Women, Ethnicity and Power in the Roman Empire

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One of the themes of the second conference on Feminism and Classics -- and one that is becoming increasingly central to women's studies in general -- is the proposition that the binary opposition between the sexes, as represented in social and literary discourse, is sustained in part by being implicated in other hierarchical polarities, such as race, age, the antagonism between native and foreign, or the local spatial tension between the domestic and the public sphere. As Susan Stanford Friedman (1996: 18) writes: "One axis of identity, such as gender, must be understood in relation to other axes, such as sexuality and race"; Friedman advances what she terms a "new geography of identity" (22), in which "interactional analysis of codependent systems of alterity replaces the focus on binary difference," and invites critics to examine whether such systems, when they co-exist in a text, clash or else "intensify each other in collaboration" (26).

The representation of gender roles within a given social discourse is thus a complex variable, at least within certain limits: the sexes may achieve symbolic parity, for example, in contexts where other structures of difference are temporarily disabled, even while they continue to be marked by extreme dimorphism in nearby domains. Tracing the turns of gender discourse in antiquity thus requires sensitivity to the way in which sexual polarities respond to or are imbricated with other regions of the social lexicon. The representation of these latter distinctions, in turn, may be influenced by local social practices or by a particular angle of vision.
In this paper, I examine an exceptional moment in classical literature in which certain tropes of gender representation seem to be suspended. The period under review is that of the Roman Empire from the first to the fourth centuries A.D., as seen through a variety of literary sources in both Greek and Latin; the instance in question is the way in which an apparent disruption in categories of ethnicity seems to have affected the depiction of gender roles at a particular point in the text of Strabo's *Geography*. The *Geography*, a survey of the lands of the Roman Empire, was composed during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, that is, at the end of the first century B.C. and the beginning of the first century A.D. Before discussing this text, however, I begin by examining some of the prevailing ways in which the sexes were differentiated in the literature of this epoch, in order to make clear what is unusual about Strabo's account of a queen who ruled at the margins of the Empire.

* It is commonly supposed that there was an amelioration in the condition of women under the Roman empire, as opposed to their circumstances during the Republic and in classical Athens, and that the new situation is reflected in a variety of texts of this epoch (for a critical view, see Castresana 1993). Gillian Clark (1993: 71) notes, for example, that, in contrast with the Hippocratic corpus, "late-antique medical texts, like those of the first and second centuries [A.D.], tend to emphasize the similarity of male and female." In law, the republican system of *tutela* had largely eroded (Clark 1993: 15; Gardner 1986: 21); as the jurist Gaius observes (*Inst.* 1.190, trans. Gardner):

> There appears to be hardly any worthwhile argument for women of full age being in *tutela*. The common belief, that because of their instability of judgment they are often deceived and that it is only fair to have them controlled by the authority of tutors, seems more specious than true. For women of full age manage their affairs themselves.

Jane Gardner (1986: 22) concludes that the supposed weakness of the female sex "did not correspond with the observed facts that many women could and did handle their affairs competently, nor with the whole trend of legislation." Marriage too was increasingly viewed as depending on the intention or *affectio maritallis* of both partners.

The discourses of both law and medicine were driven by logics internal to these professions, as well as by other pressures in contemporary social life. Nevertheless, the old tropes by which women are denied equality with men, especially in regard to the exercise of power, whether domestic or political, continued unabated in the imperial period. We may begin by analyzing a witty and ironic fragment of Iamblichus' novel, *Babylonika* (Habrich 1960: 27-29),
composed in the second century A.D., which illustrates well the way in which the system of
gendered oppositions works by representing women who assume an active sexual and domestic
position as transgressive and disruptive of interrelated hierarchies. In the manuscripts, the
excerpt is provided with the descriptive title: "A master accuses his slave of adultery with his
[the master's] own wife after she related that, in a dream, she made love with him [the slave] in
the temple of Aphrodite." The master states his case before the king (presumably Garmus, king
of Babylon):

