

very similar to those of male patrons – interest in literary life, pursuit of a reputation as a cultured benefactress and desire to be immortalized in literature – they could seldom provide their protégés with the same kind of social and political benefits as men, and their roles were often limited to financial support and encouragement. Hemelrijk also raises an interesting point when she explains that despite their presumable high intellect, education and interest in society, Roman patronesses are almost exclusively praised for their traditional feminine virtues alone. This formula probably had a lot to do with suspicious attitudes towards educated women's morals, and in my opinion, it is the single most important point concerning the differences between male and female patronage.

The last two chapters discuss women as writers, first examining the field of poetry and then moving on to prose. Hemelrijk concentrates on studying the almost complete lack of works written by women and possible reasons for this. She approaches the subject by introducing four known Roman women poets. Two of these were somewhat well-known elegiac poets with a detectable female viewpoint, while the work of two others was more of a humdrum nature and only preserved as inscriptions. As the author points out, it seems clear that any general voice of women in poetry can not be traced. This also goes for prose – mainly letters – written by women. It seems that the same standards applied to language and style of both women's and men's writings, and women usually filled these demands quite well. The meager amount of women's works left is described as the result of three factors: women's minor activity in writing, their difficulties in getting their work published and the poor preservation of women's writings – the works of women represented the less valued genres of literature and often dealt with everyday themes not considered worth preserving. Altogether, the author analyzes profoundly and in detail the loss of women's writings – a subject that in most studies is overlooked as a self-evident phenomenon.

All in all, Hemelrijk has succeeded in writing an accomplished study about a very little examined yet highly interesting subject. Her handling of the theme is refreshingly versatile compared to the somewhat superficial image of women's education hitherto. She has made an effort to scrutinize the role of women in educated society from multiple perspectives, using a variety of literary sources, and even attempted to trace the voices of women themselves. One must admit that due to the scarcity of sources, and the ambiguous nature of the subject itself, there is very little undisputed evidence to support some of the interpretations, and many of them can – and undoubtedly will – be argued about in the future. In my opinion, this can, nonetheless, be considered one of the accomplishments of this book. As a thorough handling of a controversial subject, Hemelrijk's work will hopefully pave the way for a broader discussion about the intellectual life of women in Roman society.

Elina Pyy

JACQUELINE M. CARLON: *Pliny's Women: Constructing Virtue and Creating Identity in the Roman World*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009. ISBN 978-0-521-76132-1, IX, 270 pp. GBP 45, USD 85, EUR 52.

The Younger Pliny's corpus of 368 letters contains a great deal of information about the upper-class of Roman society in the late 1st and early 2nd century AD: social relationships, the daily activities of the senatorial class and the mechanisms of imperial administration. It is then

evident that any published work that examines this formidable source of information in more detail is very welcome. Jacqueline Carlon's book on Pliny's women will surely become an important point of reference for any study on the role of elite women in Imperial times as well as on Pliny's character.

In her work, Carlon has selected 38 letters which either focus on women or are addressed to women or include women prominently. These female characters of the Plinian corpus are classified in five distinct groups defined by family and thematic ties: those associated with the Stoic opposition to the principates of Nero, Vespasian and Domitian (Chapter 1); those connected to Corellius Rufus as Pliny's protégé (Chapter 2); those who receive Pliny's benefaction or loyalty (Chapter 3); those who represent the ideal wife-type (Chapter 4); and those who are portrayed as unseemly (Chapter 5).

Each chapter offers a detailed analysis of these five women-types, as they appear in the Plinian letters, in terms of familial and political connections, prosopography and historical background. The letters are also carefully analysed in their rhetorical structure and diction with particular focus on choice and disposition of key words.

The ultimate goal of Carlon's analysis is Pliny's image as it is manipulated by the Roman author through his letters. Following the more recent scholarship on Pliny's correspondence, in fact, the author argues that the women described in the letters have been carefully selected by the Latin writer as a means of self-presentation. The social position of specific women, the choice of some words for their description, the insertion of anecdotes, and even the arrangement of the letters within the corpus are all intended to reinforce the positive image and role of Pliny in Roman society under Trajan's rule as well as to preserve his *gloria* and to secure his *aeternitas*.

As Carlon's main interest is Pliny's self-representation, her book shows a male-oriented approach when measured against the ideals and aspirations of the male members of the Roman upper class, who alone produced literature. Surely, they cannot be counterbalanced by images of women as they perceive themselves in relation to the male dominant group, as literature written by women is not attested. However, it would be interesting to know in what way and how Roman women may have responded to men's use of female characters for constructing or enhancing their social status and identity by means of other sources (visual arts, for example). Perhaps this area could be explored in future research.

Margherita Carucci

RICHARD SEAFORD: *Dionysos*. Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World. Routledge, Abingdon 2006. ISBN 0-415-32488-2. XII, 158 pp., 7 figs. GBP 14.99.

Dionysos by Richard Seaford is part of the series "Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World" targeting the general reader and student. It provides an outline of various aspects of the cult of Dionysus, drawing on sources as diverse as vases from Magna Graecia, Nietzsche, anthropology, and the New Testament. After a brief summary of some of the scholarship on Dionysus over the centuries, Seaford discusses themes he considers important to the understanding of the cult. The section on nature outlines the animal companions of Dionysus as well as the blurring of lines between human and animal, especially among the maenads.