

Is **this** a dirty body? [LIMC Orestes 11] We might expect dirt to be something visible, but it turns out to be hardly more visible than citizenship. When a mother says to a child, ‘You have got a dirty face, go and wash it’, it isn’t dirt that she is seeing. What she sees is usually chocolate. Were she to see blood, she would be very unlikely to react in that way. Lord Chesterfield’s much quoted and approved definition of dirt as ‘matter out of place’ is certainly no sufficient condition: much matter may be displaced without becoming dirty; only some matter in some displacements counts as dirt. But is it a necessary condition? Is it merely conventional that certain substances – say excrement – are reckoned dirty in all or almost all circumstances, whereas others, like chocolate, are only dirty in some circumstances?

If this is a puzzle over identifying what we can see as dirty, there is even more of a puzzle over metaphysical dirt. The injunction to ‘Wash your mouth out with soap!’ is occasioned not by the sight of chocolate but by ‘foul’ language. We regularly use this language of dirt of actions which produce no physical mark. Sometimes that language is more or less directly related to morality, as in links between promiscuity and dirty behaviour or talk of stains on people’s consciences. Quite often it is related to bodily substances. Blood is often reckoned to make someone dirty, whether it is menstrual blood or blood shed in death – ‘he has got blood on his hands’. Physical and metaphysical dirt are not separate but intertwined, and in both cases the classification as dirt is not straightforward. How do we tell that a body is dirty?

For the last forty years discussions of dirt have been dominated by a **single work** of anthropology, the late Mary Douglas’ book *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, published in 1966. It is Douglas who gave Lord Chesterfield’s definition of dirt new life. In a classic piece of structuralist analysis she insisted that:

Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements.¹

For Douglas ‘people really do think of their own social environment as consisting of other people joined or separated by lines which must be respected,’ and a person is polluted who ‘has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone’.² If some sorts of crossing generate pollution beliefs more regularly than others, the explanation is that social pressures are potentially more explosive in those areas.³

For the last twenty-five years discussions of dirt in classical Greece have been dominated by a **single work** of ancient history, Robert Parker’s *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*.⁴ Parker notes, against Douglas, that ‘not all pollutions can be seen as products of category violations’, and that in reckoning the newly born and the newly dead to be problematic ‘a disconcerting being has been declared a misfit by special manipulation of the classificatory process’. But when Parker goes on ‘The being is disconcerting not on logical, cognitive, or classificatory but on simple emotional grounds that it is hard to adjust to decisive change’ he fails to create significant clear water between himself and Douglas, who admits that areas subject to greater social pressure engender greater pollution concerns.⁵ Parker himself explicitly accepts Douglas’ association of fear of

¹ Douglas (1966) 35

² Douglas (1966) 138, 112.

³ Douglas (1966) 157: ‘Is there any reason why all these examples of the social system at war with itself are drawn from sexual relations? There are many other context in which we are led into contradictory behaviour by the normal canons of our culture. National income policy is one modern field in which this sort of analysis could easily be applied. Yes pollution fears do not seem to cluster round contradictions which do not involve sex. The answer may be that no other social pressures are potentially so explosive as those which constrain sexual relations.’

⁴ Parker (1983)

⁵ Parker (1983) 62.

pollution with the urge for order and control.⁶ The degree to which Parker works within the framework established by Douglas is clearly revealed in the title of his first chapter: ‘Purification: A Science of Division’.⁷

[Under the influence of both Douglas and Parker, Jan Bremmer, when he came to write his *Greece and Rome* New Survey of work on Greek Religion introduced the issue of purity and pollution in the following words:

An important consequence of overstepping or breaking existing cosmological, social, and political boundaries was the incurring of pollution. The vocabulary of pollution and purity together with its concomitant practices was most frequently used in Greek religion to indicate proper boundaries or categories not to be mixed... The employment of this particular vocabulary with the corresponding rites of purification can, in one way, be seen as an important Greek way of dealing with maintaining religious and social norms and values in times when the legal process was still underdeveloped.⁸

Just as Parker questions Douglas’ approach only to employ it, so also, in the most recent treatment of the subject, does Andreas Bendlin. Bendlin raises the objection that if social control is maintained through purity regulations, and purity regulations are a natural extension of social control, ‘one would need to assume that the purity regulations are regarded as natural categorizations by most and under all circumstances’; ‘is that really the case?’ he asks.⁹ But, leaving this as a rhetorical question, he immediately goes on to say that Douglas’ approach undoubtedly has heuristic value, and suggests that it helps us understand childbirth and death and the relationship of women to purity regulations.] It is time to think more radically about dirty bodies.

⁶ Parker (1983) 64

⁷ Cf. the last paragraph of that chapter: ‘It seemed useful... to begin with a way of looking that relates purification to the desire for order, and that treats it as a form of behaviour rather than as a product of an explicitly formulated set of ideas’ Parker (1983) 31.

