



Laura K. McClure

# Women in Classical Antiquity

FROM BIRTH TO DEATH



WILEY Blackwell



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*Laura K. McClure*

**WILEY Blackwell**

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*For my parents*



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## Preface

It has been almost three decades since a new textbook on women in classical antiquity has appeared. Since then, much has changed in the field. New areas of inquiry, new discoveries, new critical approaches, new technologies, and new research have radically modified and expanded what we know about the lives of women in the ancient world and how we understand their representation. This book is an attempt not only to communicate these advances to a general audience but also to convey just how rapidly and dynamically our view of the classical past is evolving. At the same time, it must be acknowledged at the outset that it is impossible to do justice to this escalating body of scholarship and the countless primary sources, many fragmentary or obscure, on which they rely in just one book. Instead, in what follows, I aim to isolate key texts and objects, events and concepts that best represent important ancient Greek and Roman perspectives on women and gender. What makes this book unique, however, is its focus on the life course. This approach not only helps to organize a complex body of evidence by means of an overarching narrative, it also shows how the source materials tend to engage with women and gender at moments critical to formulating social identity, such as birth, adolescence, marriage, childbirth, and death.

Throughout I have tried to strike a balance between a chronological and topical methodology. The book begins with the assumption that readers are unfamiliar with ancient Greek and Roman history and cultural institutions. To provide this necessary context, the book is divided into three chronological periods: Part I: Greece; Interlude: The Hellenistic World; and Part II: Rome. Each part begins with a brief overview of historical events, values, and institutions critical for understanding male identity to lay the foundation for the consideration of women and gender in subsequent chapters. The introduction to ancient Greece examines the rise of the polis during the archaic period and then considers the events and ideas that shaped classical Athens and masculine ideals of heroism, citizenship, and self-control. The Roman chapter explores the foundation of the Republic, the expansion of Roman power throughout the Italian peninsula and beyond, the collapse of the Republic and the foundation of the Empire. It further examines how the Romans constructed male identity around notions of military courage, political ambition, and family lineage. Although the book attempts to integrate material and visual elements in the form of painting, sculpture, architecture, numismatics and inscriptions, the primary focus remains throughout on literary representations of women and gender.

Because the life cycle begins with birth, Chapters 3 and 10 explore the incorporation of the female infant into the family and household and the ways she acquired the gendered characteristics necessary for adulthood. Chapters 4 and 11 examine female adolescence, including concerns about virginity, medical views of the female body, religious roles, and education, culminating with reconstructions of the wedding ceremony. Ancient views of marriage and motherhood, as exemplified by virtuous wives, form the subject of Chapters 5 and 12. Deviations from this norm, typically expressed by female sexual activity outside of marriage in

the form of adultery and prostitution, are considered in Chapters 6 and 13. The last chapter of each section examines evidence for women as figures of authority and the possibilities for female civic engagement, whether in the form of religious activity, as in Greece, or as benefactors and businesswomen in the Roman world. This structure has the advantage of allowing students to easily compare the situation of women across both cultures.

Each chapter begins by isolating a fundamental aspect of the life stage to be examined through the introduction of the deity who governs it, as with Greece, or through an exemplary female, as with Rome. Given divergences in source materials and cultural practices, corresponding Greek and Roman chapters do not always contain the same topics. For example, Chapter 10 discusses the education of Roman girls whereas Chapter 3 does not, because we do not have any reliable evidence of this practice among the Greeks. Boxes introduce students to methodological discussions, such as the types of evidence important for the study of women in classical antiquity, including Athenian vases and Roman wall painting. Others cover cultural institutions, such as the Greek theater or the Roman baths, and topics central to female life, including cosmetics, hairdressing, and dolls. Questions for review and reflection are given at the end of each chapter, along with a list of suggestions for further readings, both primary and secondary. The latter consists of a small selection of recent scholarly books and online resources accessible to students and useful for conducting undergraduate research. Many of these works have been indispensable to framing the discussion within their respective chapters. Pedagogical features such as timelines, maps, and charts are provided at the front of this book to help students navigate the ancient evidence and historical periods. Greek or Latin words introduced in each chapter appear in bold type and are also collected in a full glossary at the back of the book. Translations of the Greek and Latin text have been adapted from the Loeb Classical Library series.

