

**Andromache KARANIKA**

**Weaving a Bride's Lament: Lamentation, Wedding and Work Performances in Ancient Greek Literature and Modern Greek Folk Tradition**

Recent scholarship has illustrated the conflation in the poetic motifs as well as ritual customs around death and marriage. The tradition of ancient *epithalamia* and wedding songs emphasizes the bride's departure from her home. In like terms, evidence from funerary inscriptions centralizes the importance of natal families, and, in particular, the mother-daughter relation, proving the mother of the dead bride the only and eternal mourner after her daughter's loss.

In my paper, I want to investigate how the mother-daughter relation is framed in a tradition of lamentation. The perspective of the Modern Greek folk tradition can be illuminating and inspiring in our understanding of the performance of ancient texts that pose many questions. I want to investigate, in particular, the hymn to Demeter, as a narrative that focalizes on the mother-daughter relation, and songs from the Modern Greek folk tradition -short songs, as well as a longer ballad that is rich in meta-narrative details. The narrative in the ballad "*he nyphē pou kakotyche*" ("the bride that fell into misfortune") presents a girl of aristocratic origin who is married off, and falls into poverty. She, then, decides to go back to her parents, where she presents herself as a servant expert in weaving, hiding her true identity. As she weaves, she sings a song, distinctly labeled as a lament song (*moiroloi*) which gives the onset to the scene of recognition with her mother. This particular lament song in fact a twisted wedding song. The narrative of her song is identical with the narrative of wedding songs, as many examples eloquently present. Yet this is a performance at the moment of work, in the context of a narrative that focuses entirely on the mother-daughter relation. One of the major themes of the *Hymn to Demeter*, the separation of the mother and the daughter, is reiterated in oral traditional songs for weddings in the modern Greek traditional folklore. Moreover, the narrative of the quest of the bride for her former life in the Modern Greek ballad has many striking parallel features with the quest of Demeter for her lost daughter in the *Homeric hymn to Demeter*. I will discuss the two narratives in parallel, with the hope to reach a better understanding of both the texts, as well as to proceed with an interpretation about the hymn's performance context.

I would like to propose that narratives performed for ritual purposes could be performed in a non-ritual setting. Such a proposal would bring the narrative of the Hymn to Demeter, in new light, as a constructive part of a female repertoire of private performances. A comparative approach, as the one that I propose with the Modern Greek folk tradition, can be suggestive further about the many contexts of the Homeric hymns' stylized discourse.

karanika@stanford.edu