

NeMLA. Friday, April 13 2018
11:45-1:00 PM, Classics Today Roundtable
Claire Sommers, Chair; Maria S. Marsilio, Chair

Classics and the Digital Humanities
Maria S. Marsilio, Saint Joseph's University

Title Slide: #1 <http://www2.cnr.edu/home/sas/araia/companion.html>

Good morning. I offer my warm and sincere thanks to Claire Sommers for organizing this session. I am delighted to participate in it.

Teachers and scholars of classics have responded enthusiastically to the opportunities afforded by the web, uploading their photos of ancient art, artifacts and archaeological excavations for all to enjoy and use. Today I highlight the *Online Companion to The Worlds of Roman Women*, edited by Ann R. Raia and Judith L. Sebesta, which has made Greek and Roman texts, inscriptions, manuscripts, and critical scholarship accessible to colleagues for curricular use. Such initiatives are transforming the classical studies classroom. Because the *Online Companion* is focused on providing original texts for the intermediate-level Latin student and corrects the absence of women in the history of Rome, I have incorporated it into my professional research and teaching since 2007. It is my venue for the publication of annotated Latin commentaries which I have authored and which upper-division Latin students in my courses create.

Online Companion was unveiled in June, 2006, as a digital adjunct to the intermediate Latin print anthology *The Worlds of Roman Women* (March, 2005) -- hence its name. Nurtured by collegial interaction, the site has achieved its promise, as you may read yourselves in the review posted on the website of the *Society for Classical Studies*

(#2 slide) <https://classicalstudies.org/node/22518>

Companion is more than a repository for passages about Roman women – although it has added some 130 annotated texts to those in the print reader. The site offers linked illustrations of ancient artifacts, pop-up glosses that facilitate reader comprehension, and an array of Instructional Resources:

(#3 slide) <http://www2.cnr.edu/home/sas/araia/instruction.html>

These resources support teaching, learning, and active student engagement through activities involving independent research, peer critique, mentoring, creative exercises, and student and peer collaboration.

Companion is targeted to intermediate and advanced students of Latin language and literature.

However, the site offers those interested in classical antiquity a wealth of resources about Roman women of all classes who contributed substantially to the social and political fabric of their world but are scarcely visible in the texts written by and for aristocratic male authors.

In my presentation I will discuss two of the many projects on *Companion* that foster the interaction of teachers, scholars, and students of Latin and Classics: (1) the Latin Text Commentary Project, and (2) the Roman Funerary Inscriptions Project. First, the Latin Text Commentary Project.

(#4 slide) http://www2.cnr.edu/home/sas/araia/raia_commentary.html

The instructions for the commentary project ask students to choose a Latin passage from a Latin critical edition to annotate; to consult published commentaries as models for writing lexical and grammatical glosses; and to research events, persons, and ideas they find in their text. In sum, advanced Latin students are invited to become virtual mentors by annotating a text for intermediate-level Latin readers.

I have served enthusiastically as mentor for my undergraduate students at Saint Joseph's University for six published Latin text commentaries, joining my Classics colleagues at several other academic institutions who have mentored students in this project. Faculty who adopted the project uniformly report that their students demonstrated greater engagement in research and reflection and achieved improved facility with the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical elements of Latin.

The *Companion* Latin Text-Commentary Project aligns closely with Saint Joseph's University's top priority in the College of Arts and Sciences: to ensure that all undergraduate students have the opportunity to participate in independent or collaborative research. I have mentored our majors and minors in independent research, collaborative research, and co-publishing with me, furthering my academic institution's priorities as well as my own pedagogical goals for my students. The Latin text commentary projects I have mentored for *Companion* were integrated into my course requirements and objectives. The projects emerged out of collaborative assignments which students presented in class and then prepared for critique and editing by *Companion's* editorial team of experts in Latin literature. The anticipated and actual outcome was publication of my students' work in *Companion*. The projects supported major learning objectives I established for my students in all my upper-division Latin courses, such as in LAT 305: Lyric Poetry **(#5 slide)**

I stress the interactive, collaborative benefits of the Latin text commentary project. As my students worked together in groups on their Latin texts, I circulated among them, answered their questions, facilitated discussion, and helped them with problems they encountered in Latin language, meter, and literary/historical/cultural issues. For example, when we worked together on Catullus *Carmina* 34, a hymn to Roman goddess Diana whose Latin text and commentary may be found in *Companion's* World of Religion, my students inquired not only about vocabulary and grammar, but also about interpretation of the role of the Roman Diana as compared with Greek Artemis, about Roman religious practice, and about the striking departure this solemn, traditional hymn to Diana was from the “Lesbia” poems around it. I suggested they read Marilyn Skinner’s commentary about poem 34 in her book *Catullus’ Passer*, and urged them to consult scholarly commentaries and studies that were important for understanding this poem. From the bibliography on my course syllabus, my students selected commentaries by Thomson, Quinn, Fordyce, Ferguson, and Ellis. They also read Wiseman’s *Catullus and His World* on the question of choral performance.

