth case study explores second/third century A.D. Lydian and Phrygian 'propitiatory' stelai. These artefacts provided H with the rare opportunity to explore images of fragmented body parts along with texts. The inscriptions usually have a set formula that includes an invocation to a deity, an account of the transgression, details of the punishment, a reference to the reparation of the offense and sometimes a testament to the greatness of the god. The associated images tend to depict either the transgressor praising the deity or the act that led to the punishment. Some of the images show parts of the human body, rather than people. H again found that there a multiple meanings associated with the images. In some cases they represent the ailing part of the body; whilst depictions of the eyes are argued to represent the divine watching mortal acts. Consideration is also given to the possibility that these remains represented a fragmented community: a damaging part would affect the whole.

By focusing on the theme of fragmentation, H has elucidated our awareness of the socially complex meanings these votives held. It is a fascinating study that makes significant insights about the body, ancient medicine and religion in the Greco-Roman world. This small book, therefore, has much to offer.

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