

monstrably a separate metaphysical offering. Adoption of his externalist epistemology need not necessarily accept the additional argument, but such a demerit 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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*Womanhood in the Making: Domestic Ritual & Public Culture in Urban South India.* By Mary Hancock. Boulder: Westview Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8133-3583-3. Pp. xv+286.

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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 *smṛta brāhmaṇa* 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 *cumaṅkali*, the auspicious married woman. For Hancock, the *cumaṅkali*, 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 *smṛta brāhmaṇas* 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 *illaṛam* and *iṅḷkkai*, denotes a "way of life" which accommodates ritual action. Tamil *brāhmaṇa* 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 brāhmaṇas* 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 *smṛta* 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 *smṛta* 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 *saṃskāras* 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 *smṛta* 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-orientes the notions of *maṭi* (ceremonial purity) and *ñiṭṭu* (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 Sanskritic 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 Tripurasundarī 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 *śrīvidyā* 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 Kalyān, 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 nāṭyam* 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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*The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality.* By Bernard Faure. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-6910-5998-5. Pp. vi+338.

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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