monstrably a separate metaphysical offering. Adoption of his externalist epistemology need not necessarily accept the additional argument, but such a demurral bears the burden of a general explanatory deficiency in accounting for proper function.

The book is marked by a generally respectful exchange of arguments, with ready allowance that one has at points perhaps or indeed misunderstood the other’s position. The clarifications do provide impetus for further discussion and appropriation of others’ insights. Within the compass of the analytic orientation taken by the essayists, this is an instructive and exemplary collection of reasoning about knowledge. It introduces the reader to implications in Plantinga’s perspective that can be readily pursued in examination of his other work recently and soon to be published. Both he and his critics, especially the editor, point out related questions and issues Plantinga has not treated that others could take up with profit.

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Mary Hancock’s rich and nuanced study is a provocative inquiry into the engendered universe of domesticity in South India. This work is marked by an informed and sensitive analysis of the construction of femininity as both centre and margin among the urban śmṛta brähmana community of Chennai. Hancock’s meticulous ethnography clearly reveals how the ideologies of “tradition” and “modernity” are re-produced, re-formed and re-inscribed on the body of the cumāṇkali, the auspicious married woman. For Hancock, the cumāṇkali, operating within the realm of the “everyday practice” of both public and private culture, negotiates and contests the gendered language of the bourgeois nationalist culture which urban smārta brähmanas have come to represent.

One of Hancock’s pivotal arguments revolves around understanding domesticity as practice. The Tamil notion of domesticity indicated by the terms illaram and ivākkai, denotes a “way of life” which accommodates ritual action. Tamil brähmana women’s domestic ritual actions (demarcated by specific spaces and behaviours) are “ways of doing things” not unlike the performance of similar actions in nonritual contexts. Drawing from the theoretical work of Bell, Foucault, Althusser, and Turner, Hancock argues that ritual is a locus for the exertion of hegemonic power, and that the study of ritual can reveal subjects as occupying and reproducing specific gender, class and status positions. Furthermore, as a centre of power, ritual is also a site for resistance. It creates subjects who are “both compliant and resistant.”
Hancock’s study images ritual as a complex aggregate of strategies which are located in the sociopolitical and historical domains of public culture. Public culture is centred in “the space between domestic life and projects of the nation-state as different social groups constitute and contest identities that are classed, gendered and nationalized.” The public-private dichotomy, Hancock argues, represents the domestic world as “a residue of the past, modernity’s Other”—a representation strikingly obvious in religious practice. Domestic ritual action is thus the context in which urban smṛta brāhmanas are clearly confronted by both the construed, often imagined “past,” and the “real” culture of modernity and progress.

This book is methodically divided into four parts. Part 1 is the Introduction, consisting of a Prologue “Making and Unmaking the Great Tradition,” and one chapter, “Tradition, Modernity and Their Gendered Places.” Part 2, called “Elite Cultures and Hybrid Modernities,” consists of two chapters. These focus on the privileged nature of smārta communities in urban Tamilnadu, not as communities which wield and exercise political power, but rather as “elite cultural brokers” in the realm of performing arts and religious institutions. Hancock designs a historical and sociopolitical framework for the understanding of smārta women in particular, and the representation of femininity among the community. Part 3, “The World in the Home,” also consisting of two chapters, introduces Hancock’s ethnographic data. Using a variety of sources, Hancock first describes normative Sanskritic samśkāras vis-à-vis the construction of femininity, then “theorizes ritual as a site for reproduction and resistance to hegemonic images of female subjectivity.” The next chapter in this section describes the ritual activities of a group of smārta women, centred on the worship of the non-brāhmaṇa goddess Karumāriyamman. The group’s activities focus on the few women in the group who act as mediums for the goddess, and give uttaravu (commands, orders, instructions) to others in the group. In the uttaravu, the goddess, embodied in the women, “re-invents” and re-orientates the notions of maṭi (ceremonial purity) and ṛitu (the polluting effects of menstruation or sexual intercourse). The highly personal narratives and experiences of these women show both compliance with and questioning of the normative Sanskrit images of womanhood.

Part 4, consisting of three chapters, considers the role of the state in the construction of religion in urban South India through its highly stratified administration of religious spaces and institutions. This section seeks to posit “the making of womanhood” not only in the domain of brāhmaṇa ritual, but in the larger arena of sociopolitical discourse. The increasing interpolation of the bureaucracy in matters of temple administration has led some women to seek out alternate spaces for worship, space which lie beyond the legal jurisdiction of the state. For example, one of Hancock’s informants, Rajalakshmi, an older woman and śrīvidyā adept (śrīvidyā is a religious system enjoining the tripartite Tantric worship of the goddess Tripurasundari as the geometric diagram called śrīcakra, the mantra, and the anthropomorphic image), transfigures her home into a public, though somewhat elitist, area of worship. Her “new space” hangs
between the domestic world of the family home and the exterior world of the temple (kōyil/kōvil). Rajalakshmi invents a space that eludes the state’s control and simultaneously allows limited (or controlled) public access. Her own act of opening up domestic space to a public comprised largely of other śnīvidyā adepts locates her within the “place” administered by the modern state, but that territory implicitly encompasses other seemingly invisible “spaces” made visible only by ritual action. In the last chapter of this section, Hancock shows the role played by Hindu nationalism in the creation of urban religious practice. By focusing on the now defunct socio-religious movement targeted toward smārtas called Jan Kalyāṇ, Hancock demonstrates how the distinctly feminine imagery of devotion and service to (“mother”) India, recurrently employed during the anti-colonial struggle, continues to be refracted through the bodies and imaginations of elite urban women.

Hancock’s analysis of the constructed images of ideal womanhood can easily be applied to forms of expression which lie outside the realm of religious ritual as well. For example, Hancock notes the transformations which occurred when, as part of an elite nationalist agenda, devadāsīs in Tamilnadu were demonized, and the form and technique of devadāsī dance was appropriated by upper-caste women. She notes that the re-invention of the devadāsī dance as the Sanskritic bharata nātyam is indicative of “women’s stakes and modes of participation” in the formation of nationhood and new “high culture.” Moreover, the body of the brāhmaṇa woman was again the site for a re-invention of “tradition” (while that of the devadāsī was reworked as Other) and dance training strangely became part of the moral and aesthetic etiquette of the upper-caste woman.

I see few limitations to this work. I believe Womanhood in the Making is certainly a theoretical requisite for anyone engaged in the study of female subjectivity in India. Hancock’s work is refreshingly original, comparable to few, if any studies of women and religion in modern India. This project is an invaluable contribution to the conscious re-visioning of the meanings and implications of women’s experience in the religious culture of South India.

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In this book, Bernard Faure provides the reader with a wealth of anecdotal and textual information concerning sexuality in Buddhist history. The book draws primarily on the Japanese tradition and secondarily on the Chinese tradition, although the Theravādin Vinaya is also discussed. Faure’s sections on Chinese and Japanese Buddhism are particularly entertaining, as they are replete with