A Resource for Teaching and Learning

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ONLINE COMPANION

to

THE WORLDS OF ROMAN WOMEN

In Memoriam:
Barbara F. McManus
1942-2015

(click on a statue to see what is new)

INSTRUCTION
Guides, Syllabi,
Bibliography

Corrigenda to the print text

WORLDS
Texts, Commentary,
Images

Ann R. Raia, The College of New Rochelle
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Abstract: *Online Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women* began life as a complement to the intermediate Latin anthology *The Worlds of Roman Women* (Focus 2005), to make available to readers a variety of un-adapted Latin texts, images and essays about Roman women of all classes from the Republic through the Empire. Further, it contains Instructional Resources, including classroom and independent learning activities, to facilitate comprehension of passages, material evidence and contexts. It has become a forum where editors, teachers and students collaborate to engage in activities, and where their strategies and projects can be shared and even published. In addition to demonstrating the site, I will show examples of faculty mentored student work, especially text-commentary and funerary inscription analysis.

Good morning. I am pleased to participate in the Council of University Classical Departments Pedagogy Panel 2: "Education Teaching and Technology: Online Communication, Public Engagement and Teaching," organized by Helen Lovatt.

Since I imagined you would go to this site to select a Latin passage about Roman women for your students to work on or to seek out an interactive exercise to add to your course syllabus, I set two goals for my presentation:

1. to introduce you to *Online Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women* so that you can see how easily you can navigate it on your own to find what you need (you may wish to refer to the handout I distributed)

2. to share with you examples of some site activities and demonstrate how they have been used successfully for language learning.

Online Companion is a rich teaching/learning resource focused on Roman women that is free on the Internet. It houses a host of historical and literary women by name, from all social classes, from all over the Latin-speaking Roman Empire, as well as abundant pedagogical, textual and visual resources with which to study them.

In December 2016 the site, already ten years old, was reviewed on the website of the *Society for Classical Studies* (formerly the APA). The review terms *Companion* "an important resource that should be far more widely known and used than it is" and quotes an earlier review that praised *Companion* as "the gold standard for a web translation resource for intermediate as well as more advanced students," adding "because of the wealth of carefully curated content [the site] provides."

Starting on the homepage and clicking on **WORLDS** beneath the statue of the priestess on the right side brings up the gateway to Latin passages, interpretative essays and images related to Roman women, arranged within ten categories. At the bottom of the **WORLDS** page is a link to a **TEXMAP**, where all Latin passages on the site are listed by World – some 130 entries of prose, poetry, and inscriptions. They are ranked by levels of difficulty: **Easy, Intermediate, Challenging,** and are linked to criteria developed by the *Companion* editors to explain the designations.
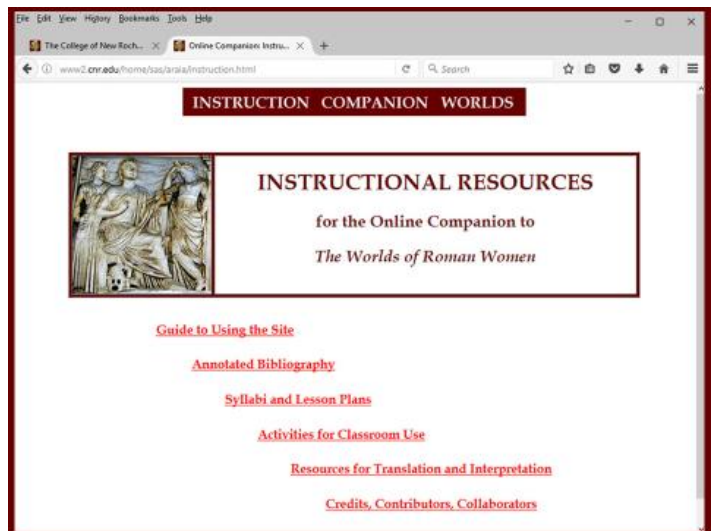

Returning to the home page and clicking on **INSTRUCTION** beneath the statue of the *matrona* and her daughter opens up a page of links. Of the six listed, I will briefly show you two, Bibliography and Resources, and explore two others at greater length. Two links take you to webpages that support research and instructional activity on *Companion*:

> 1. a **Bibliography** of works about Roman women with reviews where available

> 2. a page of trusted **Resources for texts, language, material remains, and culture** to assist student research, translation and interpretation of *Companion* passages

Returning to the **INSTRUCTION** page and clicking on **SYLLABI & LESSON PLANS** brings you to a page of linked syllabi for Latin and culture courses on women and gender, and to linked lessons and unit plans appropriate for students from middle school through college that encourage active learning and engagement. These were designed, classroom-tested and submitted to *Companion* by various colleagues. Here is an example of a teaching unit I created last fall, the "Transgressive Roman Woman." I haven't heard that it has been used yet but I thought you might like to see how it introduces literary and figural representations of Roman women and seminal readings in feminist theory, together with principles for uncovering cultural biases embedded in ancient texts. It contains four developed assignments on Roman women who are negatively portrayed in ancient sources for publicly crossing gender boundaries. The instructions ask students to make use of the readings in feminist works in the assignment bibliography to attempt the recovery of the lived experience of the women beneath their culturally constructed stereotype.