Though I have not decided to bring a charge, I cannot keep silent, not simply
because adultery is an unendurable crime but rather because in addition to what
is common to an outrage [hubris] of such a kind there is a special feature in this
case: for the adulterer is a slave and mean in spirit, even if he seems handsome
to this woman; and a slave of no other man, but rather my own -- and he ought
to have been her slave too, and not her master.... I am in doubt about whom to
accuse as the counsellor and teacher of error to the other: for the one is a lad,
and it seems persuasive that such a one was persuaded and did not persuade,
was corrupted and did not corrupt; but this other is a woman, and a woman
seems to be a thing easily deceived. Thus the weakness of youth on the one
side, that of nature on the other contend with one another. Summing up, then, I
may say that both are handsome.... For he is young and seems handsome, o
King, even to me.

We may readily resolve the ideological tension of this passage into its elements. The Greek
erotic code presupposes a division of roles between a lover or erastês, who is the active or
dominant partner, and a beloved, whether male (erômenos) or female (erômenê). This polarity
is mapped onto differences of sex (the lover is male, the beloved female), age (the beloved is a
boy), and status (in an adult male, the passive role is read as servile). Iamblichus' controversia
thus poses the puzzle: when a woman and a slave boy (the latter is doubly determined as
passive) engage in an affair, which of the two is the erastês? By virtue of status, it should be
the woman, since she is master; by virtue of gender, it is the slave, who, because of the affair,
is described as the woman's master. Bringing the case to court further complicates the problem,
because women and youths are represented as diminished in judgment; in them, passion rules.
To admit that either seduced the other is to treat one of the two as responsible before the law,
which undermines the biological basis of the social asymmetries. Hence the speaker's indecision
about bringing charges.

That the husband himself is attracted to the boy conforms to the erotic paradigm, but at
the same time it further undermines the code by casting husband and wife in identical erotic positions vis-à-vis the boy. The text thus disrupts the socially valorized homology between a set of unequal relationships. One of the ways it limits the damage, however, apart from the light tone of comedy or farce, is by locating the entire situation in barbarian Babylon. The king Garmus, who hears the case, is a lascivious and violent figure in the novel, and he pursues the heroine mercilessly: his failure of self-control is read as the sign both of a feminized race and of a perverted political order (tyranny). Correspondingly, the plaintiff fails to regulate both his household and his own passions. Even as the tale juggles the conventions that define the authority of men over women, boys, and slaves, it reinforces them by projecting such inversions onto an ethnic other, where by definition disorder reigns. And yet, even in Babylon, the voice and the perspective of the text are clearly masculine.

Iamblichus' text is playful, but subtle: unmasking and blocking such discursive evasions is one of the primary activities of feminist literary criticism. It should be noted, however, that explicit and radical statements of women's natural inequality with men were still being defended in earnest at more or less the same time that Iamblichus was writing. Thus, the Aristotelian commentator Aspasius continues to argue that a husband and wife feel different kinds of love (philia) for one another, thereby grounding the structure of affective associations generally in biological difference. What is more, Aspasius specifically relates the distinction to the question of authority. He explains (176.13-26):

the love of a father toward a son and more generally of an older man toward a younger..., as well as that of a husband toward a wife and, broadly, the love of the ruler toward the ruled involves superiority.... For it is appropriate to parents and to husbands to rule, but not to sons and wives, and this renders their love not one according to equality but rather according to superiority.

Aspasius takes for granted this description of the essential difference between men and women (176.26-177.8):

Everyone would concede these things. But the reason that [Aristotle] adduces for that fact that a father does not have the same love for a son as the son for his father, nor a husband for a wife as a wife for her husband, is highly debatable. For he says: "they each have their different virtue and function" [1158b17-18]. But some deny that there is one virtue for a father and another for a son, or one for a husband and another for a wife.... These people, and above all the Socratics, offer the following challenge:

-- Is it right, then, that the husband be just, but wife unjust?
— No indeed.
— What then? That the husband be temperate, and the wife be licentious?
— Not this, either.

Proceeding thus by way of each virtue, and supposing that it is necessary for both a husband and wife to have all the virtues, they conclude that there is the same virtue for a husband and a wife.