⁸ Bremmer (1994) 5–6.

⁹ Bendlin (2007) 182.

It is essential to Douglas' construction of what it is that makes a thing polluted that pollution beliefs are consistent. If something falls between categories then it will be polluted. It is no accident that the examples which Douglas places in pole position, and which readers of Douglas remember most clearly, are the dietary rules of the Old Testament, discussed in her chapter 3, 'The Abominations of Leviticus'. Here the story is simple and appealing: some animals are anomalous between categories, their anomalous position leads to them being regarded as unholy or polluted, and since polluted they may not be eaten. End of story. As Valerio Valeri, in the most powerful critique of Douglas to date notes, on her account 'Holiness is taxonomy. The cult of God is a taxonomic cult... he certainly is a God of taxonomists, maybe even of a follower of Aristotle'.¹⁰

There are two sorts of problems with this taxonomic approach. First, pollution is rarely so simple a matter as in the flagging up of foods for avoidance. To incur pollution is in most cases not the end of the story, for purification is possible. Purification implies that pollution can be removed, but if pollution is a consequence of an action done, how can that action be undone? How can a categorical anomaly be rectified? Wouldn't purification have somehow to move the category boundaries? The second problem is that the taxonomic approach implies that the circumstances in which pollution occurs will be consistent across all who share the same categorical division – and so presumably normally all who share the same language. But what pollutes gets defined by societies in ways that defy categorical consistency. In real life pollution is restricted other than at category boundaries.

A law on funerals from the island of Keos, dated to the end of the fifth century B.C. illustrates both these points. This law lays down how funerals and subsequent rituals for the dead are to be conducted, and deals with purification and pollution. It **lays down** that, on the day after the burial:

¹⁰ Valeri (2000) 75.

a free person must sprinkle the house with sea water first and then wash it with water, having sprinkled it on the earth. When it has been sprinkled, the house is pure and one can make the sacrifices at the hearth.¹¹

How can sprinkling with water undo the pollution of the house? On a Douglasian view a corpse in a house is ‘matter out of place’. Houses are places for the living. But on this view the house should cease to be anomalous when the corpse has been taken away. Sprinkling with water will be neither necessary nor sufficient. Sprinkling bizarrely treats metaphysical dirt as if it is real dirt.

Later in the same law we find **regulation** of who exactly is polluted by the death:

Where someone dies, when the person has been carried out, women are not to go to the house other than those who are polluted. The mother, the wife, the sisters and the daughters are polluted, but in addition to these not more than five women, the children of daughters and cousins, but no one else.

It is not hard to see why pollution might be identified as limited to the immediate kin of the dead man, in whose world things have particularly been put out of place. But that there should be a numerical limit on the more distant kin polluted, regardless of their relationship either to the dead man or to his house, is hard to square with pollution being a matter of category.

The problem is not that categories have nothing to do with pollution, but that categories offer a way, but not the only way, of defining what has already been identified as problematic. [Valeri reads the Jewish dietary restrictions in just this way:

The classification of animals that is found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy is... a classification for the purposes of eating and touching. The rules for eating and touching animals are not a side effect, a mere application, of a taxonomic enterprise; they orient

¹¹ Sokolowski (1969) 97, translated in Arnaoutoglou (1998) no.109.

that enterprise because they are its end. The issue is not “given this classification, what should we not eat?” but “if we are to eat so as to reproduce our identity, what classification?”¹²

So too, I suggest,] with the Kean law, the question is not, ‘Given the purpose of houses what can we do about death?’ Nor is it, ‘Given the closeness of kinship, what can we do about these female relatives?’ It is rather, ‘Given that death upsets arrangements in regard to things and people who are closest to the dead person, whether physically or by kinship ties, and given that deaths happen, how are we to classify in order to minimise the turmoil death causes?’. To that question there is no need for a simple answer based on a single principle, pollution can be limited by kinship relation and by number. Categorical boundaries are associated with pollution because they are potentially part of the solution, not because they are the problem.¹³

Let me return to my opening question: how do we identify a dirty body? What made bodies dirty in ancient Greece? If one takes as one’s guide the ‘**Superstitious Man**’ from Theophrastus’ *Characters*, written in the latter part of the fourth century B.C. by Aristotle’s pupil who was born in Eresos on the island of Lesbos but lived much of his life in Athens, it appears that all sorts of things are polluting:

The Superstitious man is the kind who washes his hands in three springs, sprinkles himself with water from a temple font, puts a laurel leaf in his mouth, and then is ready for the day’s perambulations. If a weasel runs across his path he will not proceed on his journey until someone else has covered the ground or he has thrown three stones over the road. When he sees a snake in his home he invokes Sabazios if it is the red-brown one, and if it is the holy one he sets up a hero-shrine there and then... If a mouse

