Women in Antiquity
FALL 2024

MEETING 12

Beyond the Roman Aristocracy

- *The Principate*
- *Patrician and Plebeian*
- *Slavery*
- *Freedmen and women*
- *Rome vs. the provinces*

1

Upcoming dates

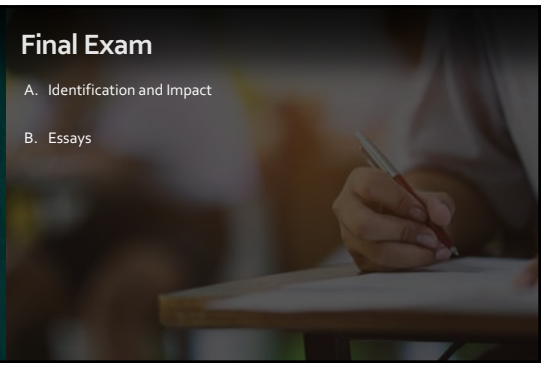
• Monday, December 9	Position Paper due
• Tuesday, December 17	Final exam (CA-209, 6:15–8:15 p.m.)
• Thursday, December 26	Ultimate Deadline • No late papers or resubmissions for reversible deductions after this date • No exceptions • Any incompletes owing to personal emergencies must be mutually agreed before this date
• This Sunday	Deadline for posting your weekly responses

2

Final Exam

A. Identification and Impact

B. Essays



3

Five things today

1. The Principate
2. Patrician and Plebeian
3. Slavery
4. Freedmen and women
5. Rome vs. the provinces

4

5

Quiz #10: Beyond the Roman Aristocracy

1. In relation to gender, the Twelve Tables established all of the following EXCEPT:
   a. Women were not allowed to cry at funerals
   b. Women remained under guardianship into adulthood
   c. Sons could be sold into debt slavery up to three times, but daughters could not
   (d) Women could escape usucapio (manus marriage) by drinking the husband's blood three nights in succession every year

2. Marriage among slaves in Rome
   a. was formally acknowledged and legally valid
   (b) resulted in free children if the mother was free
   c. was disliked and discouraged by masters
   d. sometimes involved multiple wives or husbands

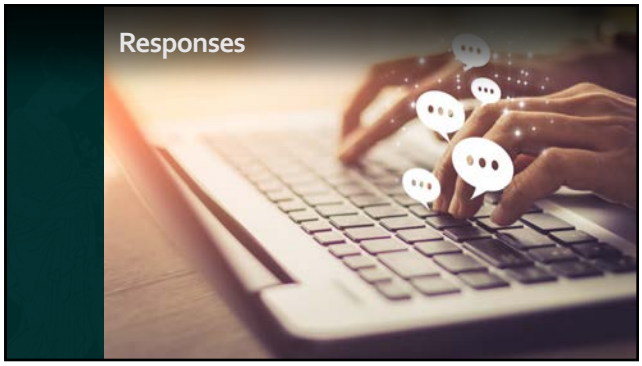
3. Stories related in Ovid's Metamorphosis include all of the following EXCEPT:
   a. Daphne, a nymph pursued by Apollo
   b. Hecuba, queen of the destroyed Troy
   (c) unhappy lovers Padmaeos and Arakinos
   d. Galatea, the sea-nymph beloved of Acis and coveted by Polyphemus, the Cyclops

4. A female Roman slave could achieve manumission (release from slavery) through all of the following EXCEPT:
   a. Bearing four children to become her master's slaves
   (b) Fasting for 60 days during the festival of the Good Goddess
   c. Repaying her purchase price with her personal savings from tips and gifts
   d. Marriage to a free man, which involved prior manumission

5. According to Pomeroy, most freedwomen were
   a. dependent on gifts from lovers or the state
   (b) shopkeepers, artisans, and domestic servants
   c. no longer in contact with their former owners
   d. initiates in a secret cult, the libertinae gaudiales

EC. What aspect of the life of Roman slaves, freedmen, and freedwomen surprised you or stood out to you?