"What, then," Aspasius asks rhetorically, "shall we say in reply to this?" He responds (177.8-23): it is virtue in a pilot if he does the pilot's job and rules the sailors, and it is virtue in the sailors to be ruled by the pilot.... And so, if there is one virtue for the ruler and another for the ruled (in all the above-mentioned relationships there are rulers and ruled, for a father rules, but his sons are ruled, and a husband rules, but his wife is ruled), there would be a different virtue for each of these.

A pilot's responsibility, of course, depends on training, not on natural capacity. Aspasius simply asserts that men rule women as a father rules children, and that therefore their functions and their virtues are different. It is not much of an argument.

Plutarch (Virtues of Women 242 F) is among those who flatly reject the Aristotelian view, affirming instead that "the virtue of a man and a woman is one and the same." Nevertheless, Plutarch's examples of feminine aretē, which are chiefly instances of courage, almost invariably characterize women as passively enduring oppression and torture, for example by taking their husbands' place in prison (247 A-C, of Etruscan women; cf. Valerius Maximus 4.6.ext.3), or else by such stratagems as concealing weapons under their garments so as to enable men to mount a resistance. If women are as brave as men, and brave in the same sense of the term, they still manifest their valor in actions conformable to a weaker and less aggressive nature. The one case in which women actually take up arms, under the leadership of the Argive poetess Telesilla, proves the rule: for this episode serves, on Plutarch's telling, as the aition for a festival called the Hubristika, in which men dress as women and women as men (245 E-F). Just as certain festivals permit reversals of socially sanctioned roles for limited periods of time and in ritually controlled circumstances, so too, it is implied, the spectacle of women actively engaged in battle and defeating male enemies is a temporary inversion of the natural order.

There is a curious parallel of sorts in Appian's Spanish Wars (72), in which Appian mentions that among the Lusitanian tribe called the Bracari, "who are a most warlike ethnos, the men fight alongside the women, who are armed" (one notes the projection of such a deviation from the norm onto a barbarian population); he then remarks that all the men died bravely in the conflict with the Romans, but "of the women who were taken captive," some killed themselves,
and some their children as well. Why are only women taken prisoner, if the men and women have fought together? I suggest that there is a slippage here, and that Appian has reverted to a conventional image of feminine courage as passive.  

The theoretical equation between male and female capacities thus elicits strategies to recontain the threat to the paradigm of male domination and female subordination. Hence the disparagement of virile women, beginning with Aeschylus' Clytemnestra. Characteristic of Roman attitudes is Velleius Paterculus' description of Fulvia, the wife of Antony: "with nothing feminine about her except her body, she confounded everything with wars and revolutions" (*nihil muliebre praeter corpus gerens omnia armis tumultu miscebat*, 2.74.3; cf. Hillard 1989; Fischler 1994). A particularly interesting instance of the virile woman is Hypsicratea, the concubine (*pallakis*), according to Plutarch (*Life of Pompey* 32.8), of Mithridates, king of Pontus; along with 800 cavalry, Hypsicratea broke free of Pompey's blockade and while the rest dispersed, she was one of only three who remained at the king's side. Plutarch says she was always manly [andrôdês] and extremely bold; the king consequently liked to call her Hypsicrates. At that time, taking possession of the cloak and horse of a Persian man she neither flagged in body before the distances they ran nor did she weary of tending the body and horse of the king, until they came to the place called Sinor, which was full of the king's coin and treasures.

The trick of changing Hypsicratea's name to the masculine form suggests that there is something askew in her identity. Moreover, her exceptional physical strength is balanced by the evident weakness of Mithridates himself, to whose needs she ministers during their flight. Mithridates is further feminized by his dependence on his wealth rather than his military prowess. As Froma Zeitlin (1981: 178) remarks in her essay on Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*: "When women are in a position to rule, men must become women." For all his boldness, Mithridates is here assimilated to the image of Asiatic effeminacy and decadence.  

Appian, in his *Mithridatic Wars*, omits any mention of Hypsicratea in his description of Mithridates' flight (101), though he represents him as addicted to women. Of the more volatile Antiochus, however, Appian tells us (*Syrian Wars* 20) that, after the defeat of his forces at Thermopylae, "he fled on his ships to Ephesus with his newly-wed wife, Euboea (for this is what he used to call her)." One sees a pattern here.

