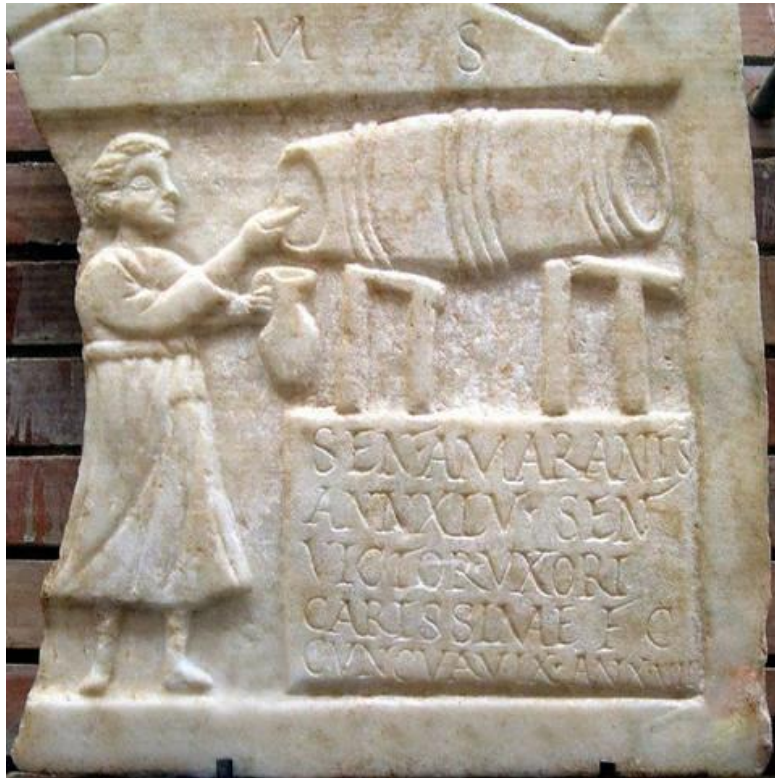


BELLARIA LXXIX



WOMEN'S LIVES FROM ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS

By kind permission of Cambridge University Press, this series is based entirely on Emily A. Hemelrijk's superb *Women and Society in the Roman World: A Sourcebook of Inscription from the Roman West* (Cambridge 2021). It covers inscriptions of all sorts, from graffiti to curse tablets and epitaphs, sourced from Italy and the western Latin-speaking provinces. Professor Hemelrijk provides a wide-ranging introduction to the subject matter, more focussed introductions to each chapter, and each individual inscription is prefaced with an admirably clear discussion of its implications. It is hard to see how it could have been better done.

As Professor Hemelrijk points out, there are thousands of inscriptions referring to women. Hers can be only a small selection (of which the *Bellaria* will be an even smaller selection) for the specific purpose of focussing clearly on different aspects of women's lives. These are reflected in the chapters and their sub-headings, replicated in the *Bellaria*. The numbering of the headings is also taken from the book and gives an indication of its scope.

Professor Hemelrijk's text has been constructed with great precision for scholars, with different markers to indicate emendations, corrections, missing words and so on. Such markers have been removed to make the Latin easier to read by the non-professional. I have made the occasional change to the translations to match them more closely to the Latin.

The Latin of many inscriptions would often get 0/10 from *Kennedy's Latin Primer*. So too would some of the verses. Standards were dropping even then ...

Roman female names

As will become clear, the conventions *change greatly* over time. At its simplest:

1. A slave usually had a single name.
2. A citizen had two names, e.g. the daughter of Lucius Licinius Crassus was Licinia Crassa (if he had two daughters, they would be distinguished by Maior and Minor).
3. A freedwoman also had two names: her own name plus that of the person who freed her. So a freedwoman of Lucius Licinius Crassus would be Licinia [say] Melissa, or (in full) either Licinia Licinii liberta Melissa, or Licinia L L Melissa.