¹² Valeri (2000) 80

¹³ cf. Parker (1983) 121: ‘Pollution ... is not so much a rationalization as a vehicle through which social disruption is expressed.’

nibbles through a bag of barley he goes to the expounder of sacred law and asks what he should do; and if the answer is that he should give it to the tanner to sew up he disregards the advice and performs an apotropaic sacrifice. He is apt to purify his house frequently, claiming that he is haunted by Hekate. If owls < > while he is walking he becomes agitated and says ‘Athena is quite a power’ before going on. He refuses to step on a tombstone or go near a dead body or a woman in childbirth, saying that he cannot afford to risk pollution. On the fourth and the seventh of the month he orders his household to boil down some wine, then goes out and buys myrtle-wreaths, frankincense and cakes, and on his return spends the whole day garlanding the Hermaphrodites. When he has a dream he visits not only dream-analysts but also seers and bird-watchers to ask which god or goddess he should pray to... If ever he observes a man wreathed with garlic < > the offerings at the crossroads, he goes away and washes from head to toe, then calls for priestesses and tells them to purify him with a squill or a puppy. If he sees a madman or an epileptic he shudders and spits into his chest.¹⁴

Encounters with various animals in particular circumstances, with the dead, with birth, with dream visions, with men engaging in certain dubious practices or suffering madness, all of these pollute. What this man does is not what everyone would do in the circumstances. The Superstitious man takes all potentially polluting actions to demand both pre-emptive and reactive measure, when other men would only concern themselves in more restricted circumstances (e.g. when physical proximity or kinship create a particular link with the dead or with those who have given birth). But this peculiarity of the superstitious man makes him both good evidence for the sorts of things that might pollute, and for the expectation that these things should not *always* be thought of as polluting – that is, it is inconsistency that is

¹⁴ Theophrastos *Characters* 16, Diggle’s translation, modified.

expected. The Superstitious man, like classification systems themselves, does not recognise fuzzy edges.

The wider evidence for pollution in ancient Greece reveals another sort of inconsistency, inconsistency across time. The ancient Scholiast on *Iliad* 11.690 already observed that there was no Homeric instance of a murderer being purified. The first mention that we know of purification for murder came in the seventh-century epic *Aithiopis*, in which Achilles was purified on Lesbos after he had been provoked into killing Thersites.¹⁵ As George Grote put it:

The idea of a special taint of crime, and of the necessity as well as the sufficiency of prescribed religious ceremonies as a means of removing it, appears thus to have got footing in Grecian practice subsequent to the time of Homer...¹⁶

This Homeric silence has been much discussed. Parker has emphasised that death in war, the most frequent death in the *Iliad*, was never regarded as polluting, and has drawn attention to the association between disaster and dirt displayed when Achilles pours grimy dust over his head after the death of Patroklos and refuses to wash until after his funeral. Admitting that the ‘metaphysical extension’ of this physical symbolism of dirt is not to be found in Homer, Parker nevertheless denied that that extension can be proven to be later. Similarly, Parker maintained that, with regard to purification, ‘The celebrated silence... reduces itself almost entirely to the matter of the actual rite of purification... If the actual rites of purification were introduced in post-Homeric times – an importation from Lydia, perhaps – the importance of this innovation was slight...’.¹⁷ But what Parker belittles as of minor importance are the

¹⁵ Proclus *Khrestomathia* 2 (*OCT Homeri V* p.105 line 28ff).

¹⁶ Grote (1862) Vol.1 21.

¹⁷ Parker (1983) 69, 134.

features which transform pollution and purification that in Homer ‘is inspired solely by a proper and sanitary striving after cleanliness’ into a metaphysical matter.¹⁸

The Homeric silence on pollution and purification is only the most striking of various historic changes to what was regarded as polluting and in need of purification. Two changes that have attracted particular attention relate to sexual intercourse and to menstruation. Although a sixth-century law from Olympia forbids sexual intercourse in the sanctuary, and requires sacrifice of an ox and complete purification should it occur, and although in the middle of the fourth century the Koans required the slaughterer of the ox to be ‘pure from woman and man during the night’ prior to the sacrifice, it is first in the great late fourth century purification law from Cyrene that those who have had sexual intercourse during the day are required to undergo purification before entering a sanctuary.¹⁹ Such prohibitions become common in the Hellenistic period. So too, concern for purity from menstrual contamination occurs only in late texts for non-Greek cults.²⁰

Scholars have explained these changes too in terms of accidental gaps in our evidence, rather than actual changes in belief. Parker suggests that ‘there was originally a connection between the three ‘polluted days’ at the end of the month and menstruation’, on the grounds that Aristotle claims that menstruation naturally fell at the month’s end.²¹ And Herodotus’ observation in his account of Egypt that ‘Apart from the Egyptians and Greeks, almost all humans have sexual intercourse in sanctuaries and go from women into a sanctuary without washing, considering humans to be just like other beasts’ is taken to be evidence for a general taboo on both practices in the Greek world.²² But at the very least we have to admit

¹⁸ Gillies (1925) 74.

