

BOOK REVIEW

Immigrant Women in Athens: Gender, Ethnicity, and Citizenship in the Classical City. By REBECCA FUTO KENNEDY. Routledge Studies in Ancient History. New York and London: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xiii + 177. Hardcover, \$140.00. ISBN 978-0-415-73786-9.

Amid the modern interest in Greek women, the metic woman has either been neglected in favor of her citizen counterpart or subsumed into the category of “foreign prostitute.” Rebecca Futo Kennedy’s slim but engaging volume takes a fresh look, asking (1) what were the experiences of metic women in Athens; (2) why were (and are) so many of them considered prostitutes; and (3) why were they so frequently the victims of invective attacks by citizen men? She uncovers a heterogeneous group of women of differing statuses and circumstances, caught in evolving Athenian ideas of identity. This interpretation breaks down Athenian ideological constraints that have over-influenced modern scholarship on metic women.

Chapter One outlines the evolution of laws for metic women, from establishment of the *metoikia* (metic register and tax, 470-460 BCE) to Perikles’ marriage law of 451/50, to a full ban on marriage of citizen men and metic women sometime between 390 and 370. Kennedy postulates that the limitation of metic marital prospects was a response to Athenian ideas of ethnicity, a concerted effort to individuate what was Athenian and, more importantly, what was not Athenian. The metic woman, a foreign Other, represented a sexual threat to the construction of Athenian citizen identity, so she needed to be controlled.

Chapter Two considers shifting attitudes towards metic women in Greek tragedy. Kennedy rejects Geoff Bakewell’s conclusion¹ that the *Suppliants* (463 BCE) reflects anxiety about an influx of immigrant women who posed a threat to citizen marriage and property rights. Rather, she sees the assimilation of the Danaids as resolving anxiety over the erotic threat that they posed from outside accepted gender roles: married to citizens, these women are safely integrated. In

¹ Bakewell, G. *Aeschylus’ Suppliant Women: The Tragedy of Immigration* (Madison, WI, 2013).

plays produced after the marriage law, the ideological focus shifts. *Medea* (431) demonstrates the proper boundaries for metic and citizen: it is not Medea but Jason who threatens the citizen body with his foreign desire for riches, personal gain, and access to the royal house. Medea, by contrast, behaves like a proper metic, married to a metic and producing metic children, apart from the citizenry. Kennedy's reading offers new dimensions to the ambiguous depiction of Medea and additional motivations for the negative portrayal of Jason.

In Chapter Three, "Aspasia, Citizen Elites, Courtesan Myth," Kennedy challenges the two predominant definitions of *hetaira*. Sian Lewis contends that a *hetaira* is iconographically marked as a prostitute by activities such as reading and playing instruments; Laura McClure describes foreign, wealthy, famous, and intellectual women who associated with Athenian elites while practicing prostitution [2]. Kennedy adapts McClure's definition: the *hetaira* is a companion, equal to men in her circle, and welcome at symposia and other activities inappropriate for citizen wives, but is not a prostitute. This view runs contrary to most definitions of *hetairai*, and is based on scanty evidence that the term developed into "prostitute" after the 5th century.

Chapter Four, "The Dangers of the Big City," outlines the dangers metic women faced from citizen men in Athens. Women who failed to register and pay the *metoikion*, the metic tax, could be charged with *graphê aprostasiou* and sold into slavery. Metic women were also denied redress in court. If they had no living blood relatives, no one could seek punishment even for their murder. They had two alternatives to marriage, a means of securing some safety: *hetaireia* (discussed in chapter 3) and *pallakia*. *Pallakia*, Kennedy contends, was a secure, contract-based alternative to marriage for free women (citizens and metics) who had no dowry or were legally unmarriageable (like metic women after 380 BCE). This arrangement was a respectable domestic partnership, ideologically less offensive to citizen elites because it consigned metic women to appropriate gender roles and domestic spaces while not damaging the marriageability of a citizen male. A few sources refer to slaves as *pallakai*, but these should be considered "handmaidens" rather than concubines. Kennedy's nuanced examination of what *pallakia* meant for different classes of women (slaves, metics, citizens) is one of the chapter's strengths.

The final chapter, "Working Women, Not 'Working Girls,'" attempts to dispel the assumption that all job titles held by metic women were an elaborate code for prostitution. Kennedy examines the *phialai*, inscriptions put up by metics having escaped charges of *aprostasiou*, and the jobs listed for women. She argues

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that jobs requiring “the labor of one’s body” entailed not prostitution, but rather any kind of manual labor. Here Kennedy suggests that a *pallakê* may be in some cases a paid housekeeper, not a sexual partner, looking after the domestic needs of a bachelor citizen, and she proposes that such might have been Neaira’s role in Stephanos’ household. This interpretation is interesting but roams far from Apollodoros’ account.

While some may find Kennedy’s redefinition of the terms *hetaira* and *pallakê* contentious, one need not accept it to appreciate her reconsideration of the roles metic women played in Athens. Kennedy may be criticized, however, for her extensive reimagining of the characters of Aspasia and Neaira. While she notes that the misleading scholarly characterizations of them arise from over-reliance on late evidence, as well as appropriation of elite Athenian bias in invective, her own speculations are founded on equally thin evidence and tend toward apolo-gism. Such overcorrection transforms Aspasia and Neaira into virtuous, long-suffering matrons, a portrayal as problematic as that of villainous prostitutes.

The book is well-produced, with few errata; the most noticeable, unfortunately, occurs on page one, where Henry Liddell’s name is misspelled in the epi-gram containing the definitions of the book’s master terms. The first chapter, on laws restricting metic women, should be a staple of courses on women in Greece. The final chapter, outlining the wide variety of jobs held by metic women, offers a strong counterpoint to textbooks concerned with the domestic occupations only of citizen women. By distinguishing metic women from citizen women and pros-titutes, this book does an important service to studies of women in Athens.

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