As my students worked on this project, I appreciated the benefits of the Latin text commentary project not just for teachers and students of Latin at all levels, but also for teachers and students exploring Greek and Roman literature, political and social history, religion, politics, philosophy, and material culture in translation. Each Latin text commentary project is introduced by an essay in English that provides links to a wealth of interdisciplinary resources in ancient literature, political and social history, religion and mythology, and material culture accessible to all interested in Classical Studies. The information provided in the introductory essay for Catullus 34 highlights the significance of Diana as a Roman goddess, the attributes for her that Catullus celebrates in his poem, her powers overlapping with Juno and Hecate and, surprisingly, with the goddess of agriculture Ceres (**slide #6**) **Catullus 34:** <http://www2.cnr.edu/home/sas/araia/catullus34.html>. The Latin text commentary for Catullus 34 also discusses the topics of poetic performance and meter, and SPQR images of the Greek Artemis (**#7slide**) and the Roman Diana (**#8 slide**).

The possibility of online publication and recognition outside the classroom gave my students a strong incentive to quality performance. While completion of the project demanded that they work collaboratively and that I direct their research and provide appropriate guidance and correction, the final goal of publication was achieved only after the webpage received rigorous external review and approval by *Companion's* editorial consultants, who are highly regarded teachers and scholars of Roman literature and civilization. I share this assessment of the project from one of my Latin students who participated in this project (**#9 slide**)

The Latin text commentary project offers a dynamic, interactive, motivational pedagogy for undergraduate students of Latin. Incorporated into your course syllabus with careful design and planning, it can support student achievement of high-level learning outcomes and can help you realize your departmental and institutional priorities. Furthermore, I attest that my work on the *Companion* Latin text commentary projects with my students, who have contributed commentaries on Latin lyric poets Catullus and Horace, has stimulated and advanced my own scholarly publications on Catullus, Horace, and Plautus in *Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women* and in national and international scholarly Classics journals.

Companion offers important insights about the lives of elite, wealthy women of the Roman world and about the attributes and influences of the divine gods and goddesses in the lives of mortals. As well, *Companion* explores important evidence that funerary monuments provide about Roman women of all social and economic classes who lived during the late Republic and first two centuries of the Empire. The Roman Funerary Inscriptions Project designed and authored by *Companion* creators and editors Ann R. Raia and Judith L. Sebesta (#10 slide) demonstrates fine examples of Roman monuments celebrating the lives of women of differing social and economic classes who are presented up close and as individuals -- in glossed Latin passages, in images, and as research options. They invite the reader to probe beyond statistics, stereotypes, and formulae to imagine what women's lives might have been like. Julia Capriola (#11 slide) was a freedwoman of the Julian gens. Her image and inscription can be found in *Companion's* World of Marriage, together with an essay that explains what her monument can reveal about her. Reclining comfortably at the banquet of life or perhaps at her 9-day funeral feast, this stern 35-year-old *matrona* survived childbirth and disease to earn the traditional accolades of women: *carissima* and *sanctissima*. Julia Secunda and her mother Cornelia Tyche (#12 slide), a freedwoman, were members of the family of the freedman Julius Secundus. They appear in *Companion's* World of Family. A 16th century drawing shows what their hugely expensive tomb looked like originally. One of its walls contained a 14-line poem in hexameters commissioned by the grieving father and husband that movingly narrates their death in a shipwreck off the Spanish coast. In the inscription below their portraits he bears witness to their excellence: Julia, almost 12 years old, was dutiful as well as intelligent beyond her peers; Cornelia, 39 and married to him for 11 years, was unmatched in her affection for him and exceptional in her devotion to her children.

In conclusion, *Companion* is an immensely valuable collection of resources for all scholars, teachers, mentors, and students interested in the study of women, and in the history and material culture of the ancient world. Teachers may make their own scholarly contributions on the site, may

work in collaboration with other scholars, or act as teacher/mentor for their students. The surprisingly numerous women who are present in the "worlds" of *Companion* under their own names represent upper and lower classes, wealthy and poor, famous (or infamous) and humble, proper wives, mothers, daughters, workers, mortals and goddesses. Drs. Ann R. Raia and Judith L. Sebesta, as *Companion* designers, editors, collaborators, and contributors, serve as models for online outstanding scholarly and pedagogical studies in Classical antiquity. They welcome your contributions. Thank you.