I FAMILY LIFE

Wives

3 *Laudatio Turiae*

CIL 6, 41062 [extracts]

Rome

9 BC



Fragments of the *Laudatio Turiae*

Comment: this aristocratic writer's famous encomium of his politically engaged wife Turia (set up in various parts of Rome) includes her successful efforts to save him from being proscribed and to rehabilitate him into Roman society. This moving extract describes her reaction to their childlessness.

When you despaired of your ability to bear children and grieved over my childlessness, you became anxious lest by retaining you in marriage I might lose all hope of having children and be distressed for that reason. So you proposed a divorce outright and offered to yield our house free to another woman's fertility. Your intention was in fact that you yourself, relying on our well-known conformity of sentiment, would search out and provide for me a wife who was worthy and suitable for me, and you declared that you would regard future children as joint and as though your own, and that you would not effect a separation of our property which had hitherto been held in common, but that it would still be under my

control and, if I wished so, under your administration: nothing would be kept apart by you, nothing separate, and you would thereafter take upon yourself the duties and the loyalty of a sister and a mother-in-law.

diffidens fecunditati tuae et dolens orbitate mea, ne tenendo in matrimonio te spem habendi liberos deponerem atque eius caussa essem infelix, de diuertio elocuta es uocuumque domum alterius fecunditati te tradituram non alia mente, nisi ut nota concordia nostra tu ipsa mihi dignam et aptam condicionem quaereres pararesque ac futuros liberos te communes pro que tuis habituram adfirmares, neque patrimonii nostri, quod adhuc fuerat commune, separationem facturam, sed in eodem arbitrio meo id et, si uellem, tuo ministerio futurum: nihil seiunctum, nihil separatum te habituram, sororis socrusue officia pietatemque mihi dehinc praestituram.

5 Mausoleum of Postumia Matronilla

CIL 8, 11294

Near Thelepte, Africa Proconsularis.

2nd century AD

Comment: here is the 'traditional' picture of the perfect Roman housewife—married to one man, she has no life in the wider world and faithfully dedicates her whole existence to the unceasing demands made on her by home and family.

Sacred to the Spirits of the Dead. Postumia Matronilla was a wife without compare, a good mother, a most dutiful grandmother, modest, pious, hard-working, thrifty, active, wakeful, attentive; she married one man, and slept with one man; she was a matron who worked hard and was trustworthy. She lived for 53 years, 5 months and 3 days.

Dis Manibus sacrum. Postumia Matronilla, incomparabilis coniux, mater bona, auia piissima, pudica, religiosa, laboriosa, frugi, efficax, uigilans, sollicita, uniuira, unicuba, totius industriae et fidei matrona. uixit annis numero LIII, mensibus numero V, diebus tribus.

8 Putting the husband first

CIL 3, 7436

Nicopolis, Moesia Inferior.

Late 2nd-3rd century AD



Aeneas in the Elysian Fields (Sebastiano Conca 1735-40)

Comment: in this quite romantic extract from a long encomium praising his wife Aelia's traditional virtues, her husband Fronto emphasises their compatibility and her sharp intelligence.

First, she was chaste—which you will hear with pleasure—and spaces of the world, also the royal palace of the underworld, know. I pray that you order her to dwell in the Elysian Fields and to crown her hair with myrtle and her temples with flowers. Once she was my home, my hope, my one and only life and she wanted what I wanted, and did not want it if I did not. Nothing was kept secret by her that was not known to me. She was not lacking in hard work, nor was she inexperienced in wool work. Thrifty was her hand, she was generous in her love for me, her husband. Nor without me were food or the gifts of Bacchus a pleasure to her, wonderful in her advice, sharp-witted and of noble reputation.

haec primum casta, quot te audire libenter, et mundi spatia Ditis quoque regia norunt. hanc precor Elysiis iubeas consistere campis et myrta redimire comas et tempora flore. Lar mihi haec quondam, haec spes, haec unica uita, et uellet quod uellem, nollet quoque ac si ego nollem, intima nulla ei quae non mihi nota fuere, nec labos huic defuit, nec uellerem inscia fila, parca manu, se larga meo in amore mariti, nec sine me cibus huic gratus nec munera Bacchi, consilio mira, cata mente, nobili fama.

