Eos CV 2018
ISSN 0012-7825

Ariadne Konstantinou, *Female Mobility and Gendered Space in Ancient Greek Myth*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, 208 pp., ISBN 978-14-725-677-3, £81.00.

For several reasons, the book under review seems to be an extremely appetising piece of scholarly work. First of all, over the past fifty years or so, the subject matter of female (im-)mobility in ancient Greece has become one of the most widely discussed issues of ancient culture. Most of the classical formulations of the problem, which originate from the 1970s and 1980s, were informed by traditional positivist scholarship with its obvious pitfalls which resulted from paying little or no attention to the distinction between the social reality, ideological statements and outward fiction. Given the ideological bias that is evident in the case of at least some of the authors (suffice to mention Eva Keuls[1]), the temptation to turn scholarly work into a moralising story about how men always oppressed women was clearly too strong to resist (not that I am arguing against such a view – I only think that it does not necessarily belong to scholarship *sensu stricto*). The decades that followed brought some works (e.g. by Cohen or Goff[2]) whose authors advocated a much more balanced interpretation based on a radically different use of sources which resulted from the integration of some contemporary anthropological devices into classical scholarship (especially Bourdieu[3]) that help distinguish between what we are told by our ancient "informers" and their actual daily experience.

Konstantionou's (= K.) book begins with a personal statement ("A few years ago, I happened to see from the balcony of our apartment at the heart of cosmopolitan Tel Aviv people dancing in the streets during the festivity of Simchat Torah…"), which seems to locate it in the same strand of thought strongly influenced by post-modern anthropology, which, far from confusing an experience of an individual with supra-individual abstract entities, nevertheless, tends to pay as much attention to the former as it happens to be suspicious about the latter. Further on in the introductory chapter, K. makes her theoretical position more explicit, drawing attention to several difficulties of which historians of ancient Greek culture are becoming gradually more and more aware: our sources are excerptive, biased by the fact that they usually represent the point of view of a single gender (male), social (citizen or at least free individual) and economic (better off) group. Moreover, the vast majority of them come from a single place (Athens). Having all this in mind, the author sets out to navigate these challenges through a close-reading of individual texts and by focusing on their meaning within the relatively narrow context of their original time and place of creation/performance, but without the goal of drawing a perfectly consistent (and thus necessarily forced) image of the ancient cultural system or its evolution. What is also important is that K. declares that she is interested in mythology as such, rather than in the way in which it reflects/refracts the social reality. This means that the scope of the book was intended to be narrow, which should be taken as a definite advantage, had the author been as disciplined as she clearly desired to be. However, for some reasons which are described below the book turns out to fulfil only part of what it promises.

The first part of the book ("Goddesses on the move") is well organised along lines that result from K.'s modification of an already classical analysis of the figure of Hestia proposed by Vernant[4].

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[1] E.C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus. Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, New York 1985.

[2] D. Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society. The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens*, Cambridge 1991; B. Goff, *Citizen Bacchae. Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley 2004.

[3] P. Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique: précédé de Trois études d'ethnologie kabyle*, Genève 1972.

[4] J.-P. Vernant, *Hestia-Hermès. Sur l'expression religieuse de l'espace et du mouvement chez les Grecs*, L'Homme III 1963, pp. 12–50.