The book has been designed for maximum flexibility in the classroom. It can be used alone as a general introduction to women and gender in the classical world, in support of a course on women in ancient art or similar topic, or in conjunction with a selection of primary sources. Individual chapters can also be used separately. For instance, those on the organization of the family and household might provide a useful introduction to a course on women in Greek or Roman literature in translation.

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## Abbreviations

The abbreviations used here are mostly those used in the third edition of the Oxford Classical Dictionary.

### General

BCE Before Common Era, used in place of BC (“Before Christ”)  
 c. *circa*, “approximately”  
 CE Common Era, used in place of AD (Latin *Anno Domini*, “in the year of our Lord”)  
 Cf. *confer*, “compare”  
 e.g. *exempli gratia*, “for example”  
 fl. *floruit*, “s/he flourished,” the general period in which a person lived  
 Fr. Fragment (*pl.* Frr.)

### Collections of Sources and Reference Works

AE *L'Année Épigraphique*, published in *Revue Archéologique* and separately (1888–)  
 CEG *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca*  
 CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*  
 CMG *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*  
 IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*  
 P. Oxy *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*  
 SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*  
 TLE *Thesaurus Linguae Etruscae*, a collection of Etruscan tomb inscriptions.  
 WO U. Wilcken (ed.), *Griechische Ostraka aus Aegypten und Nubien* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1899)

### Greek and Roman Authors and Texts

Aesch.	Aeschylus	
	<i>Ag.</i>	<i>Agamemnon</i>
	<i>Cho.</i>	<i>Choephoroi</i> , “Libation Bearers”
	<i>Eum.</i>	<i>Eumenides</i>
<i>Anth. Gr.</i>	<i>Greek Anthology</i>	
Alc.	Alcman	
Ap. Rhod.	Apollonius of Rhodes, <i>Voyage of the Argo</i>	
App.	Appian	
	<i>B Civ.</i>	<i>Civil Wars</i>

Ar.	Aristophanes <i>Ach.</i> <i>Eccl.</i>  <i>Lys.</i> <i>Nub.</i> <i>Thesm.</i>	<i>Acharnians</i> <i>Ecclesiazusae</i> , “Women of the Ecclesia” <i>Lysistrata</i> <i>Nubes</i> , “Clouds” <i>Thesmophoriazusae</i> , “Women of the Thesmophoria”
Arch.	Archilochus	
Arist.	Aristotle <i>Eth. Eud.</i> <i>Eth. Nic.</i> <i>Gen. An.</i> <i>Pol.</i> <i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Eudemian Ethics</i> <i>Nichomachean Ethics</i> <i>Generation of Animals</i> <i>Politics</i> <i>Rhetoric</i>
Ath.	Athenaeus, <i>Deipnosophistae</i> , “Dining Sophists”	
Aug.	Augustus RG	<i>Res Gestae</i> , “The Deeds of Divine Augustus”
Aul. Gell.	Aulus Gellius, <i>Attic Nights</i>	
Catull.	Catullus	
Cic.	Cicero <i>Att.</i> <i>Brut.</i> <i>Cael.</i> <i>Har. resp.</i>  <i>Mur.</i> <i>Phil.</i> <i>Tusc.</i> <i>Verr.</i>	<i>Letters to Atticus</i> <i>Brutus</i> <i>In Defense of Caelius</i> <i>On the Responses of the Haruspices</i> <i>In Defense of Murena</i> <i>Philippics</i> <i>Tusculan Disputations</i> <i>Against Verres</i>
Dem.	Demosthenes	
[Dem.]	Pseudo-Demosthenes	
Dio	Dio Cassius, <i>Roman History</i>	
Dion. Hal.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus <i>Ant. Rom.</i>	<i>Roman Antiquities</i>
Eur.	Euripides <i>Alc.</i> <i>Andr.</i> <i>Cap. Mel.</i> <i>Hec.</i> <i>Hipp.</i> <i>IA</i> <i>IT</i> <i>Med.</i> <i>Pho.</i> <i>Tro.</i>	<i>Alcestis</i> <i>Andromache</i> <i>Captive Melanippe</i> <i>Hecuba</i> <i>Hippolytus</i> <i>Iphigenia in Aulis</i> <i>Iphigeneia in Tauris</i> <i>Medea</i> <i>Phoenician Women</i> <i>Trojan Women</i>
Hdt.	Herodotus	