40 Thrown into the Tiber by her husband

IPostie-A, 210

Portus, Italy

2nd century AD

Comment: since husband and wife had the same name, they were probably freed slaves; the single-named Orfeus (and December) were probably slaves. If so, Orfeus and Florentia were not technically married.

Restutus Piscinensis and Prima Restuta made this for Florentia, their dearest daughter, who by Orfeus her husband was deprived of life in the Tiber. Her relative December set this up. She lived for 16 years and 6 months.

Restutus Piscinensis et Prima Restuta Primae Florentiae, filiae carissimae, fecerunt, qui ab Orfeu marito in Tiberi uita decepta est. December cognatus posuit. quae uixit annos XVI semis.

Mothers

43 Praise of a Mother

CIL 6, 10230 = ILS 8394

Rome

Early 1st century

Comment: the mother in question, Murdia, daughter of Lucius, is in this extract praised by the son of her first marriage because she had made him and his half-brothers by her second marriage equal heirs to the estate—her daughter too had been left a legacy—and he himself had been left a previous legacy from his father's will.

... She made all her sons equal heirs, having given a legacy to her daughter. A mother's love consists in her affection for her children and equal distribution [for all]. She willed her husband a fixed sum, so that his right to her dowry would be enhanced by the honour of her deliberate choice. Recalling my father's memory, and with that taken into account and out of her loyalty to him, having made a calculation she left me in her will specific property, not with this in mind so that, with an insult to my brothers, she should prefer me to them, but remembering my father's generosity, she decided that I should have returned to me the part of my inheritance which she had received by the decision of her husband, so that what had been taken care of by his orders should be restored to my ownership.

... omnes filios aequae fecit heredes, partitione filiae data. Amor maternus caritate liberum, aequalitate partium constat. uiro certam pecuniam legauit, ut ius dotis honore iudici augetur. mihi reuocata memoria patris, eaque in consilium et fide sua adhibita, aestumatione facta, certas res testamento praelegauit, neque ea mente, quo me fratribus meis quorum aliqua contumelia praeferret, sed, memor liberalitatis patris mei, reddenda mihi statuit, quae iudicio uiri sui ex patrimonio meo cepisset, ut ea usu suo custodita proprietati meae resti tuerentur.



In such action she determined to maintain the marriages given to her by her parents to worthy men, with obedience and propriety, and as a bride to become more beloved because of her merits, to be thought dearer because of her loyalty, to be left in greater honour because of her judgement, and after her death to be praised in the estimation of her fellow citizens, since the division of her estate indicated her grateful and honourable intentions towards her husbands, her fairness to her children and the justice shown by her sincerity.

constitit ergo in hoc sibi ipsa, ut a parentibus dignis uiris data matrimonia osequio probitate retineret, nupta meritis gratior fieret, fide carior haberetur, iudicio ornatio relinqueretur post decessum consensu civium laudaretur, quom discriptio partium habeat gratum fidumque animum in uiros, aequalitatem in liberos, iustitiam in ueritate.

56 Dialogue between deceased mother and son

CIL 8, 9513 = ILS 8144

Caesarea, Mauretania Caesariensis

Imperial period

Comment: a son wishes his mother had made a tomb for her children, not for herself.

The sweetest mother. Sallustius Honoratus for Claudia Extrikata, my dearest mother, [has set up] what you [i.e. Claudia] ought to have made for me or for those whom you left so unhappily bereaved. When I was writing this, I diluted the ink with my tears. The sweetest mother [sends] farewell greetings to her children: 'Why stand and read the inscription on my tomb? Forty-five years I lived for you; in the forty-sixth I died, when it was appointed'.

dulcissima mater. Sallustius Honoratus Claudiae Extrikatae, matri karissimae, quod tu mihi, uel quos miseros exorbatos reliquisti, debuisti facere. haec cum scriberem, lacrimis atramentum temperaui. dulcis sima mater filiis salutem: quid statis et recitatis titulum monumenti mei? XLV annis uobis uixi; in XLVI excidi, quando datum est.

