The Seer and the City
Religion, Politics, and Colonial Ideology in Ancient Greece
MARGARET FOSTER

“It is not easy to write successful ‘cultural poetics’ work because one is bound to enter a variety of different fields, but this is done deftly here. The results are excellent and raise important questions for many different areas of scholarship.”
—Nigel Nicholson, Walter Mintz Professor of Classics, Reed College

“This book makes an important intervention into our understanding of the incredibly rich and relatively untapped collection of material that can be called the discourse of the seer by focusing on and elaborating the ways that the Greeks imagined the seer rather than on the instrumental and functional details of how prophecy worked in archaic and classical Greece.”
—Carol Dougherty, Professor of Classical Studies, Wellesley College

Seers featured prominently in ancient Greek culture, but they rarely appear in archaic and classical colonial discourse. Margaret Foster exposes the ideological motivations behind this discrepancy and reveals how colonial discourse privileged the city’s founder and his dependence on Delphi, the colonial oracle par excellence, at the expense of the independent seer. Investigating a sequence of literary texts, Foster explores the tactics the Greeks devised both to leverage and suppress the extraordinary cultural capital of seers. The first cultural history of the seer, The Seer and the City illuminates the contests between religious and political powers in archaic and classical Greece.

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