¹⁹ Olympia: GDI 1156, Buck 72; Kos: RO 62 A 40–2, Cyrene, RO 97.11f., see Parker (1983) 74 n.4.

²⁰ Parker (1983) 101–2 n.112. On other societies where menstruation is not regarded as impure cf. Testart (1991) 254–5.

²¹ Parker (1983) 102 n.113.

²² Herodotus 2.64.1; cf. Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 912–3; Parker (1983) 74–5.

a change in the degree to which the need for purification is advertised and that a range of different practices are enjoined in different places and at different times. We find variation both as to whether what was required was washing or lapse of time, and as to whether it mattered what the status of the sexual partner was (courtesans and adulterous liaisons prolong the time lapse required in some cases, virgins prolong it in two cases, and in one of those regulations it is stated that illegal liaisons permanently debar from entry to the sanctuary).²³ If the idea that sexual relations pollute was not itself new, these variations suggest that the question of what exactly it was about sexual relations that was problematic was variously interpreted.

The significance of changes in beliefs about pollution over time depends upon what we take pollution to be. Douglas acknowledged at the beginning of *Purity and Danger* that ‘danger-beliefs are as much threats which one man uses to coerce another as dangers which he himself fears to incur by his own lapses from righteousness’, and that ‘The whole universe is harnessed to men’s attempts to force one another into good citizenship. Thus we find that certain moral values are upheld and certain social rules defined by beliefs in dangerous contagion’.²⁴ But the larger claim that Douglas wanted to make, that ‘ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience’, required that pollution beliefs were not open to cynical manipulation, since the order of the world rested upon them.²⁵ While Douglas explicitly allows that ideas of impurity and purity were sensitive to change, and that the impulse to impose order continually modified and enriched ideas of purity, but the more she insists that ‘primitive religions’ have scope to meditate on ‘the great mysteries of religion and

²³ Parker 74 n.4 for summary. Sokolowski (1962) 91.12, 19, from third-century Lindos, for banning of those involved in illicit relationships and long period imposed in circumstances of *diakoreusis*.

²⁴ Douglas (1966) 3

²⁵ Douglas (1966) REF

philosophy' the more the investment involved in ideas of purity and pollution will prevent any significant change occurring.²⁶

For Douglas, notions of impurity and danger belong to a primitive worldview which is personal, anthropocentric, and undifferentiated.²⁷ In her treatment of pollution and morality Douglas suggests that taboo is reified and failed law.²⁸ With regard to the ancient Greek world, Jan Bremmer expresses the view that pollution beliefs were a way of 'maintaining religious and social norms in times when the legal process was still undeveloped'. But once we accept that pollution beliefs are not a secondary product of a classificatory system, that they may well have entered the Greek world at a particular historic moment in the seventh century B.C., that they differed from place to place in the Greek world, and that certain sorts of pollution concerns developed or changed over time, then a rather different relationship to law suggests itself. It is precisely from the seventh century that we possess the first written laws from the Greek world, and it is over the period from the seventh to at least the fourth century that law codes in Greek cities become increasingly elaborated. Chronologically, at least, Greek pollution beliefs and purification practices develop in parallel with law.

There are good empirical and good theoretical reasons for thinking seriously about the relationship between pollution beliefs and law. The empirical reason is that much of our evidence for pollution beliefs comes in the form of explicit regulations, the regulations that have come to be termed 'sacred laws'. These are inscriptions prescribing practices and

²⁶ On the existence in Douglas of two conflicting views of taboo, a functionalist one and a cognitive one, which are never reconciled, see Valeri (2000) 406 and n.103.

²⁷ Douglas (1966) 92, where she defends use of the term 'primitive'. This is at the end of the chapter 'Primitive worlds' which begins with the claim that 'it is impossible to make any headway with a study of ritual pollution if we cannot face the question of why primitive culture is pollution-prone and ours is not. With us pollution is a matter of aesthetics, hygiene or etiquette, which only becomes grave in so far as it may create social embarrassment' (p.73). Both Douglas and those writing since have inclined to link pollution beliefs to individual psychology, while acknowledging that the link may not be a simple one (Douglas (1966) 127).