Daughters

58 Flavia Athenais

CIL 6, 34114

Rome

Late 1st century AD



Comment: Apollonius was a sub-slave of the emperor Domitian, and Flavia Pallas a freedwoman.

To the Spirits of the Dead. Apollonius, personal slave of the emperor Domitian Augustus Germanicus and Flavia Pallas—her parents—made this for Flavia Athenais, their dearest daughter. She lived for eight months, twenty-six days. [In verse] Snatched from her mother's arms, here lies our unhappy child, before she lived nine full circles of the moon. Her lamenting father and mother have wept over her lying here and enclosed her tiny limbs in this marble tomb.

Dis Manibus. Flaviae Athenaidi Apollonius Imperatoris Domitiani Augusti Germanici seruus peculiaris et Flavia Pallas parentes filiae carissimae fecerunt. uixit mensibus VIII, diebus XXVI. [In verse] rapta sinu matris, iacet hic miserabilis infans / ante nouem plenos lunae quam uiueret orbis. / hanc pater et mater maesti fleuere iacentem / paruaque marmoreo clauserunt membra sepulchro.

63 Anthis Chrysostoma

CIL 6, 34421

Rome

Imperial period

Comment: Her parents—their Greek single names suggested they may have been former (?) slaves—three freedwomen and two slaves buried this little girl.

For Anthis Chrysostoma, charming, chattering little bird, who lived for three years, five months and three days. Her most unhappy parents Faenomenus and Helpis,

made this inscription for their dearest, chatty, honey-sweet daughter. Porcius Maximus and Porcia Charita and Porcia Helias and Sardonux and Menophilus [who] nursed her till the day of her death.

Anthidi Chrysostomae, suaui, loquaci auiculae, garrulae, quae uixit annis III, mensibus V, diebus III. Faenomenus et Helpis, parentes infelicissimi, filiae carissimae, uociclae, mellitissimae, bene merenti titulum fecerunt. Porcius Maximus et Porcia Charita et Porcia Helias et Sardonux et Menophilus, qui eam nutrierunt in diem mortis eius.