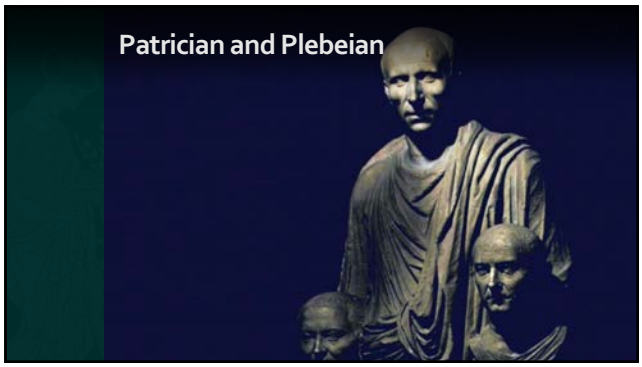
6


Responses

7

Questions about whatever

8


Patrician and Plebeian

9

Primary Source Reading

Fragments

The Twelve Tables

10

Finding the Roman lower classes

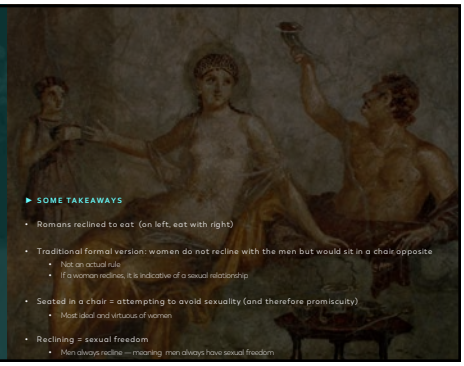
- Emphasis is on family
- Roman census
- Roman info tends to come from sources oblique to lower classes
  - Legal records
  - Accounts of elite families and individuals
- Anomaly:
  - Large quantity of everyday Roman citizens hidden, but
  - Classes lower than that (slaves and freedmen) are within the household
  - Info about them in terms of contact with higher classes within household
- Presence of gender inconsistent
  - Collective presence in forum and in demonstrations

11

Secondary Source Reading

Matthew Roller

"Horizontal Women: Posture and Sex in the Roman Convivium"



▶ SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Romans reclined to eat (on left, eat with right)
- Traditional formal version: women do not recline with the men but would sit in a chair opposite
  - Not an actual rule
  - If a woman reclines, it is indicative of a sexual relationship
- Seated in a chair = attempting to avoid sexuality (and therefore promiscuity)
  - Most ideal and virtuous of women
- Reclining = sexual freedom
  - Men always recline = meaning men always have sexual freedom

12

Roman economy

- Wealthiest economy — Very high standard of living
  - Preeminence among surrounding peoples they engage with and over peoples they rule over
  - To be a Roman citizen is to stand out
- Secret of understanding Rome's pursuit of dominion
  - Romans develop their empire
    - partly to protect their home territory,
    - partly out of commercial enterprise and trading aggression
  - Armies *follow* to reinforce and protect trading interests and territory
  - Purpose of empire is always to gain control over distant resources
- Roman economic power is also a secret of Romanization
- Result: Roman society expands because the Roman economy rapidly expands

13

Roman slavery

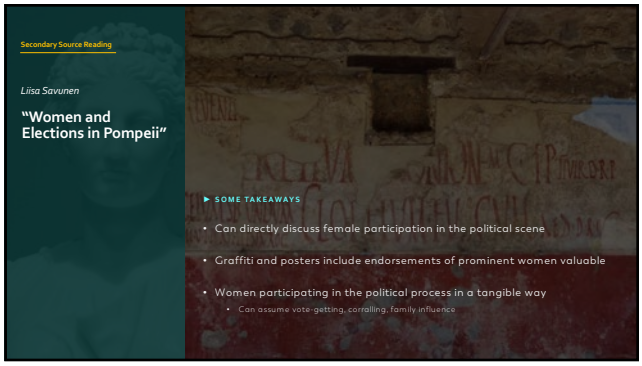
- As Roman economy expands, Romans depend on slaves and freed slaves
  - Most Roman military engagement is about keeping or protecting the lands they have
  - Generates large numbers of prisoners of war who enter into the slave system
    - Captured soldiers
    - Large numbers of civilians from places that resisted Roman dominion and are paying a penalty (women and children + male civilians)
- Skilled slaves
  - Expansion into Hellenistic east brings skilled laborers and professionals (doctors, teachers, midwives, etc.)
  - Performed skilled functions within households as slaves
  - Very likely to be freed and able to operate as freedmen in what they did
  - Women as well, though Roman aristocratic matrons worked as well (e.g., spinning/looming)

14

Rome and the Empire

- Romanization via colonies and other Roman cities
- Miniature Romes become Roman in culture but mixed in ethnicity
- Less of a physical difference between lower and upper classes
  - In Rome, slaves are foreigners
  - In the rest of the empire, the distinction may be less
  - The divide is different, and not necessarily in predictable ways

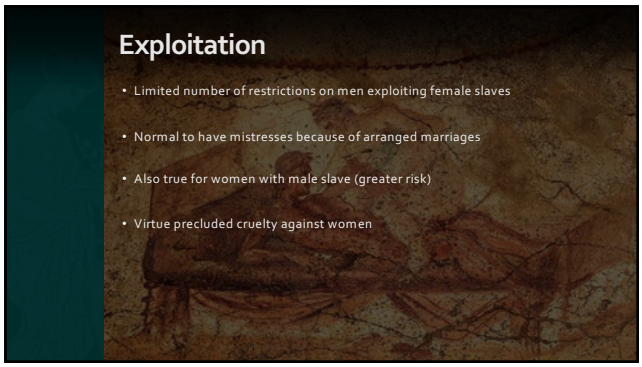
15


Secondary Source Reading
Liisa Savunen
"Women and Elections in Pompeii"
SOME TAKEAWAYS
Can directly discuss female participation in the political scene
Graffiti and posters include endorsements of prominent women valuable
Women participating in the political process in a tangible way
Can assume vote-getting, corralling, family influence

