

## BOOK REVIEW

*A Roman Woman Reader: Selections from the Second Century BCE through the Second Century CE.* By SHEILA K. DICKISON AND JUDITH P. HALLETT. Mundelein: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc., 2015. Pp. xxii + 226. Paper, \$19.00. ISBN 978-0-86516-662-2.

Dickison and Hallett's intermediate/advanced reader aims to introduce students to the study of Roman women in the manner of a sourcebook, to trace developments in the Latin language, and to present numerous critical approaches to the central topic of Roman women, while providing grammar and syntax assistance for students transitioning from graded readers to advanced commentaries.<sup>1</sup> In 780 lines of Latin from texts written across four centuries, this unique selection of readings is "designed specifically to furnish Latin students with a comprehensive and accurate picture of what our sources relate about the images and realities of women in Roman antiquity" (xv).

The editors have utilized a chronological rather than thematic organization, distinguishing their work from Raia, Luschnig, and Sebesta's intermediate Latin reader, *The Worlds of Roman Women*.<sup>2</sup> In addition, their expansive purview includes more challenging archaic material, a wide selection of documentary and inscriptional evidence, and passages concerning female erotic desire. The reader opens with Plautus' *Casina* and closes with Aulus Gellius on the *captio* of the Vestal Virgins, and includes excerpts from Cato the Elder, Nepos (Cornelia), Livy, Cicero, Horace, Tibullus (Sulpicia), Propertius, Ovid, Petronius, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Sulpicia, Martial, and Juvenal. Readers are prompted to trace three themes throughout: the influence of genre, the depiction of women as "same"

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Page xvi cites as a model Bonnie MacLachlan. *Women in Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Ann Raia, Cecilia Luschnig, and Judith Lynn Sebesta. *The Worlds of Roman Women: A Latin Reader*. Newburyport, MA. Focus Press: 2005. The online companion can be found here: <http://www2.cnr.edu/home/araia/companion.html>

and “other”, and how female-authored texts confirm or contradict male stereotypes about women (xiii).<sup>3</sup>

Dickison and Hallett have the difficult task of presenting a cohesive set of texts centered on a theme, while providing sufficient grammar and syntax guidance for the upper-intermediate student, as well as interpretive issues and questions inviting student discussion. Passages range in difficulty, and the commentary outlines the grammar of more elusive sections, rearranging elliptical phrases and sometimes providing translations (e.g. Tibullus (Sulpicia) 3.16). Several passages highlight specific grammatical and literary features, providing opportunities for presentation and review. Plautus’ *Casina* introduces archaism; Cato’s outline of the *vilica*’s duties reviews future imperatives and jussive subjunctives. Literary devices are defined throughout: Cicero’s condemnation of Clodia challenges students to identify prosopopeia, hendiadys, anaphora, and asyndeton.

Introductions to each passage give the literary and historical context, and present the purpose of the inclusion of the passage. Passages prioritize historical women and first person narratives in order to elucidate the lives of women from a range of ages, classes, and locales. The familiar character sketches of Lucretia, Sempronia, Turia, and Dido are absent, replaced by the words of Cornelia, the two Sulpicias, and Claudia Severa. Selections speak across the centuries to reflect Roman cultural attitudes, stereotypes, and social practices. Common motifs include female erotic desire, overbearing mothers, and domestic concerns regarding marriage, adultery, and divorce. Within the primarily negative representations are observations about women with property (Clodia, Eumachia), pride in one’s ancestry (Suetonius), female artistry (Sulpicia, Ovid), education and writing (Pliny the Younger, the Vindolanda Tablets), and religion (Aulus Gellius).

The chronological framework allows students to trace developments in the Latin language, and specific word choice and literary devices illustrate cultural themes. Pliny’s use of *concordiam* in letter 4.19 prompts the observation, “In this period ‘harmony’ in a married relationship has become a very important ideal for Romans” (157 ad 19–20). In Cicero’s *Pro Caelio*, the phrase *in gloria muliebri* distinguishes the sexes: “Noble Roman males and females achieved a high reputation in totally different ways. The moral reputation of a noblewoman was based largely on her display of chaste behavior” (88 ad 27–28). The excitement of the editors is ubiquitous: in Petronius’ *Satyricon*, *expugnare* provides “military termi-

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Judith Hallett. “Women as ‘Same’ and ‘Other’ in [the] Classical Roman Elite.” *Helios* 16.1 (1989) 59-78.

nology!" (140 ad 37), while the use of *castae* and *pudicitiam* "reminds us of the *matrona's* claim to fame, now under siege and shortly to surrender!" (142 ad 51).

One of the main strengths of the volume is its inclusion of passages for comparison. Epitaphs provide glimpses of life outside the elite and away from Rome: before we read Augustan elegiac poetry, we investigate the playful, erotic undertones of a funerary inscription written in elegiac meter (*CIL* VI.18324). Certain readings combine related materials: the manipulative Clodia of Cicero's *Pro Caecilio* emerges as a wealthy landowner in Cicero's letters (Reading 8), and the Fulvia of Cicero's *Philippics* is further denounced in sling bullet inscriptions from the Perusine War (Reading 9). Four Sulpicia poems are joined by the epitaph of Petale Sulpicia that helped "quell suspicions about Sulpicia's authorship," as well as a letter from Sulpicia's father to Cicero (133, Reading 11). Reading 3 tenuously pairs the letter of Cornelia with Livy's Sophoniba, an African queen that may have provided a moral example for Cornelia, "at least as Livy characterizes her" (56). Sophoniba is a powerful example of a foreign woman committing a noble suicide, similar to Horace's Cleopatra and Vergil's Dido.

Bolchazy-Carducci readers may be used in conjunction with other texts; this text would pair well with Catullus or Roman elegy, Livy book one or *Aeneid* book four (alluded to in Tibullus (Sulpicia) 3.9, Sophoniba's suicide, Petronius' *Satyricon*, and the *Tabula Vindolanda* 2.291). The introduction is accompanied by an excellent starter bibliography; a timeline and complete vocabulary list end the volume. Images of the sling bullets, Vindolanda tablets, and representative inscriptions would be useful. For example, the editors note that a "reversed C in Latin inscriptions signifies *Caiae* = *Gaiae*" in *CIL* I.2.1570 (74 ad 1), but we do not see the epitaph under discussion. In addition, while the meter is noted for all verse texts, a brief metrical guide would be helpful. These quibbles are few, and readers are sure to emerge with a multiplicity of images regarding the lived realities of Roman women from texts rarely discussed in the undergraduate Latin classroom. The reviewer looks forward to putting this text to good use.

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