Returning to the **INSTRUCTION** menu and clicking on **ACTIVITIES FOR CLASSROOM USE** opens a page of that begins with **Suggestions** for assignments designed to make creative use of *Companion* materials. Below them are listed **Semester Projects,** to which we will return shortly. The final section contains links to instructions for **shorter exercises arranged by World**; these were created by faculty to foster discussion with students and dialogue with ideas in the texts.

The two **Semester Projects** on this page encourage students to be proactive in their research and to assume responsibility for their learning. They foster a pedagogy of faculty mentorship toward the outcome of student engagement with the process and ownership of their work. They promote collaboration between teacher and student, among students, and, through *Companion*, beyond the classroom with scholars in the field.
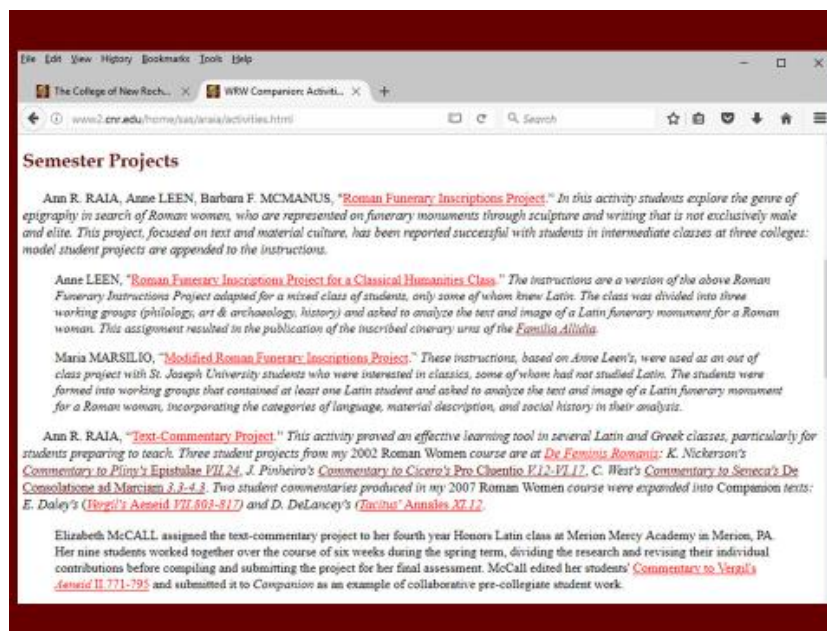
1. the **Roman Funerary Inscriptions Project** has much to offer instructors and students. Reflecting on her first experience with the project, Anne Leen, classics professor at Furman University, wrote:

> I must admit I was reluctant at first to undertake the project since I have no experience with inscriptions, our library lacked the most important resource, the *CIL,* and organizing the project took time and preparation. The study of inscriptions takes one well beyond Latin into Roman epigraphy, political, military and social history, and funerary art, just to name a few areas. But the very thing that made this project complex made it an ideal learning vehicle, so, after a crash course in Roman epigraphy, I decided to do it.

This assignment resulted in twelve faculty-mentored student publications on *Companion*, which added to the site thirteen formerly unknown Roman women of lower social rank. Ten projects appear as student models on the Funerary Inscriptions instruction page. One decorated funerary monument is in the World of Family, containing inscriptions dedicated by the freedwoman Sextia Psyche to her husband and daughter, Vivennia Helias. Another decorated funerary monument is in the World of Marriage, dedicated to his freed slave and wife Dasumia Soteris by her former master and husband.

The instructions for the project attest to the value of funerary monuments, especially for the study of women. The objectives are threefold: becoming acquainted with the field of epigraphy, appreciating monumental inscriptions as evidence, and the production of an interpretive analysis of text and artifact. Instructions for beginning the project are followed by 10 steps leading toward its completion. Much of the primary material needed for the project, such as unpublished monument options, is linked on *Companion*, as is a Project bibliography of epigraphic materials and databases in print and on the Internet. The instruction page concludes with successful models of student projects.

Leen describes the effect of this assignment on her students:

> The project was gratifying and educational for everyone. The students were excited to work with primary source materials that for the most part had never been studied, translated, described, or published, and they were motivated at the prospect of an e-publication credit on *Companion*. Several of them threw themselves into it like graduate students attacking a seminar paper. Since our library has the holdings of a typical undergraduate facility they had to look elsewhere, finding many things online, in Google books, and through interlibrary loan. I was impressed at how readily they helped one another. Even though each student was working on his or her own inscription and in theory competing with the others for a good grade, they were generous with resources and comments.