²⁸ Douglas (1966) ch.8.

behaviour in relation to sanctuaries and the sacred.²⁹ Some offer both rules and sanctions, and indicate where responsibility for the sanctions lies. Others simply indicate what is or is not to be done, and leave it at that. Some identify themselves as having been agreed by a particular body, community, or state, others give no indication at all of the authority which issued them. Some of these laws are certainly or plausibly part of larger law codes; and the many that are plausibly or certainly isolated injunctions are exactly like laws about matters other than the sacred.³⁰

The theoretical reason for associating pollution beliefs and purification practices on the one hand, and ‘laws’, that is, formally articulated rules accepted by a community, on the other, is that both form part of a community’s customs.³¹ To belong to a community is to observe that community’s pollution beliefs, just as it is to observe their laws and their less formal customs. Any account of a group’s behaviour needs to take into account pollution beliefs as well as formal laws and informal customs.

The way law and pollution beliefs work together is well revealed by Athenian homicide law. Athenian law notoriously made homicide an offence which only the injured party could pursue – in this case the injured party being the immediate family. And what is effectively the earliest Athenian law that we have, Draco’s homicide law, stipulates the conditions in which a killer may be pardoned by the relatives without any reference to pollution or purification.³² The primary concern of law here is to regulate the relationship

²⁹ Lupu (2005) 3–112 for a summary; Parker (2005) for general discussion.

³⁰ In archaic Greek law in particular there has been an on-going debate as to whether it is appropriate to think only of isolated injunctions or whether there were also codes. See Osborne (1997), Hölkenskamp (1999).

³¹ cf. Valeri (2000) 407 ‘over time taboos become custom, so that one may also follow them to identify as a Huaulu or a member of a particular subgroup. The character of custom is thus one that the taboos share with many other habits and rules, but this by definition does not imply that they have the same cause.’

³² ML 86, cf. Parker (1983) 116. Demosthenes 20.158 maintains that Drako insisted that the manslayer should be excluded from things sacred, libations, social gatherings (‘mixing-bowls’) and the agora, but that if he did indeed keep clear of them he maintained that they

between the killer and those who have obligations to the person killed. Law steps in to prevent feud and to ensure that whatever settlement occurs between the parties is public and enforceable. Pollution, on the other hand, is not concerned with the relationship between killer and the kin of the killed, but between the killer and the rest of the world, human and divine. The result might seem to be something of a conflict: death in suspicious circumstances brought pollution on those responsible but unless one was a kinsman there was no provision for using the courts to pursue those responsible.³³ For all that in the context of homicide ‘ritual and legal status are assimilated to the extent that... ‘pure’ and ‘not subject to legal sanctions’ are often synonymous’, law and pollution beliefs turn out to be complementary, not identical.³⁴

The absence of notions of pollution and purification in the Homeric epics goes together with the easy reception that we find in them of men who have left their home community because responsible for another’s death. Patroklos, received into the house of Peleus, is but one example of several alluded to in the Homeric epics.³⁵ By contrast, the most explicit of sacred laws on the subject, the law from Selinous, provides that any man who has killed and needs purification can ask for it wherever he wishes and whenever he wishes and can be purified by anyone – after which he will be free to eat with and board with anyone.³⁶

In the case of homicide, the concerns of law and the concerns of pollution beliefs turn out to be rather different. Many other actions and events which bring pollution are not the

were *katharos*. For a scholarly desire to see Drako’s law as a response to new fears about pollution, cf. Parker (1983) 115.

³³ This issue is raised in Plato’s *Euthyphro* 3e–4c.

³⁴ Parker (1983) 114 for the quotation.

³⁵ *Iliad* 23.84–90. The full list of Homeric examples is collected by Richardson (1993) 175. The simile likening, with wondrous rôle-reversal the astonishment of Achilles at Priam to the astonishment felt at the arrival in a strange community of someone who had killed a man is particularly striking in this connection (*Iliad* 24.48083). (Richardson (1993) 323 thinks that the surprise ‘may not be so far from the later idea of pollution’, but I incline rather to think that it is the wonder at a man who has done something terrible.)

³⁶ Lupu (2005) no.27.

concern of law at all. Unusual or problematic animal movements, birth and death (as opposed to killing), dreams, madness, none of these things that Theophrastos' *Superstitious Man* worries about come into the domain of law, and nor does sexual intercourse as such, or marriage, or miscarriage (unless artificially induced), which are other things regulated in other texts with reference to pollution. One area where concern for pollution overlaps with an area law did concern itself with comes as something of a surprise: the wearing of particular clothes or jewellery

A law from third-century Dyme in Achaia lays down:

At festivals of Demeter women are to have neither gold of more than an obol weight, nor decorated clothing, nor purple, nor to wear make-up, nor to play the aulos. If anyone transgresses the sanctuary is to be purified on the grounds that she is impious.³⁷

Although this is the only case where the language of purification is explicitly used, this regulation is one of a group, all from sanctuaries in the Peloponnese, dating between the late sixth century and the first century B.C.³⁸ The earliest of the **examples**, from northern Arkadia reveals the seriousness with which the offence is regarded:

If a woman wears a garment made of animal skin, it is to be consecrated to Demeter Thesmophoros. If she does not consecrate it, may she die a bad death for her conduct unfavourable to the cult, and may the person who at that moment holds the office of demiourgos pay a fine of 30 drachmas. If he does not pay, he is to be convicted of impiety. This law is to be in force for ten years. This bronze plaque is to be sacred.