I do not know Plutarch's source for the anecdote about Hypsicratea, but the story was already known to Valerius Maximus (4.6.ext.2) in the beginning of the first century A.D. In Valerius' version, however, Hypsicratea is Mithridates' wife, not concubine (cf. Eutropius *Breviarium* 6.12.13), and the episode is included among outstanding examples of conjugal
As Valerius tells it, The queen Hypsicratea too loved her husband Mithridates with all the stops of affection let out, and for his sake she thought it a pleasure to change the outstanding splendor of her beauty for a masculine style. For she cut her hair and habituated herself to horse and arms, so that she might more easily participate in his toils and dangers. Indeed, when he was defeated by Cn. Pompey and fleeing through wild peoples, she followed him with body and soul equally indefatigable. Her extraordinary fidelity was for Mithridates his greatest solace and most pleasant comfort in those bitter and difficult conditions, for he considered that he was wandering with house and home because his wife was in exile along with him.

In this vignette, there is no suggestion of oriental effeminacy in the character of Mithridates. In turn, Hypsicratea, despite her rugged ways, is reduced to a symbol of domesticity. There remains, however, the fact that martial ability in a wife is celebrated as a basis of companionship with her husband, even if it is coded as the feminine virtue of fidelity. With characteristic obscurity, Valerius opens up the possibility of a genuine parity of Roman *virtus* in a married couple.¹⁴

An independent queen is an objective challenge to the premise that women are incapable of ruling. As Gillian Clark (1989: 29) writes: “Real power [for women] was acceptable only if it was temporary, exercised in special circumstances by a woman doing what remained a man’s job.”¹⁵ A barbarian queen may be represented as governing an effeminate people, though the trick is harder to manage if her military successes are conspicuous.¹⁶ But there is another option.

The *Historia Augusta* includes among the lives of the thirty pretenders who rose up during the reign of Gallienus a biographical sketch of Zenobia, the ruler of Parthia.¹⁷ The author begins with a moralizing complaint (*Tyr. trig.* 30.1-2):

All shame was now exhausted since, with the republic worn out, it came to the point that because Gallienus behaved miserably even women ruled well. For indeed a foreign woman, Zenobia by name..., who boasted that she was of the race of Cleopatra and the Ptolemies, after the death of her husband Odaenathus draped an imperial robe about her shoulders, bedecked herself in the raiment of Dido, went so far as to accept the crown, and, in the name of her sons ... ruled longer than her female sex allowed.

The tropes are familiar. Zenobia is foreign, an avatar of Rome's traditional enemy queens: Dido,
whose adornment suggests oriental luxury and feminine display, and Cleopatra, who serves also
to exhibit Zenobia's hollow pride in her lineage.\textsuperscript{18} Her success, moreover, is a reflex of Gallienus' effete depravity in Rome: "When women are in a position to rule, men must become women" -- this time, Roman men. Finally, Zenobia's authority takes the form of an unnaturally prolonged interregnum, in which, following the death of her husband, she acts as regent for her sons.

After this preamble, the author quotes a letter, ostensibly composed by Aurelian, a successor to Gallienus, in which the emperor defends himself for having displayed Zenobia, a mere woman, in his triumph. Aurelian's praise of Zenobia as a worthy opponent is thus undercut by his apologetic purpose. Aurelian ascribes to Zenobia prudence, seriousness, clemency, and a more than feminine thrift (30.16), the last phrase hinting ironically at her passion for jewels and Persian banquets (30.13; see Moreno Ferrero 1992: 117-18). Aurelian also emphasizes her chastity (she had sexual relations with her husband only for the production of children, 30.12) and personal fortitude: with her troops, Zenobia wears a military helmet and walks miles rather than resort to a carriage (30.17-18). In the triumph, Aurelian loads Zenobia down with gold chains and ornaments which cause her to stagger; she is thus forced to appear both weak and gaudy.\textsuperscript{19} In the end, as Isabel Moreno Ferrero observes (1992: 120), "she spends the rest of her life with her sons in a villa in Tivoli..., now in conformity with the decorum of Roman matrons."

