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# Rosetta

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**Review: Rebecca Futo Kennedy. *Immigrant Women in Athens: Gender, Ethnicity, and Citizenship in the Classical City*. New York/London: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xiii & 177. ISBN 978-0-415-73786-9 (hbk)**

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This book is an important contribution because studies of gender in Graeco-Roman antiquity rarely account for racial or ethnic difference.<sup>1</sup> This book is certainly a step in the right direction. It is divided into five chapters organised by theme and endnotes are conveniently placed at the end of each chapter. Kennedy draws upon a diverse range of sources to show the way metic women were portrayed and to provide glimpses into their actual lives. Kennedy argues that metic women played a significant and complex role in Athenian society that has been downplayed because of the ethnocentric and androcentric bias in the sources and, additionally, their uncritical acceptance in classical scholarship (p. 5). Throughout the book, there is a great deal of source criticism and, at the same time, an excellent self-reflexive perspective on classical scholarship. Though there are also points for disagreement, Kennedy presents a convincing thesis.

This book is especially strong in two areas: reading metic women in myth and, secondly, refuting the labelling of the *hetairai* as a type of prostitute. Kennedy is correct to point out that attitudes in myth are important because metic women were subject to these attitudes and, additionally, Kennedy shows that there is a clearly identifiable ideology of metic women (pp. 26-28). Kennedy argues that Aeschylus' *Suppliants* and *Oresteia* show that metic stigmatisation could be resolved (pp. 29-38). Threat imagery associated with metic women in the literature, after the Periclean citizenship law of 451 BCE, suggests that metics are to be contained or removed from society (pp. 38-55).

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<sup>1</sup> For an example see Foxhall, Lin. *Studying Gender in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge UP, 2013). There is no systematic treatment of race nor ethnicity.

This threat corresponds with the growing presence of metic women in the iconographic evidence of the time (58). Through a succinct analysis of mythological material, Kennedy demonstrates that metic women were subject to discrimination in which both race and gender played a role.

The strength of Kennedy's thesis lies in her excellent deconstruction of *Hetairai* which, as she contends, needs to be redefined. Kennedy observes that scholars assume that only prostitutes can be eroticised (pp. 70-71). Yet, these women are shown as engaging in the same activities as men which suggests that they were part of the same class who tended to be non-Athenian Greek (pp. 72-73). Consequently, Kennedy defines *hetaira* as an elite woman, sometimes non-Athenian, who participated in sympotic and political discourse. These women consorted with the Athenian elite and were part of the same class (pp. 74). Kennedy argues, for example, that Aspasia was sexualised and demonised because of Athenian ethnocentrism. The two problems with the scholarly discourse are that she is assumed to be a metic prostitute and sexual attacks against her are taken as literal indicators of her socio-economic status. Rather, the evidence on Aspasia corresponds to Kennedy's definition of *hetaera* (pp. 75-76). Kennedy, through a historical reconstruction (pp. 76-77), demonstrates that perceptions of Aspasia were rooted in societal predispositions about metic women (pp.78-85). Kennedy, overall, shows the importance of addressing the ethnocentrism and sexism in Athenian sources.

There are, however, two problems in her methodology. First, there is no thorough engagement with the concept of race which is surprising considering her previous work<sup>2</sup> and her prior engagement with discussions on race in Graeco-Roman antiquity.<sup>3</sup> Kennedy does not address the growing scholarship on race in Graeco-Roman antiquity.<sup>4</sup> Critical race theory is not engaged or even mentioned.<sup>5</sup> Race is awkwardly conflated with ethnicity in the discussion. For example, Kennedy agrees with Lape that

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<sup>2</sup> See Kennedy et al. *Race and Ethnicity in the Classical World: An Anthology of Primary Sources in Translation* (Hackett Publishing, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy 2013

<sup>4</sup> See Haley 2009, McCoskey 2012.

<sup>5</sup> For a primer: Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. Second ed. (New York UP, 2012)

Athenian citizenship was racialised,<sup>6</sup> but she characterises *Athenaios* as an “ethnic designator” (p. 6). She describes Aspasia as a victim of “ethnocentric” Athenian views of non-Athenians, but then describes those same views as “racialist” (p. 75). These two terms are not synonymous. Ethnicity is not wholly separate from race.<sup>7</sup> Rather, it functions more so as a sub-category of race.<sup>8</sup> In an Athenian context: ethnicity is best applied to non-Athenian Greeks, while race explains non-Hellene difference. This approach clarifies the difference in Athenian relations with non-Athenian Hellenes and non-Hellenes.

Secondly, Kennedy argues that the metic women was “*the ultimate Other and the gravest threat to Athenian exceptionalism and democracy*” (p. 6, emphasis added), but there is no substantial discussion of the differences between metic men and women. In fact, Athenian society impacted metic men along similar lines. Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* is suggestive of how foreign men were also targets of racialised chauvinism which is overlooked by Kennedy. The Aegyptiads are portrayed as oversexed Egyptian black men.<sup>9</sup> Kennedy’s discussion of Euripides’ *Medea* also exemplifies this perfectly. Kennedy observes that Jason embodies the stereotype of the self-interested and opportunistic metic and Medea embodies the ‘respectable’ metic who is contained within the metic/citizen boundary (pp. 49-51). This suggests that foreignness was the primary factor in discrimination against metics, both men and women. In Isaeus’ legal speeches, the description of Melas the Egyptian is a clear example of the function of this attitude in reality. Like Jason, the racial otherness of Melas the Egyptian is emphasised by his name and his portrayal as a cunning tradesmen (Is. 5.7-8, 40) which has evident gender specific connotations. It seems likely that the racial and/or ethnic difference of both metic men and metic women, at least in some contexts, were the primary factor in their stigmatisation. This suggests the need for a reconsideration of the relationship between race, ethnicity and gender in a classical Athenian context.

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<sup>6</sup> See Lape 2010

<sup>7</sup> Rees 2007: 4-16

<sup>8</sup> Lipsitz 1995: 370-71

<sup>9</sup> Vasunia 2001: 34-35

This is an important topic and, in spite of this reviewer's disagreements, the discussion is well executed. Kennedy clearly demonstrates that we have to think of other aspects of identity when discussing women in Greek antiquity. However, she does not adequately engage the concept of race. In addition, she does not consider a simultaneous interplay between race, ethnicity, and gender. Also, it is important not to see gender exclusively as the provenance of women, but also to address the gender-specific issues of non-Athenian men. There is not enough discussion on the similarities or differences between attitudes and systematic policies directed against metic men and metic women. Nonetheless, Kennedy convincingly proves that metic women had a much more complex role in society than has been hitherto suspected. To dismiss this, as Kennedy demonstrates, is to uncritically accept the viewpoint of their enemies – Athenian male citizens. Criticism notwithstanding, this is an insightful analysis on the complexity of difference in classical Athens.

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