In 2014 Leen created a variant of the funerary instructions in order to offer the project to her freshman Classical Humanities class in which only some students knew Latin. Their response resulted in an analysis of the cinerary urn for Allidia Hymnis listed among the student models on the Funerary Inscriptions page. Her efforts produced an unexpected bonus, for after the semester ended she researched the Hymnis monument along with two other dedications for this proud freedman family, which resulted in the addition of the *Familia Allidia* to the World of Family.

      2. the **Text-Commentary Project,** the second of the Semester Projects, was conceived in 2002 as a final exercise for my 4th semester Latin students in a course on Roman Women. My purpose was to encourage them to invest in the language and content of the passages by providing support for researching ancient women and by presenting them with an audience for their work other than me, both virtual and real. Since *Companion* did not yet exist, I contacted the editor of *De Feminis Romanis* on the Diotima site and arranged to have three of my students' projects published there in 2003.

Clicking on the link brings you to the instructions**,** the goals of which are practical: increased student competence in Latin skills and comprehension and the production of intermediate-level commentaries to Latin texts about Roman women. The instructions provide a framework for preparing students to engage with the assignment through research and consultation of models, a timeline, and detailed requirements for and expectations of the project that include research and reflection on the work, its genre, and the woman in her environment.

The project has been successfully adapted for various populations: a single student, a group of students, or an entire class, divided into collaborative working teams. Since 2007, six undergraduates in three different schools undertook this project as an independent study with their faculty mentors; their activity added seven new passages to *Companion*. Three faculty offered the assignment as a graded option in their advanced Latin classes, resulting in four new *Companion* webpages and a model of the project.

The most recent addition to *Companion* as a result of this project was submitted by Dr. Maria Marsilio, who mentored her Fall 2016 Latin class at Saint Joseph's University in the annotation of Catullus'poem 34. Her students communicated to her their recognition of the project's benefits: collaboration, improved Latin skills, deeper understanding of text and context, and e-publication.

Since their work, reviewed and edited by *Companion's* Editorial Board, is now published in the **World of Religion**, let's go there to see how Latin texts and images are displayed on the site. Each of the ten Worlds opens with a thematic image and an illustrated essay describing women's experience of that World. Here Roman women are heralded as full participants in religious practice, private and public, in Rome and in the provinces. Below the essay is a menu of linked annotated passages on the site and in the print text. Below the text table is a long catalogue of artifacts, linked visual witnesses to a Roman world of goddesses and divinized female abstractions; priestesses of the state worship of Vesta, the Imperial cult, and imported goddess cults; scenes of religious ritual; religious implements and monuments.

Clicking on [Catullus *Carmina* 34](#) in the World of Religion text table brings you to his Hymn to Diana. It is introduced by a sculpture of the goddess and an illustrated essay describing her character, her powers, her worship. The essay focuses on the goddess as female and Roman; it addresses the wide dominion and benefactions Catullus attributes to her in this poem, distinguishing her from Greek Artemis. It concludes with a reference to the poem's disputed occasion and poetic structure.

Having demonstrated the many advantages of the website, I turn now to what I feel is the very reason for *Companion's* existence – its use of digital technology to present primary sources about Roman women in a manner that facilitates the process of reading and translation, promotes interaction with the text, and fosters comprehension. In the interests of time I selected only two glosses from Catullus' poem 34 to show you -- while they are specific to the passage, they are representative of the quality and quantity of annotations linked to *Companion* texts:

1. Clicking on *deposivit* in line 8 lifts a small window to the upper left corner of the frame, well out of the way of the Latin passage. The dictionary entries appear first, followed by comments on the form and meaning. When the SPQR symbol is clicked, the image box replaces the smaller gloss box; here we see a drawing of a scene of Leto giving birth to the divine twins.

2. Clicking on the word *notho* in line 15 opens a window containing the dictionary form and meaning, the syntax of the adjective and a possible explanation of its use in the text; additionally, it identifies a rhetorical device that is linked to a site describing it. Clicking on the SPQR at the end of the line produces an illustration of Diana as the moon goddess.

There are many sites on the Internet that offer Latin texts and some, like Perseus and smaller enterprises, provide linked annotations as well. But it is my contention that *Companion* is alone in providing:

1. texts hyperlinked to glosses in pop-up windows that do not obscure the Latin passage

2. plentiful images to illustrate the selections

3. glosses that provide contextualized lexical, grammatical, rhetorical, and cultural assistance accessible to the intermediate Latin student

4. a focus on women

I end with two invitations:

      1. Since everyone – especially students -- finds their digital devices fascinating, why NOT link language teaching and learning appropriately to that excitement?

      2. Please consider joining our international community of contributors and collaborators – among them Kirsty Corrigan of Kent University and Liz Gloyn of Royal Holloway -- for the continued development of *Companion,* but at the very least, introduce the site to your students.

Thank you.