It is now time to return to Strabo, and to indicate how his text seems momentarily to transcend the hierarchies of gender delineated above. In that part of his \textit{Geography} devoted to the region round the Black Sea, Strabo writes (12.3.24):

The Tibareni and Chaldaeans up to Colchis, Pharnacia and Trapezus are in the possession of Pythodoris, a sensible \textit{sôphrôn} woman who is capable of taking charge of things. She is the daughter of Pythodorus of Tralles, and was the wife of Polemon, and was sovereign together with him for a time, but then succeeded to the rule.... She had two sons and a daughter with Polemon.... [Her daughter was married to Cotys, king of Odrysae; after her husband was murdered in 19 A.D., their son succeeded to the throne.] Of Pythodoris' sons, one, in a private capacity, used to administer the realm along with his mother,\textsuperscript{20} while the other was recently established as king of Greater Armenia. She herself married Archelaus and remained with him until his death, but she is now a widow, and she possesses the aforementioned places and others still more pleasant. Strabo pauses several times subsequently to remind the reader that the territories being described belong to Pythodoris (cf. 31, 37).
According to Strabo's account, Pythodoris inherited the kingdom upon the death of her first husband: to this extent, perhaps, her authority depended on that of a male, though Strabo notes that she had shared the royal power with Polemon. There is no suggestion in Strabo's version that Pythodoris' second husband, Archelaus, assumed the kingship upon marrying her, or that Pythodoris was at any time acting as regent for her sons. She is simply presented as a capable monarch who governs a large and prosperous territory; indeed, Ettore Pais notes that "she is the only sovereign for whom Strabo has a complimentary word apart from Augustus, Tiberius, and the Roman governors of Egypt" (1887: 120-21). Nor is there any indication that men are feminized to compensate for her rule. Here, then, is a woman "capable of taking charge of things," who is represented with none of the narrative subterfuges that typify accounts of powerful women. How did Pythodoris escape?

In truth, Pythodoris held royal power as a vassal of Rome - her mother, Antonia, was the daughter of Marc Antony - and it is likewise known from other sources (see Schmitt 1972: 1278) that she married Archelaus at the behest of Augustus, some fifteen years or so after the death of Polemon in 8 B.C. Archelaus died in 17 A.D., and Strabo evidently re-edited or touched up this part of his geographical survey a couple of years later. It is no surprise that he should be up to date on events in this quarter: immediately following this report (12.3.39), Strabo takes up the account of his own home town, Amasia in Pontic Galatia, where he may have composed the greater part of his Geography. Strabo's family was well established in the region: the brother of Strabo's mother's father (i.e., Strabo's great-uncle) was appointed by Mithridates as governor of Colchis (11.2.8), the eastern limit, according to Strabo, of Pythodoris' realm (Strabo was thus of partly Asian, partly Greek descent: Jones 1917: xii-xiv). Whatever the depth of his personal acquaintance with the other territories he describes, Strabo had first-hand knowledge of Pythodoris' dominions to the east (cf. Pais 1887: 117, 245).

The queen that Strabo admires is, as we have seen, of mixed Greek and Roman parentage, ruling at the pleasure of a Roman emperor over Greeks and Asian peoples in Pontic Cappadocia. Pythodoris thus appears both as a hybrid and a mediator between the Roman center, from which she has managed to maintain at least a nominal independence, and the Asian periphery of the empire. Strabo has nevertheless repressed or ignored those elements in the nature of Pythodoris' reign that might contribute to an image of her as a mere satellite of Rome. It is not, of course, for feminist motives: though a Stoic, Strabo expresses the prejudices of his age concerning women's capacity for philosophical reasoning, and judges that a moral comportment must be inculcated in them through fables and deisidaimonia or superstition (1.2.8). Rather than inspect Strabo's views on men's and women's natures, however, it may be
more instructive to consider the angle of vision of his political geography (*hypothesin ... politikōteran*, 1.1.14; cf. 1.1.18).