According to the French scholar, the notion of Hestia's immobility and her eternal fixity at the centre of the household (esp. *Hymn. Hom. Ven*. 21–32) are related to her mythical virginity and reflect some of the ideas on real-life virgins, who were ideally not expected to leave the paternal hearth before marriage. K. rightly observes that this is not as simple as it might seem (it is important to emphasise that it was not that simple for VERNANT either) and she devotes a chapter (1) to a presentation of virgin goddesses, only one of whom was represented in the poetic tradition as immobile (Hestia), whereas some others were constantly on the move (Homeric Athena, Artemis). The chapter (2) that follows presents two non-virgin goddesses: Aphrodite and Demeter, who are described as travelling, and Hera, who is almost completely stationary. Although the Homeric Hera sometimes travels, most notably to meet Zeus on Mount Ida (the official destination of her journey is even more remote, as she claimed to be going to the limits of the world), K. convincingly argues that these peregrinations are different from those of the goddesses who mingled with mortals. Unlike them, Hera works through intermediaries, most of the time being confined to her golden throne in Olympus or to some other location restricted only to the gods. Thus, an interesting map of goddesses' (im-)mobility starts emerging from the material gathered by K.: stationary Hestia, man-like Athena, wild Artemis, lustful Aphrodite who visits her lovers, Demeter who assumes the likeness of a post-menopausal woman in order to travel among mortals, and hieratic Hera. These goddesses are distinguished by various modes of movement and the spaces they are associated with. The discussion of this fascinating material, however, is often limited to the presentation of poetic passages with only a few words of commentary, which may leave a feeling of dissatisfaction.

The second part of the book, "Heroines on the move", is organised according to a "descending" principle. Having discussed the issue of the mobility of Olympian goddesses (chapters 1 and 2 in part 1), the author focuses on tragic heroines (chapter 3). Then she devotes a chapter (4) to the mobility involved in ritual. Thus, we gradually pass from the celestial sphere towards the human level. In spite of the presence of this seemingly clear principle, the second part of the book seems much more poorly organised than the first, and it gives the impression of something that is unfinished.

Chapter 3 begins with an observation that the wedding, one of the most important moments in an ancient Greek woman's life, involved her transfer from the paternal to the marital house. K. introduces an interesting and perhaps useful distinction between "small-scale centrifugal movement" and "the large-scale journey". The peregrinations of girls married abroad (e.g. Procne who married Thracian Tereus) and of those who were expelled by their fathers once they had lost their virginity as a result of an extramarital affair (e.g. Danae) belonged to the latter category. Quite interestingly, the author does not distinguish between these two related, but strikingly different, categories of girls leaving their paternal household.

In the section that follows ("Mobile heroines in Greek tragedy"), K. makes some introductory remarks that are generally true, if obvious, about the way in which tragedy as performed in the theatre might have distorted the general rules of conduct (e.g. speakers, male or female, are always outside the palace). What is surprising here are the speculations about the reason why female choruses "do not need a justification […] when they first enter the stage". A specific example of the chorus in Euripides' *Medea* is given to substantiate this claim. Yet, the first lines of the parodos (131–133) read: ἔκλυον φωνάν, ἔκλυον δὲ βοὰν/ τᾶς δυστάνου/ Κολχίδος. This is precisely a justification of the presence of someone who goes out of the house in order to help/comfort a person outside. Indeed, as EASTERLING[5] argued, each of the female choruses in extant tragedy provides an explicit explanation (even if not always a satisfactory one) of their presence in the public space.

The rest of the chapter presents two tragic stories about women on the move: the wanderings of Io in fantastic lands (*Prometheus vinctus*) and the journey of the Danaids (*Supplices*). Admittedly, both myths are fascinating, and so is the chapter in K.'s book. Nevertheless (in spite of the justification on p. 85), I do not understand why the author decided to focus on them, given that they do

[5] P.E. EASTERLING, *Women in Tragic Space*, BICS XXXIV 1987, pp. 15–26.

not seem to exemplify anything that might be called a typical case of female mobility in tragedy (if anything like this exists). I do not understand either why K. claims that the wanderings of Io did not evoke the liminal phase of "the passage of young woman into adulthood and motherhood". Instead, she states that she prefers the reading that "focuses on the geographical details of the myth and interprets it as an attempt to map geo-political identities and delineate spatial constructs such as centre and periphery". Admittedly, these are two different but hardly mutually exclusive perspectives; on the contrary, the former (to a substantial degree) presupposes the latter. What is more, having made this declaration, K. turns to what she calls the "small-scale mobility" of Io – her passage from paternal to marital household that signifies the period of becoming an adult woman. *Mutatis paucis mutandis*, this is exactly the interpretation that the author rejected. As for the section on the Danaids myth, I found the observations on the heroines' "manipulative rhetoric" fascinating. Nevertheless, I keep asking myself why this interesting essay was included in a book about female mobility.