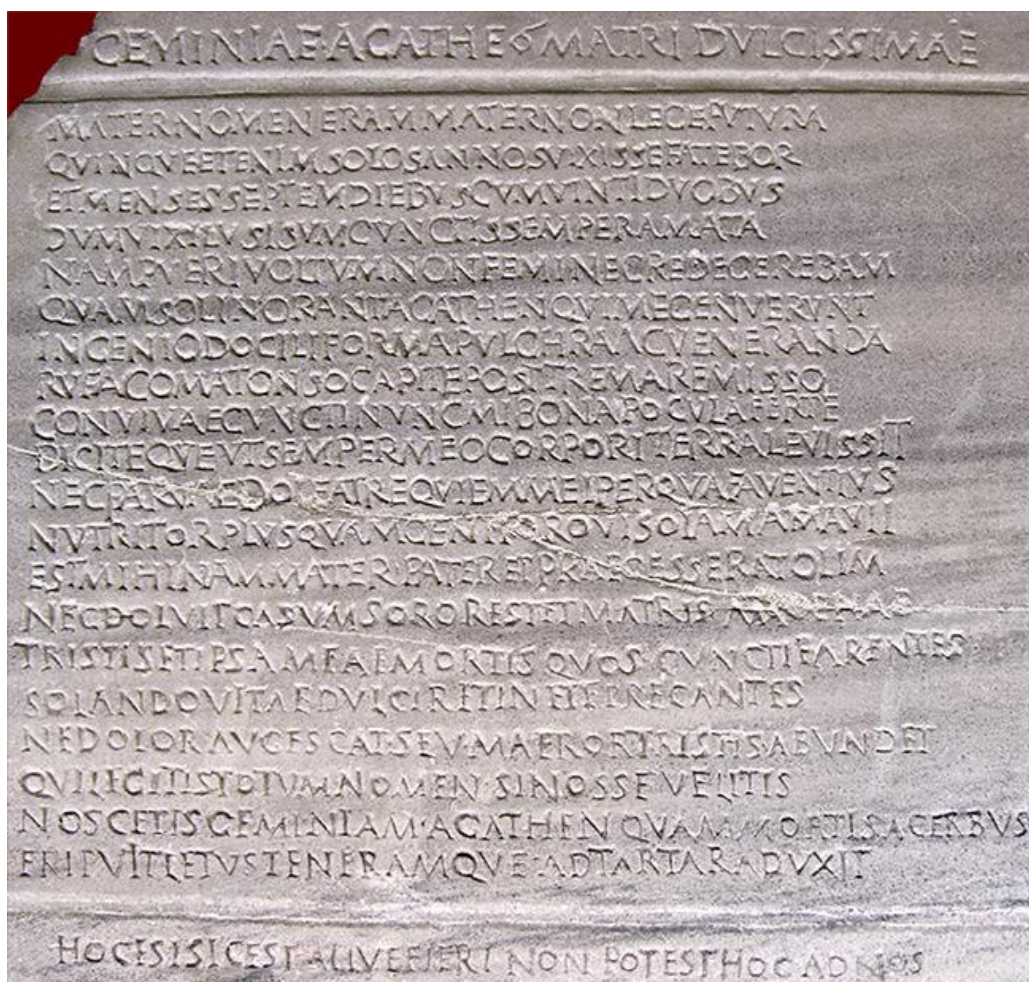
Young Girls

70 A girl who looked like a boy

CIL 6, 19007

Rome

2nd century AD



Comment: with her Greek cognomen Agathe, Geminia was probably born into a freeborn Roman family. Roman boys let their hair hang loose at the back; girls knotted it up. Faventius was probably a slave or freedman. The verse is clumsy—rather spondaic and metrically faulty.

[On top] To Geminia Agathe [nicknamed] Mother, the sweetest. [Flanking the text] To the Spirits of the Dead.

[In verse] Mother was my name, but I will never be mother by law: I shall confess that I lived only five years, and seven months and twenty-two days. While I lived, I played and was always loved by everybody. For I had the face of a boy, not of a girl—believe me—and only those who bore me knew me as Agathe, [a girl of] responsive temperament, a pretty and venerable appearance, with red hair cropped short [on top] and hanging loose at the back. Banqueters, all now raise your cups to me and pray that always the earth may rest lightly upon my body.

Geminiae Agathe Matri, dulcissimae. Dis Manibus.

[In verse] *mater nomen eram, mater non lege futura: / quinque etenim solos annos uixisse fatebor / et menses septem, diebus cum uinti duobus. / dum uixi lusi, sum cunctis semper amata. / nam pueri uoltum, non feminae, crede, gerebam, / quam soli norant Agathen qui me genuerunt, / ingenio docili, forma pulchra ac ueneranda, / rufa coma, tonso capite postrema remisso. / conuiuiae cuncti nunc mi bona pocula ferte / diciteque ut semper meo corpori terra leuis sit.*

May Faventius not mourn exceedingly over the repose of my small body, who reared me more than my father and who loved only me. For I have a mother; my father preceded me in death long ago and did not mourn my fate. There is also my lovely mother's sister, who is herself mournful at my death, too. You, all my relatives, please keep them in sweet life by consoling them, praying that their pain may not increase nor their bitter grief overflow.

