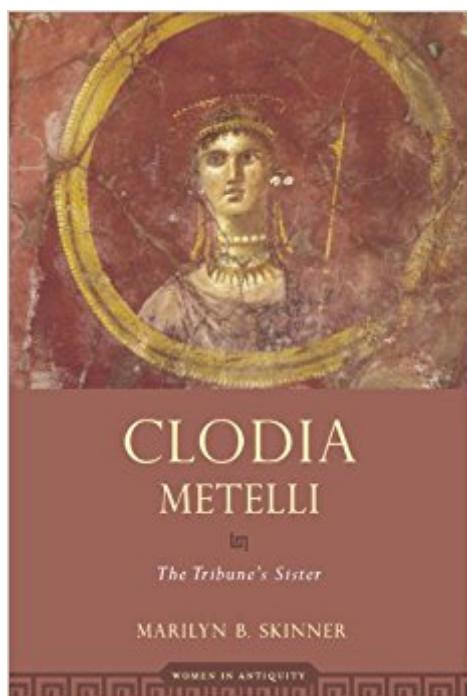


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Clodia Metelli: The Tribune's Sister (Women In Antiquity)



Synopsis

Clodia Metelli: The Tribune's Sister is the first full-length biography of a Roman aristocrat whose colorful life, as described by her contemporaries, has inspired numerous modern works of popular fiction, art, and poetry. Clodia, widow of the consul Metellus Celer, was one of several prominent females who made a mark on history during the last decades of the Roman Republic. As the eldest sister of the populist demagogue P. Clodius Pulcher, she used her wealth and position to advance her brother's political goals. For that she was brutally reviled by Clodius' enemy, the orator M. Tullius Cicero, in a speech painting her as a scheming, debauched whore. Clodia may also have been the alluring mistress celebrated in the love poetry of Catullus, whom he calls "Lesbia" in homage to Sappho and depicts as beautiful, witty, but also false and corrupt. From Cicero's letters, finally, we receive glimpses of a very different woman, a great lady at her leisure. This study examines Clodia in the contexts of her family background, the societal expectations for a woman of her rank, and the turbulent political climate in which she operated. It weighs the value of the several kinds of testimony about her and attempts to extract a picture as faithful to historical truth as possible. The manner in which Clodia was represented in writings of the period, and the motives of their authors in portraying her as they did, together shed considerable light on the role played by female figures in Roman fiction and historiography.

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Customer Reviews

"The book is well-presented and well-written, with an image in each chapter, easily accessible sections and sub-sections within the chapters. As an early volume in the Women in Antiquity series, it has set the tone for future biographies of other key women." --Bryn Mawr Classical Review"Skinner, one of the most sophisticated and accomplished classical scholars today, is the perfect person to write the first full-length biography of Clodia Metelli. This is a careful, impeccably documented biography that confronts directly the political context of Clodia's life, explores Roman attitudes toward wealthy, sexually adventuresome women and deals effectively with the primarily hostile sources for her life. Scholars and students alike will find this biography as interesting for its content as for a model of persuasive scholarship. Essential." --CHOICE

Marilyn Skinner is Professor of Classics at the University of Arizona.

This is not a history or biography of Clodia Metella and her very interesting times, but rather a technical analysis and discussion regarding the information available about her from all sources but mainly from Cicero and Catullus. In fact, there is very little known about her. There is no surviving correspondence or inscriptions: only Cicero's letters and speeches and Catullus poems. Skinner is very clear about the limitations of writing a biography of a ancient Roman woman. So while you will not find out a lot about Clodia Metella nor even about the last decades of the Republic, you will learn a lot about historical methodology.

Excellent product. Excellent service.

I had thought that the book I am currently writing would be the first biography of Clodia Metelli, the woman whom the ancient Roman poet Catullus called "Lesbia" in his most touching verses, as well as some of his most shocking and sensational. However, at best it will be second, because Marilyn Skinner has produced the first. Skinner is the pre-eminent Catullan scholar in America, having published about him and his work since writing her PhD dissertation. Skinner is also an authority on the poetry of Sappho, who greatly influenced Catullus; she is an expert on sexuality in ancient Greece and Rome; and, she has published scholarly articles on Clodia since the early 1980s. In sum, no one has ever been more qualified to write a biography of Clodia. Moreover, "Clodia Metelli: A Tribune's Sister" is completely accessible to the general reader -- no prior knowledge of the subject matter is required. Skinner's writing is straight-forward, and she superbly organizes the subject matter, including the status of women in Clodia's day (the period of Julius Caesar's rise to

power), the general political climate, the major figures in Clodia's life (so far as is known): her brother Clodius; her husband, Celer; her former lover Catullus; her former lover subsequent to Catullus, Caelius; and Cicero, including his personal correspondence relating to her, and his oration at trial, "Pro Caelio", attacking Clodia's character in order to defend his former protege Caelius against, among other charges, attempting to poison Clodia. Notwithstanding the complex interactions of these figures, Skinner presents these interactions in a manner that is completely clear to the reader. Her translations of certain passages of Cicero's "Pro Caelio" are the best I've read. All of the assertions made by ancient authors are footnoted with the relevant sources, and Skinner also presents the interpretations of modern scholars regarding various controversies. Skinner is a brilliant and subtle thinker. So far as I am aware, she is the first scholar to publish the observation that perhaps the Roman Senators and Knights listening to Cicero's oration, while sitting in judgment on Caelius, were not as naive as other scholars seem to suppose. I must confess, though, that as with TP Wiseman's very strongly and intelligently argued case that Catullus was writing poems about a *different* Clodia, I remain unconvinced that Clodia Metelli was greatly unlike the portraits that both Cicero and Catullus paint in words -- the former in rousing prose, the latter in arousing poetry. Of course, Skinner's keen observation regarding one particular matter, "We don't know", well applies to any of the people and events that occurred more than two millennia ago. However, my view is that to believe with Wiseman that Catullus was writing about some other "Clodia", or with Skinner that Cicero's characterizations of Clodia were largely inaccurate, would raise more questions in my mind than do more traditional readings. But, if you have any interest in this subject matter -- as a student, scholar, or general reader -- and want a single volume that is as comprehensive as it is comprehensible, allow me to be succinct: Buy this book.

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