The chapter (4) that follows is devoted to the relationship between the mythical stories and the experience of real-life women through ritual. In the introduction, the author declares that she is not going to discuss the complex issue of the priority of ritual over myth or the opposite way around. This suggests that she assumes that myths can usually be expected to have had direct counterparts in apposite rituals. This assumption is at best problematic, however common it used to be in the scholarship, especially in the early twentieth century. Perhaps this is the main reason why the whole chapter seems to attack a straw-man.

In the section that follows, "Maenads at the mountain", K. introduces a distinction between "named" mythological maenads (Cadmus' daughters and their *thiasoi*) and "anonymous" ones, whose fate in the *Bacchae* (unlike Agaue, they returned home) is supposed to reflect an experience of real women who participated in the rituals. This is an interesting reformulation of a distinction already introduced by Diodorus of Sicily (IV 3) that is well represented in the scholarly literature[6] between the mythological and historical maenads. The only problem is that such a distinction cannot be read back to the text of Euripides. In spite of K.'s claims, lines 35–38, 680–682 and 694 do not suggest that the *thiasoi* led by Cadmus' daughters were separate from the crowd of ordinary Theban maenads. Apart from this, the section is very interesting, but some further elaboration would be welcome. As it stands, it gives the impression of being a series of loose observations about how Dionysiac experience makes the concept/perception of space shift. Given the nature of the subject matter (chaos), a more robust conceptual frame is needed in order to save the description from becoming similar to what is being described. Unfortunately (to give one example), K. does not make explicit the distinctions between descriptive categories when she writes about dissolving physical boundaries by means of tearing down the walls of a palace and dissolving conceptual boundaries by means of speaking metaphorically about a city as if it was a person. I understand that it is a mental shortcut, but it is certainly a risky one.

The section that follows is entitled "The space of the hunt in the huntress myths and the *arkteia* at Brauron". It contains some interesting remarks about the difference between Artemis and her mortal followers (the main difference is that Artemis was immortal, which had far-reaching consequences) and between the male "black hunter" and his female counterpart. Here the main problem is that the figure of the "black hunter" seems to have more to do with the history of scholarly paradigms than with Greek culture itself[7]. Subsequently, K. addresses the problem of the

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[6] E.g. A. Rapp, *Die Mänade im griechischen Cultus, in der Kunst und Poesie*, RhM XXVII 1872, pp. 1–22, 562–611; A. Henrichs, *Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina*, HSCPh XC 1978, pp. 121–160.

[7] See e.g. J. Ma, *Black Hunter Variations*, PCPhS XL 1994, pp. 49–80; D.B. Dodd, *Adolescent Initiation in Myth and Tragedy. Rethinking the Black Hunter*, in: D.B. Dodd, C.A. Faraone (edd.), *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives*, London–New York 2003, pp. 71–84.

relationship between the myths of huntresses and the rituals at Brauron, only to conclude that it is doubtful. Again, the question arises as to whether this passage is really necessary in a book about female mobility.

The last chapter, although included in the second part of the book, clearly stands out from it. It contains general conclusions and some brief remarks (e.g. contrasting the spatial mobility of women in myth and in comedy). Subsequently, on the last three pages, the author introduces another valuable pair of terms, "glass ceiling" and "glass walls", in reference to the limits of mobility of real and imaginary ancient women.

All in all, given its hyperbolically excerptive character and the fact that the material has been chosen in an arbitrary way, the book under review cannot be read as a monograph. It is rather a selection of essays directly or indirectly related to the central subject matter specified in the title. Yet, it cannot be denied that, in spite of its all weaknesses, it is an interesting and thought-provoking piece of scholarly literature on an extremely difficult and important subject. Like a preliminary archaeological survey, it offers some glimpses of the enormous mass of data regarding female mobility and gendered space in the ancient Greek imagination. There is still much to be done…

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