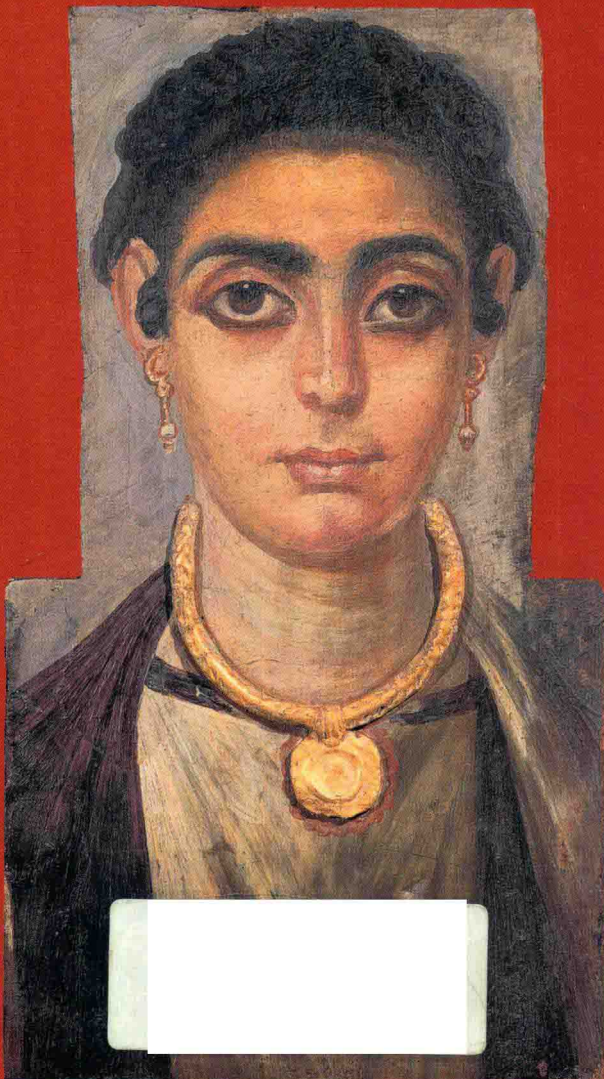


# ROMAN WOMEN

EVE D'AMBRA



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*Vassar College*



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## ROMAN WOMEN



This richly illustrated book examines the daily lives of Roman women by focusing on the mundane and less-celebrated aspects of daily life – family and household, work and leisure, worship and social obligations – of women of different social ranks. Using a variety of sources, including literary texts, letters, inscriptions, coins, tableware, furniture, and the fine arts, from the late republic to the high imperial period, Eve D’Ambra shows how these sources serve as objects of social analysis, rather than simply as documents that re-create how life was lived. She also demonstrates how texts and material objects take part in shaping realities and what they can tell us about the texture of lives and social attitudes, if not the emotions of women in Roman antiquity.

Eve D’Ambra is Professor and Chair of the Department of Art at Vassar College. She is the author of *Roman Art* (Cambridge, 1998).

## CAMBRIDGE INTRODUCTION TO ROMAN CIVILIZATION

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Cambridge Introduction to Roman Civilization is a program of books designed for use by students who have no prior knowledge of or familiarity with Roman antiquity. Books in this series focus on key topics, such as slavery, warfare, and women. They are intended to serve as a first point of reference for students who will then be equipped to seek more specialized scholarly and critical studies. Texts in these volumes are written in clear, jargon-free language and will integrate scholarship primary texts into a synthetic that reflects the most up-to-date research. All volumes in the series will be closely linked to readings and topics presented in the Cambridge Latin Course.