It appears that, just as he comes to describing the region around his native Amasia, Strabo's geography takes on an especially polycentric configuration as opposed to the hierarchical geometry of center and periphery. Strabo is a great admirer of Roman rule and of the emperor, whose role he compares to that of a father (6.4.2). He is contemptuous of primitive tribes, but he installs no absolute opposition between barbarians and civilized peoples (see Van der Vliet 1984: 30-32, 41-44, 50-51, 61-63), and is capable of appreciating civilizations as distant as India. His vision of the inhabited world is one in which "different people hold sway [dunasteuontôn] over different parts, and from different seats [hestias] and starting points [arkhês] determine their actions and enlarge the extent of their supremacy [hêgemonias]" (1.1.16). Internal differentiations relevant to a geographer would exist, he adds, even if the entire world were subject to a single regime. This dispersed image of power disrupts the conventional polarities between Roman and foreign, leaving in its place a complex relation between Romans, Greeks, and Asians of various sorts that is not reducible to a binary structure.

Ettore Pais (1887: 99-100, 113) argued over a century ago that Strabo had in mind as the readership of his *Geography* not Roman officials but rather cultivated Greeks in Asia Minor, and he drew the further conclusion that Strabo's great work was addressed to none other than Pythodoris herself (120). But it is not necessary, I think, to speculate about local patronage in order to account for the defocalized representation of power relations in this passage. The image of Pythodoris' autonomy is motivated or enabled, I suggest, by the locally disarticulated nature of Strabo's political cartography, which is most evident precisely in the ethnically diverse and politically contested space around his own city. Pythodoris happens to be a woman. But the fracturing of the elementary antinomies -- Greco-Roman vs. barbarian -- that constitute the ethnic other temporarily dissolves the ideological authority of the opposition between masculine Romans and feminized Asians, and thus disarms the conventional formulas by which the status of women rulers is compromised.

Binary sign systems reciprocally support one another. The case of Pythodoris is an intriguing example of how geographics, or the spatialization of hierarchical relations, impinges upon the construction of gender roles. In the multinational world of the Roman empire, especially as viewed from its outer margins, more than one polarity may have been destabilized.
Bibliography


Notes

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2. I am grateful to Judith Hallett for bringing this remarkable essay to my attention.

3. Contrast Dixon 1996: 79: "I am ... sceptical of claims for any consistently `liberalizing' tendencies in Roman law in relation, for example, to patria potestas or the legal independence of Roman citizen women."


6. Cf. Rousselle 1991: 354: "There was no intellectual obstacle to a theory of feminine courage"; Rousselle cites an anonymous Latin treatise on physiognomy (ed. André 1981) and the writings of the Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus. Cf. Seneca Ad Marciam 16.1; Diogenes Laertius 7.175 reports that Cleanthes wrote a book "On the Thesis that the Same Virtue Belongs to a Man and a Woman"; see also Clement of Alexandria Stromateis 4.8, Diogenes Laertius 6.12 (on the Cynic Antisthenes). At the same time, Seneca is opposed to women occupying positions
in public life; for discussion of this apparent contradiction in Seneca's (and, more generally, Stoic) views, see Elorduy 1936: 194-95; Favez 1938; Manning 1973; Loretto 1977; Hallett 1989: 63-64; Houser 1997.