16

Slavery in the household
Considerable presence of slaves and ex-slaves in Roman aristocratic households
Women more likely to end up as domestics
Men might end up in households, fields, mines, etc.
Domestics used as indicators of family's status
Well-kept, healthy, elegant and well-dressed
Children growing up in aristocratic family would have constant contact
Intimate knowledge of what it is like to be a slave woman or a freedwoman

17


Exploitation
Limited number of restrictions on men exploiting female slaves
Normal to have mistresses because of arranged marriages
Also true for women with male slave (greater risk)
Virtue precluded cruelty against women

18

Primary Source Reading

Ovid

Selections from *Metamorphoses*

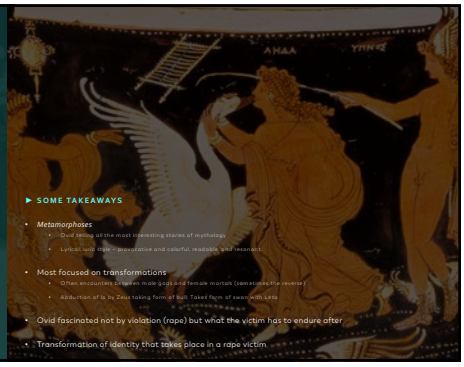
Pyramus and Thisbe

19

Secondary Source Reading

Leo C. Curran

"Rape and Rape Victims in *The Metamorphoses*"



▶ SOME TAKEAWAYS

- *Metamorphoses*
  - Ovid telling all the most interesting stories of mythology
  - Lyrical, epic style – provocative and colorful, readable and resonant
- Most focused on transformations
  - Often encounters between male gods and female mortals (sometimes the reverse)
  - Abduction of Io by Zeus taking form of bull. Takes form of swan with Leda
- Ovid fascinated not by violation (rape) but what the victim has to endure after
- Transformation of identity that takes place in a rape victim

20

Freedmen and freedwomen

- Generous with manumission
  - Can accumulate savings over this time purchase
  - Gain after many years of service or after master retires
- Large population of ex-slaves, male and female a crucial part of the Roman economy
  - Low-level managerial in businesses and factories
  - Household staff of an aristocrat includes a quantity of freedmen and women
- Best-known example: Julio-Claudians
  - Romans have no civil service
  - Governors used their own household staff – their own freedmen
  - Emperors had to do the same thing
- Large population of freedmen/women as important layer of society
  - Member of household as a sort of adopted noncitizen
  - Freedman takes the name of his old master's family
  - Part of society even if not a citizen, depending on patronage of family

21

Secondary Source Reading

Judith P. Hallett

"The Role of Women in Roman Elegy: Counter-Cultural Feminism"

▶ SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Subjective, emotional, intimate and personal
  - E.g., Catullus (modeled himself after Sappho)
- Kind of woman presented
  - Exalted
  - Role reversal – male exhibits loyalty, trustworthiness; mistress's flaws and infidelities
- Ideal woman differs from Roman ideal woman (assertive responsibility)
  - Forthright self-sufficiency, unmaterial of Roman male

22

Marriage

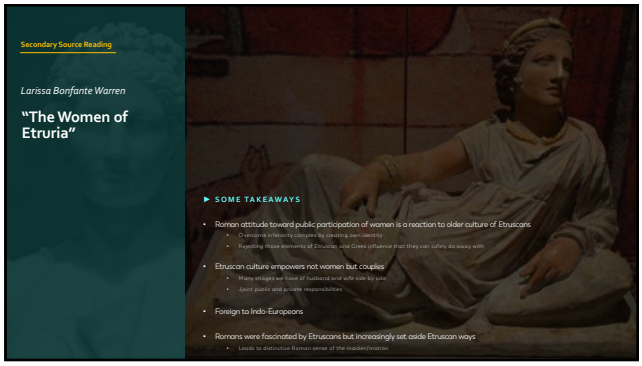
- Slaves: Not "official" but done with permission
- Freedmen/women: recognized and binding
- Child can be citizen
  - Only possible if born to two free parents within precincts of Rome
- Mostly domestics within city household or rural estate (not mines or harvesting gangs)

23

D(is) M(anibus) Regina liberta(m) et coniuge(m)
Barates Palmyrenus natione
Catuallauna an(norum) XXX

'To the spirits of the dead, and to Regina, his freedwoman and wife, of the Catuvellauni, aged 30 years, Barates of Palmyra erected this.'

24


Secondary Source Reading
Larissa Bonfante Warren
"The Women of Etruria"
► SOME TAKEAWAYS
• Roman attitude toward public participation of women is a reaction to older culture of Etruscans
• Overcome inferiority complex by creating own identity
• Rejecting those elements of Etruscan and Greek influence that they can safely do away with
• Etruscan culture empowers not women but couples
• Many images we have of husband and wife side by side
• Joint public and private responsibilities
• Foreign to Indo-Europeans
• Romans were fascinated by Etruscans but increasingly set aside Etruscan ways
• Leads to distinctive Roman sense of the maiden/matron

25

26