But what precisely is the problem here?

One approach to these regulations takes the issue to be sex. Parker lists the laws in a footnote to his chapter 'The works of Aphrodite' and later, in his chapter on 'Sacrilege' remarks:

³⁷ Sokolowski (1962) 33

³⁸ Sokolowski (1962) 32, (1969) 65.16–23, 68.

‘There is nothing intrinsically impure about a purple gown (indeed the offending object is sometimes required to be dedicated to the goddess); but it is polluting in this context because it offends against the ethos of a festival that requires women temporarily to renounce the paraphernalia of sexual attraction.’³⁹

There is no doubt that the items banned in the Dyme law were indeed items associated with women who sought to attract attention to their sexuality. Clement claims, for instance, that flowery clothes and gold jewellery were permitted at Sparta only to prostitutes.⁴⁰ But the Dyme restriction applies only to the festival of Demeter, an occasion which, particularly if it is the Thesmophoria that is in question, might be expected to be restricted to women only. Nor is it easy to see that sexually provocative dress, if that is what the *zteraion lopos*, translated by me, following Dubois, as ‘a garment made of animal skin’, should be reckoned to be, should be thought *dusmenes* to the cult.⁴¹

An alternative approach is to see the regulations as essentially sumptuary: it is the elaborateness of the items of dress that is problematic because expensive outfits generate social competition, and, in a world where gods look like men, competition with the gods too. But a concern to restrict competitive expenditure sits uncomfortably with the concentration of the north Arkadian law on a single item – or should we think of the *zteraion lopos* the latest must-have fashion accessory? And it sits uncomfortably too with the prohibition on playing the aulos.

³⁹ Parker 83 n.36 for footnote, 145 for quotation.

⁴⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Paid.* 2.10 p.220.6–9 St; Athenaios 521b ascribes similar regulations to Syracuse.

⁴¹ Both the *zteraion lopos* and the phrase involving *dusmenes* have caused problems to interpreters of this law. Robinson (1943) in his original publication took the first to be ‘a hide-garment of Deraea’ and the second ‘if she is ill-disposed towards her religious rite and work’; Beattie (1947) objected and offered ‘a brightly coloured robe’ and ‘being unfriendly as regards a sacrificial garment’. I have followed Dubois (1988), vol. 2 195–202 without expecting that the argument has now ceased.

The latest of these Peloponnesian sanctuary restrictions on women's dress, the regulations for the conduct of the Mysteries at Andania, dating to 92 B.C. gives the responsibility for policing to the magistrates known as 'woman-regulators', *gunaikonomoi*, and so aligns these regulations to other rules enforced by *gunaikonomoi*.⁴² The explicit invocation of *gunaikonomoi* to enforce rules in relation to a sanctuary and to cult activity is unusual,⁴³ but the parallelism between what is regulated by pollution belief at Dyme and what is regulated elsewhere by the intervention of *gunaikonomoi* is important. Ogden concludes his recent study of *gunaikonomoi* with a list of the potential range of rationalizations lying behind dress restrictions and the observation that 'The Greeks understood fully the capacity of dress to be meaningful, and *gunaikonomoi* could no doubt be busy men'.⁴⁴ Dress, he implies, can be held to give so many messages that it provides all sorts of opportunities for intervening in women's lives.

I want to make two observations on the basis of these regulations of women's dress, jewellery, and behaviour. The first is that it is women's behaviour that is regulated. Although some of the Hellenistic and later *gunaikonomoi* seem to have been charged with regulating matters that involved men as well as women, the paradigm, as embedded in the magistrates' name, was clearly the regulation of women.⁴⁵ The second observation is that our inability to find a convincing single explanation for the regulations applied to Peloponnesian sanctuaries or a single rationale, beyond imposition of 'good order', behind the regulations of

⁴² Sokolowski (1969) 65. 25–28; on *gunaikonomoi* and their duties see Ogden (2002).

⁴³ Otherwise found in Sokolowski (1969) 127.5 (Methymna, fourth-century B.C., where the word is restored, in relation to a *pannykhis*, and Sokolowski (1955) 32.20 (arrangements for cult of Zeus Sosipolis at Magnesia, 197–6 B.C. where they are simply responsible for choosing nine maidens to take part. Ogden's claim that the core job of *gunaikonomoi* was 'selecting women for festivals and supervising their behaviour within them' (2002 203) seems to me poorly supported by the evidence he himself gives, which shows a much more general and civic role, with responsibility in relation to cult activities at the margins or their responsibilities.