7. Cf. Lefkowitz 1983: 50: "Ancient women could certainly be courageous, but they could not be truly independent."

8. Cf. the similar reaction of the women of Saguntum after the defeat of their city (Spanish Wars 12); also Florus' account of Marius' slaughter of the Cimbri (Epitome 1.38.16-17), in which the wives of the Cimbri fight with lances and poles from wagons drawn up as barriers; when their request for liberty is denied by Marius, the women kill themselves and their children. Note too the variation on the theme in Florus 1.31.16-17, where, at the end of the third Punic war, Hasdrubal, along with thirty-six thousand of his men, surrenders to the Romans, whereas Hasdrubal's wife, in imitation of Dido, immolates herself and her two children: "How much braver was a woman -- the general's own wife!" Finally, one may compare Florus' description of the Gallo-Greeks who, softened by their residence in Asia, surrender to the Romans in 178 B.C.; once in chains, however, they are inspired to attempt suicide by the example of the wife of Orgiacontis, their king, who decapitates a centurion who had raped her and brings the head back to her husband (1.27.3-6; cf. Valerius Maximus 6.1.ext.2): again, the woman's heroism is balanced by the feminization of the men (my thanks to Isabel Moreno Ferrero for bringing the passages in Florus to my attention). For parallels to Florus' description (2.21-22) of the ferocity of women who hurl their own children as missiles, see Grassl 1994.
9. See Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1983: 20 (cf. 27) on the "condescending Western attitude toward the Orient, usually regarded as effeminate"; cf. Polybius' description (36.15.1-5) of womanish behavior of the barbarian tyrant Prusias of Bithynia; Pomeroy 1986: 421.

10. Thus, Appian notes rather gratuitously that when Mithridates was in Stratonicea in 88 B.C. he saw a pretty girl and added her to the number of his wives (21 fin.); later, Mithridates is portrayed as dallying irresponsibly with her while battles are raging (27 fin.). In acknowledging Mithridates' extraordinary military abilities, Appian observes that he was "enduring of toil (phereponos), and only the pleasures of women bested him" (112 fin.). Strabo too (12.28) is silent on Hypsicratea.

11. Conceivably, Valerius found the story in Cornelius Nepos' Exempla. Cornelius was apparently the first Roman to make such a collection of edifying anecdotes; cf. Horsfall 1989: xviii.

12. Heftner 1994: 232 remarks of Hypsicratea that "according to eastern conceptions, she was indeed, as concubine, the wife of Mithridates (although she must have belonged among the second class wives)."

13. Among the Roman examples are tales of husbands who slay themselves upon the loss of a wife and wives, like Cato's, who react similarly to news of a husband's death (4.6.2-3, 5).

15. Clark illustrates her argument with reference to the tale of Aretaphila, a contemporary of Mithridates, who, as Plutarch relates in *Virtues of Women* (255 E-255 E), obligingly retired from royal authority when her brief rescue operation was done. Cf. Diodorus Siculus' report of the mutual cruelty of Eurydice and Olympias, rival regents in Macedonia (317 B.C.), which concludes: "Everyone remembered the words of Antipater, who, as though he were pronouncing an oracle at his death, exhorted them never to permit a woman to have charge of the kingship" (19.11.9). Blomqvist 1997: 87, after distinguishing between two types of politically active women in Plutarch, represented by the tyrannical figures Aspasia, Cleopatra, and Olympias on the one hand, and the virtuous Aretaphila on the other, concludes that what offends Plutarch is not that a woman acts, but "that she acts in order to promote her own interests" in the political sphere. See also Gordon, Reynolds, Beard and Roueché 1997: 233 (with bibliography): "Against the repeated view that women in Asia Minor became more capable of holding independent civic office, it has rightly been maintained that they might hold a circumscribed set of them, but only within the context of a particular family situation, most notably after the death of a father and in the absence of brothers, but also as junior adjuncts to their husbands. Generally speaking, such women were not free to act as they pleased: they were counters in primarily male conceptions of the family interest."

16. One strategy is to project powerful queens onto the extreme margins of the civilized world, where their authority stands outside and is complementary to the masculine order that reigns at the center. Thus, Tomyris, queen of the Massagetae, is celebrated for defeating the Persian ruler Cyrus after he had attacked her in a treacherous night raid, in what Herodotus calls the greatest of the wars between barbarians (1.214); Herodotus mentions, incidentally, that the customs of the Massagetae include connubial promiscuity (1.216), which suggests a disordered relationship between the sexes. Candace, the queen of Ethiopia in the *Alexander Romance*
(3.18-23), is described as a just ruler; she depends on Alexander, however, to settle a quarrel between her sons, and exclaims: "I wish you were my son -- through you I would have controlled all nations" (3.23; trans. Dowden in Reardon 1989: 725).