If you, who read this, wish to know my full name, know that I was Geminia Agathe, whom bitter Death has snatched away and led her to Tartarus at a tender age.

nec paruae doleat requiem mei perquam Fauentius, / nutritor plus quam genitor, qui solam amauit. / est mihi nam mater, pater et praecesserat olim / nec doluit casum, soror est et matris amoenae / tristis et ipsa meae mortis, quos cuncti parentes / solando uitae dulci retinete, precantes / ne dolor augescat seu maeror tristis abundet.

qui legitis totum nomen si nosse uelitis, / noscetis Geminiam Agathen, quam mortis acerbus / eripuit Letus, teneramque ad Tartara duxit.

Grandmothers

75 A grandmother burying a granddaughter

CIL 6, 18282b

Rome

Imperial period

Comment: a grandmother laments that she should bury her granddaughter

To the Spirits of the Dead Flavia Apollinaris, her granddaughter. She lived eight years. What the granddaughter should have made for her grandmother, the grandmother dedicated to her blessed granddaughter.

Dis Manibus Flaviae Apollinari, nepti suae. uix(it) a(nnos) VIII. Quod neptis aviae facer(e) debuit, avia fecit nepti suae sacr(ae).

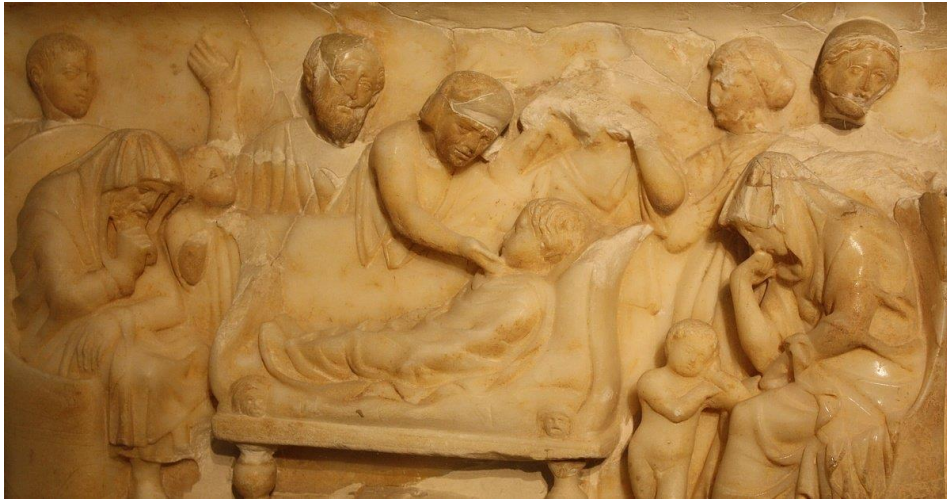
Fosterfamilies and Stepfamilies

85 Mourning the death of a foster-daughter

CIL 11, 3771

Careiae, Italy

2nd century AD



Comments: another very moving epitaph

To the Spirits of the Dead. For Terentia Asiatica, daughter of Publius, his foster daughter, Publius Terentius Quietus set this up. [In verse] Here lies the lifeless body of my beloved foster daughter, an innocent girl whom the Fates have plunged into a bitter death—for she had not yet completed her tenth year—and, cruel, have made my old age a grievous one. For I will always search for you, my foster daughter Asiatica, and I will constantly envisage your face while mourning, and it will be a consolation that I shall see you very soon when, having completed my life, I shall be reunited as a shade with yours.

Dis Manibus. Terentiae Publi filiae Asiaticae Publius Terentius Quietus alumnae. [In verse] hic iacet exanimum dilectae corpus alumnae, / quam Parcae insontem / merserunt funere acerbo - / nondum etenim uitae decimum compleuerat annum / - et mihi crudeles tristem fecere senectam. / namque ego te semper, mea alumna Asiatica, quaeram / adsidueque tuos uoltus fingam mihi maerens / et solamen erit quod te iam iamque uidebo, / cum uita functus iungar tuis umbra figuris.

Next week: Citizenship and ethnicity