⁴⁴ Ogden (2002) 210

⁴⁵ For regulations that apply to men, compare the reports of a 'new law' limiting numbers of diners imposed by *gunaikonomoi* in Hellenistic Athens: Athenaios *Deipnosophistai* 245a–c.

gunaikonomoi, may be itself key to these rules: rather than a reflection of a single over-riding concern, in both cases the regulations serve their purpose in important part by having no single over-riding concern.

These two observations go together, I suggest, in the following way. Law requires that it can be more or less effectively policed. Advertising laws which cannot be put into operation, either because the offence cannot be detected or because even when it is detected no one is prepared to take action, undermines rather than reinforces the authority of the state. In the classical Greek world, putting law into action depended upon the willingness of the injured parties to take their injuries to court or, where there was effectively no injured party, upon a third party taking up the case. Injured parties could normally be expected to avail themselves of legal process provided that the costs of that legal process to them were not greater than the injury sustained, and there are some reasons for thinking that states provided a variety of procedures at least in part to allow for injured parties of a wide range of resources.⁴⁶ Where there is no injured party the offence must seem serious enough to others to encourage them to take the case to law voluntarily. Offences against public order are problematic in this context, since the damage done to other individuals is slight. Where it can be thought that the offence will be so ill-regarded by the gods that they will punish any community which does not itself ‘take the law into its own hands’, volunteer prosecutors may be forthcoming, but it is hard to think that gods whose own behaviour is not rarely disorderly have so an keen eye on individual human beings’ disorderly behaviour as to strike a community which does not take the merely disorderly to court.

In the archaic and classical Greek city state, I suggest, law was not able to deal with anything other than major offences unless the offence significantly damaged another citizen. For trivial matters there were two possibilities. One was to enforce them over those who had

⁴⁶ A claim I first made in Osborne (1985)

no direct political voice and who could therefore be relatively easily coerced by magisterial power. The largest class of those over whom this sort of control could be exerted were women, although much the same was possible with regard to children. Hence the comparative prominence of *gunaikonomoi* (and to a less extent *paidonomoi* and other magistrates charged with looking after the behaviour of the under-aged). The other possibility was to enlist the agency of the gods, by declaring that a form of behaviour was impious, impure and demanded purification. By suggesting that anyone who did that was dirty.

The late sixth-century Arcadian law about the *zteraion logos* is, on my reckoning, a first tentative step in this direction. Tentative because those who proclaimed this regulation both thought it necessary to invoke magisterial aid, and were clearly uncertain as to whether they could persuade the *damiourgos*, the magistrate in question, to enforce the ban. By the time the Dyme Demeter sanctuary imposed its regulation of women's jewellery, clothing, make-up, and music at their festivals they seem to have been confident that the requirement of purification was enough, and no magisterial aid is invoked.

If we turn from these regulations of women's appearance and behaviour to other areas of life in which pollution is invoked, we can, I suggest, see a similar pattern. I have already suggested that we should connect the treatment of bloodshed as polluting with the problematic status of homicide at Athens as a charge that could be brought only by the injured party. Where a man had no kin or where the kin were not prepared to act, insistence on the purification of homicides was a way of forcing the offence into the public eye. But if there was a problem with getting murderers to face the formal apparatus of law, there were many other areas of life where regulation might be desired but the formal apparatus of law was not appropriate. Modern states require registration of births, marriages, and deaths and the certification of the mad, but the ancient city had no apparatus for such bureaucracy. The considerations which lead to registration being a legal requirement, on the other hand, applied

equally in antiquity. The classification of birth, marriage, death and delirium as polluting served a publicity function comparable in effect to official registration: all these are events of which a community needs to know, if it is to remain a community. And if we insist on the licencing of dogs we might reckon even the superstitious man's regarding of the presence of unexpected animals as polluting not totally beyond explanation in terms of this need for the community to know.