17. For the parallel account of Victoria in the 31st life, see Moreno Ferrero 1992: 115.


19. For Roman attitudes to the courage of enemy women, cf. the examples cited in Rouselle 1991: 353-54. Boudicca is an especially interesting case; Roberts 1988: 123 generates the following table of equivalents from Tacitus' account: ROMAN/male/discipline vs. BRITON/female/emotion, though by analogizing the Britons to Romans oppressed by Nero, Tacitus complicates the picture and generates "interlocking and conflicting homologies" (129). Roberts concludes (132): "to be oppressed is to be feminized."

20. Both the Loeb (Jones 1928) and the Budé (Lasserre 1981) translations render the imperfect *sundiōikei* as present ("assiste a sa mère"), though nothing warrants this so far as I can see.

21. Cf. Macurdy 1937: 37: "Pythodoris was notable among the vassal-queens in that, though she had sons, she ruled as a widow in her own right" (although the point of view is dated, there is much useful information on dependent queens in Macurdy 1932 and 1937). Contrast Herodotus' account of Artemisia, the queen of Halicarnassus, who assumed the tyranny upon the death of her husband and ruled while her son was still a child (7.99). Herodotus admires
Artemisia for her courage, but it is she who tells Xerxes that Greeks are as far superior to Persians in strength as men are to women (8.68), and her great military accomplishment is to ram a ship in Xerxes' fleet in order to elude the Greek vessel that is pursuing her (8.87).

22. For Augustus and Tiberius, see Book 6, p. 288 fin.; for the governors of Egypt, described as "sensible men" (sôphronôn andrôn), see Book 17, p. 797.

23. As grand-daughter of Marc Antony, Pythodoris may have been perceived within elite Roman society as bearing, by virtue of her blood, virtues analogous to those of her male kinsmen; see Hallett 1989: 61-67. But such a perception falls short of recognizing an autonomous public role for women who belong to the aristocracy; as Hallett remarks (64): "The widely-held assumption that elite women could manifest qualities which were publicly prized in their male kinsfolk is not, however, tantamount to a Roman view that the characteristics of the two sexes were not rigidly assigned."


25. Cf. Pothecary 1997: 246: "[Strabo's] choice of Mithridates' defeat and Pompey's reorganization to mark the beginning of `our times' shows Strabo as an Asiatic, identifying with what had been Pontus although it had undergone many further changes by the time that he wrote. It is the historical experience of this region that shapes his outlook and provides him with a temporal framework, even though in other ways he is very much part of the Roman world."
26. Cf. Konstan 1994: 231, where I argue that, although the Greek novels as a genre portray the protagonists as equals in love, it is not the case that "the narrative equivalence of sexual roles is in principle emancipatory for women." The relative autonomy that is thrust upon the young heroine is both accidental and framed by her passage from daughter to wife, and the image of married life the novels furnish gives no indication that girls enjoy a comparable independence as wives. Rather than explain the novels as a reflection of women's actual status, I seek to account for the image of sexual parity as a function of the increasingly diasporized environment of the Roman empire. For a contrary view, according to which the Greek novels celebrate the continuity of Greek identity, see Swain 1996: 101-31.
Women were also kept out of positions of power. They were not allowed to be senators, governors, lawyers, judges or any of the other official positions involved in running the Roman Empire. Women were also not allowed to vote in elections. Although it was extremely difficult, some women overcame the many obstacles put in their way and managed to obtain positions of influence. Probably the most influential woman in the Roman Empire was Livia. She had strong opinions about politics and after she married Emperor Augustus she was in a position to influence the way the empire was run. Some of the letters that the couple wrote to each other have survived, and they show the important role Livia played in shaping the Roman Empire. Problem of Romanization. Luttwak’s Hegemonic Empire. Romanization. What Is It? Francis Haverfield and the Coinage of the Term Center and Periphery Post-Colonial Discourses and Complexities of Acculturation. Slideshow 4029039... Who Was Romanized? The elite adopted the culture of the Romans in order to create prestige, reflecting the increasing political power that they had acquired through Roman support. Attention is focused mainly on the elite; the evidence for their lives and beliefs is strongest, and those lower in the social hierarchy have only a secondary role in the study. R. Hingley.