Hes.	Hesiod	
	<i>Op.</i>	<i>Works and Days</i>
	<i>Theog.</i>	<i>Theogony</i>
Herod.	Herodas	
Hippoc.	Hippocrates	
	<i>Mul.</i>	<i>Diseases of Women</i>
	<i>Nat. Puer</i>	<i>On the Nature of the Child</i>
	<i>Ster.</i>	<i>On Infertility</i>
	<i>Virg.</i>	<i>On Virgins</i>
Hom.	Homer	
	<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
	<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
<i>Hom. Hymn</i>	<i>Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite</i>	
<i>Aphr.</i>		
<i>Hom. Hymn.</i>	<i>Homeric Hymn to Demeter</i>	
<i>Dem.</i>		
Hor.	Horace	
	<i>Carm. saec.</i>	<i>Carmen Saeculare, "Secular Hymn"</i>
	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>
Juv.	Juvenal	
Luc.	Lucian	
	<i>Dial. Meretr.</i>	<i>Dialogue of the Courtesans</i>
Lys.	Lysias	
Macr.	Macrobius	
	<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Saturnalia</i>
Mart.	Martial	
Men.	Menander	
	<i>Per.</i>	<i>Perikeiromene, "The Girl Who Gets Her Hair Cut Short"</i>
Nep.	Cornelius Nepos, <i>On Famous Men</i>	
Ov.	Ovid	
	<i>Am.</i>	<i>Amores</i>
	<i>Ars</i>	<i>Art of Love</i>
	<i>Fast.</i>	<i>Fasti</i>
	<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
	<i>Trist.</i>	<i>Tristia</i>
Pers.	Persius	
Pl.	Plato	
	<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
Plaut.	Plautus	
	<i>Amph.</i>	<i>Amphitryo</i>
	<i>Aul.</i>	<i>Aulularia</i>
	<i>Cas.</i>	<i>Casina</i>
	<i>Men.</i>	<i>Menaechmi</i>
	<i>Mil.</i>	<i>Braggart Soldier</i>
Plin.	Pliny the Elder	
	<i>NH</i>	<i>Natural History</i>

Plin.	Pliny the Younger	
	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Letters</i>
Plut.	Plutarch	
	<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
	<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antony</i>
	<i>Caes.</i>	<i>Caesar</i>
	<i>Cic.</i>	<i>Cicero</i>
	<i>Lyc.</i>	<i>Lycurgus</i>
	<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia</i>
	<i>Num.</i>	<i>Numa</i>
	<i>Pyrrh.</i>	<i>Pyrrhus</i>
	<i>Quaest. Rom.</i>	<i>Roman Questions</i>
	<i>Tib. Gracch.</i>	<i>Tiberius Gracchus</i>
Polyb.	Polybius, <i>Histories</i>	
Poseid.	Poseidippus	
Prop.	Propertius	
Sen.	Seneca	
	<i>Ben.</i>	<i>On Benefits</i>
	<i>Controv.</i>	<i>Controversies</i>
	<i>Helv.</i>	<i>Consolation to Helvia</i>
Sor. <i>Gyn.</i>	Soranus, <i>Gynecology</i>	
Soph.	Sophocles	
	<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antigone</i>
	<i>Ter.</i>	<i>Tereus</i>
	<i>Trach.</i>	<i>Trachiniae, "Women of Trachis"</i>
Tac.	Tacitus	
	<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annals</i>
	<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue on Oratory</i>
Thuc.	Thucydides, <i>Peloponnesian Wars</i>	
Theoc.	Theocritus	
	<i>Id.</i>	<i>Idyll</i>
Tib.	Tibullus	
Tyrt.	Tyrtaeus	
Val. Max.	Valerius Maximus	
Verg.	Vergil	
	<i>Aen.</i>	<i>Aeneid</i>
	<i>Ec.</i>	<i>Eclogues</i>
Vitr.	Vitruvius, <i>On Architecture</i>	
Xen.	Xenophon	
	<i>Hier.</i>	<i>Hiero</i>
	<i>Oec.</i>	<i>Household Economy</i>
	<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Memorabilia</i>
	<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
Zonar.	Zonaras	

## Timeline of the Classical World

This timeline is a very abbreviated overview intended to provide a historical context for the material in this book. Dates are often approximate, particularly for the Greek period, and follow established opinions. Only frequently mentioned authors have been included. Not all Roman emperors are listed.