So, is **this** a dirty body [LIMC Orestes 11]? Can you tell by looking at a person whether he or she has committed homicide or has just married, or she has just given birth? Can you tell whether he or she is diseased, or has just had a dream by which he will become obsessed and a danger to others? If you find a man behaving in a mad way or a woman dressing or behaving inappropriately and in ways liable to cause a public incident, what can you do about it? In a close knit community one might reckon that shame alone could control behaviour, and *aidos*, the Greek term which comes closest to our 'shame', is indeed prominent in Homer, where ideas of pollution are absent and dispute settlement does not rely on comparing behaviour to formal rules but on personal arbitration. In the classical period *aidos* and awareness of pollution are often inextricably linked.⁴⁷

The argument which I am pursuing here is that notions of pollution in the classical Greek world serve to reach parts, types of behaviour, which formal law cannot reach, and where the society is not sufficiently small and close knit for shame, which is entirely without threat of sanction, to be relied on. This argument is at odds with Douglas' view that notions of pollution are the result of 'cognitive discomfort experienced when confronted with ambivalence, ambiguity or anomaly', but it is also at odds with more recent suggestions that pollution ideas are centred on the body and that fear of pollution arises when 'decaying living

⁴⁷ cf. Cairns (1993) 292 (commenting on *Herakles Mainomenos* 1135–52): 'Heracles' *aidos* and his awareness of his pollution and its effects on others are inextricably linked, as indeed such concerns will tend to be...'; cf. also Parker (1983) 316–7.

matter or matter that is subject to decay as soon as it leaves the body – such as semen, blood, sweat – threatens to gain access to our body and thus to make it decay and die too’ or that ‘The embodied subject’s fear of disintegration through the body and by the body is the ultimate basis for the notion of pollution’.⁴⁸ If Douglas’ view ultimately situated pollution in language and made it a by-product of our attempt to establish a cognitive grip on the world, the view which puts the body at the centre of pollution, like the view which puts the body at the centre of shame, makes pollution a deep psychological reaction to fear of mortality and animality.⁴⁹ By contrast I wish to emphasise how, in classical Greece, at least, notions of pollution are developed as means of social control.

I return in conclusion to my opening question. In order to see whether a body is dirty or not we have to enter into shared values. Just as the child’s washing chocolate from his face requires a recognition that chocolate round the mouth is unacceptable not just to his mother but to a wider group from whom approval is needed or desired, so for a murderer or a woman who has given birth or a madman to out themselves and seek purification depends on recognition that these states are not acceptable to a wider group from whom approval is needed, the gods. Pollution focuses on the body not, in my view, because of some deep psychological anxiety about our bodies but because we need our bodies and cannot do without them; any restriction to our bodies has more or less immediate effect upon our lives. Similarly pollution focuses on changes of state not because of some deep anxiety about things which are impossible to categorise, but because to suggest that something has moved from one condition to another constitutes a *prima facie* argument for the gods being interested and involved.

⁴⁸ Valeri 102 (summarising the work of Anna Meigs), 111; cf. 356.

⁴⁹ For the view that ‘Disgust concerns the borders of the body: it focuses on the prospect that a problematic substance may be incorporated into the self’, see Nussbaum (2004) 88.

On Tuesday I drew your attention to the way in which citizenship status is invisible in figurative representations in classical Greek art and suggested that the failure to represent it corresponded with a low priority to making the distinction between citizen and non-citizen in life. Yesterday I argued that the ways in which foreign appearance was advertised or ignored in classical figurative art required us to construct a more subtle view of relations between Athenians and non-Athenians, and particularly non-Greeks, than scholars have formed on the basis of the polarities that they have found in texts. Today I am again drawing your attention to the way in which the distinctions which texts urge upon us between the clean and the unclean, the polluted and the pure (or purified) is neither represented in art nor could not be seen in the flesh.

But what should we see as the consequence of the invisibility of the polluted? In the case of citizens, the failure to mark them out in art or life indicates, I suggest, a lack of concern for the citizen-non-citizen boundary. In the case of foreigner, the application of distinguishing features in a sporadic fashion, and to indicate performance as often as to indicate nature, indicates, I suggest, that the foreign was seen as providing varied resources for thinking and acting, rather than as a block of unmitigable opposition. In the case of the polluted, however, their invisibility was in many cases a fact of life. One might even think that had the murderer, the woman who had recently given birth or recently married been visible, like the storybook gangster in his stripy tee-shirt, there would have been no need for them to be polluted. To claim that a murderer, newlywed, woman who has given birth, kinsman of the newly dead, or whoever, is polluted, is to claim that there are eyes that can indeed see the difference. When **Herakleitos** complains that to purify someone from blood-guilt by application of sacrificial blood makes as little sense as for a man who has stepped into mud washing with mud, he draws attention to what purification does: it makes the fact of pollution visible. Hence the way in which taking a forbidden object into a sanctuary may be

purified by dedicating that object in the sanctuary. The power of the notion of pollution comes from its invisibility. It is because you can't see pollution that you need to worry about it. Because if you don't worry about it, those who can see it and do worry about it may decide to make it visible and to make you worry about it. As Oedipus discovered in the face of plague, ignorance is no defence and no excuse. Sight and knowledge are, as in Sophokles' play, closely entwined, and without knowledge there can be no certain control. But if controlling other men demands seeing what the gods see, do we need to see the gods if we are to control ourselves? It is to the issue of how we see the gods that I turn in my final lecture tomorrow.