GREECE (BCE)	
3000–2100	EARLY BRONZE AGE: Beginning of Minoan Civilization on Crete
2100	Greek Speakers enter Greece
2100–1600	MIDDLE BRONZE AGE: MINOAN PERIOD
1800	Earliest writing in Linear A
1600–1150	LATE BRONZE AGE: MYCENAEAN PERIOD
1600–1500	Mycenean Shaft Graves
1450	Destruction of palace at Knossos
1400	Earliest writing in Linear B
1184	Traditional Date of the mythic Trojan War
1200	Destruction of Mycenaean palaces
1150–750	IRON AGE
800	First Olympian games
750–490	ARCHAIC PERIOD
750–25	Homer's <i>Iliad</i> and <i>Odyssey</i>
fl. 600	Sappho
535	Invention of Drama at Athens
c. 525–456	Aeschylus
508	Democratic Reforms at Athens
c. 496–406	Sophocles
490–323	CLASSICAL PERIOD
490–79	PERSIAN WARS
c. 480–406	Euripides
469–399	Hippocrates
444–385	Aristophanes
431–404	Peloponnesian War
430–354	Xenophon
399	Trial and execution of Socrates
384–322	Aristotle
340	Pseudo-Demosthenes, <i>Against Neaera</i>

**HELLENISTIC PERIOD (BCE)**

359	Philip II becomes king of Macedon
357	Marriage of Philip and Olympias
356	Birth of Alexander III to Philip and Olympias
336	Assassination of Philip II, ascent of Alexander
334	Alexander begins campaign against Persia
323	Death of Alexander in Babylon
	Birth of Alexander IV to Roxane
316	Death of Olympias
316–268	Arsinoe II
298/7	Founding of Mouseion and Library in Alexandria
277	Establishment of three Hellenistic kingdoms
ca. 266–221	Berenice II
69–30	Cleopatra VII
30	Augustus conquers Egypt and becomes first Roman emperor

**ROME**

753 BCE	Legendary Foundation of Rome
753–509 BCE	Monarchy
509 BCE	Beginning of the Republic
494–287 BCE	Conflict of the Orders
450 BCE	Law of the Twelve Tables
264–241 BCE	First Punic War
c. 254–184 BCE	Plautus
218–201 BCE	Second Punic War
195–159?	Terence
149–146 BCE	Third Punic War
146 BCE	Invasion of Greece
133–121 BCE	Gracchi Reforms
107–100 BCE	Marius
106–43 BCE	Cicero
90–88 BCE	Social Wars
83–70 BCE	Civil War: Sulla
70–19 BCE	Vergil
73–71 BCE	Spartacus' Slave Revolt
59 BCE	Formation of First Triumvirate: Pompey, Caesar, Crassus
59 BCE–17 CE	Livy
58–51 BCE	Caesar conquers Gaul
44 BCE	Death of Julius Caesar
43 BCE	Formation of Second Triumvirate: Antony, Octavian, Lepidus
43 BCE–17 CE	Ovid
31 BCE	Battle of Actium
30 BCE	Death of Antony and Cleopatra
27 BCE	Senate Decrees Octavian Princeps
c. 4 BCE–65 CE	Seneca
12–41 CE	Caligula
14 CE	Death of Augustus

14–68 CE	Julio-Claudian Emperors
37–68 CE	Nero
c. 50–120 CE	Plutarch
68–69 CE	Civil War
69–96 CE	Flavian Dynasty
96–180 CE	Five Good Emperors
117–138 CE	Hadrian
161–192 CE	Commodus
193 CE	Year of the Five Emperors
212 BCE	All Free Men in the Roman Empire Granted Citizenship
476 BCE	Traditional Date for the Fall of Rome