*To My Mother and My Daughter*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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This is a brief book on a large and increasingly unwieldy subject. In the course of its composition, I have imagined it as being perched atop a pile of scholarship, some of it quite hefty and other parts gossamer light. The book, of course, bears the imprint of the work of many fine scholars of previous generations who ventured into what was once new territory. Now the subject of Roman women seems rather more familiar, if not completely exhausted. By surveying topics that revolve around the concept and realities of Roman women, I have aimed to make these accessible to introductory students and laymen while avoiding some of the boilerplate of the genre. The juxtaposition of text and images offers a collage that may foil our impulse to match facts and pictures, a craving too often satisfied in textbooks. The images are taken seriously as sources of evidence, even when they contradict or only relate obliquely to ancient literary or historical sources. Amid the touchstones and major monuments required of such a venture, my discussions ought to suggest the depth and complexity of the issues without bringing it all to the surface. Attention is given to the ordinary and everyday aspects of life rather than to the spectacular and cinematic scenery of ancient Rome. No book is written without a point of view, and my preferences for the plebeian and anticlassical are apparent throughout.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A number of institutions have supported my work along the way. Research begun during a Howard Foundation fellowship from Brown University wound up in several chapters. I completed a draft of the book while on a sabbatical supported by the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, which provided stretches of time for reading and thinking. A leave from Vassar College and the Lucy Shoe Meritt Residency in Ancient Studies at the American Academy in Rome brought me back to the city and its many pleasures. A summer seminar offered by the National Endowment for the Humanities on Roman Egypt at Columbia University proved to be important, and I thank Roger Bagnall for introducing me to this area. Sheila Dillon and Sharon James set their accomplished students on me during a stimulating visit to their seminar on women in antiquity at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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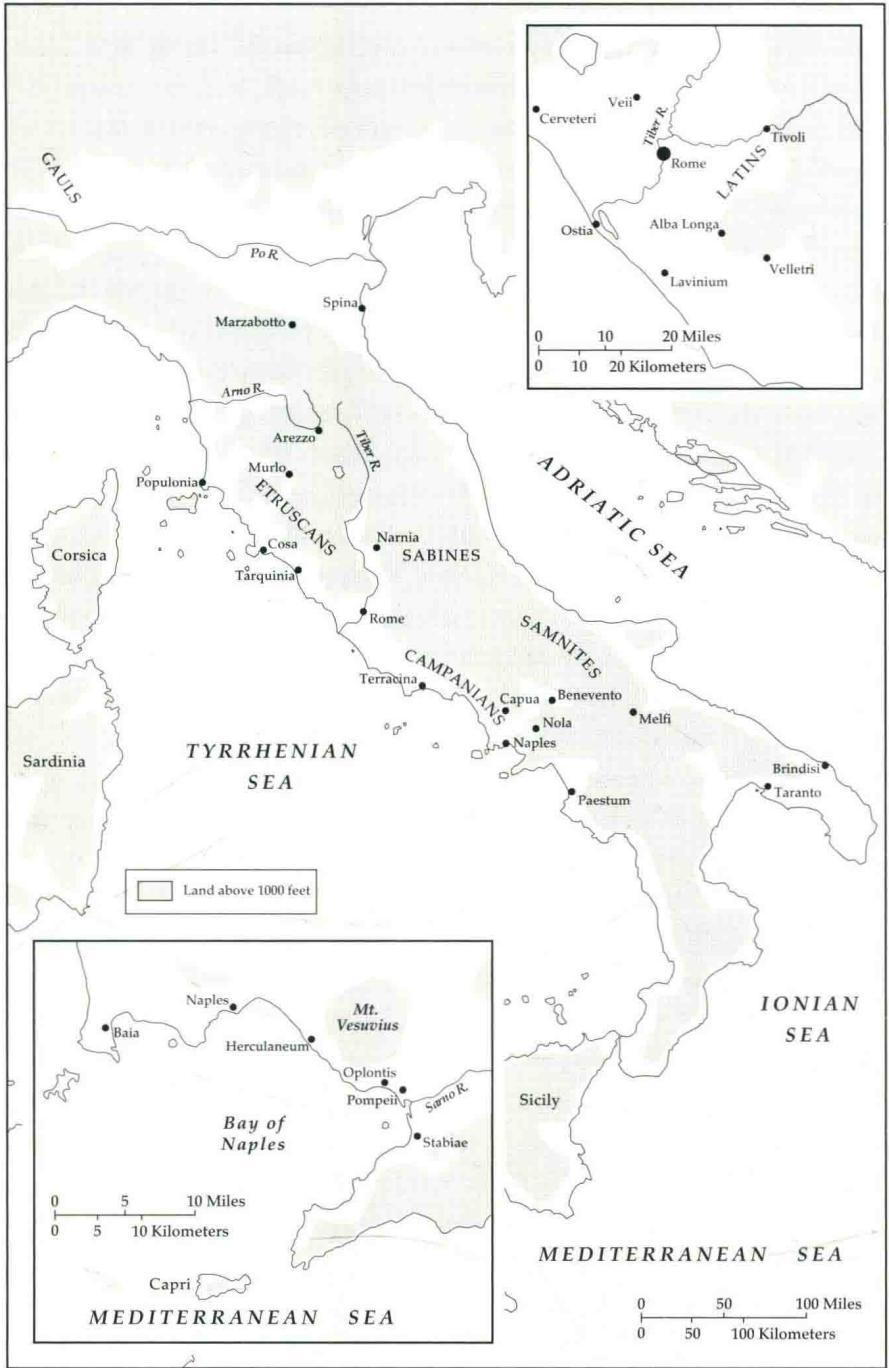
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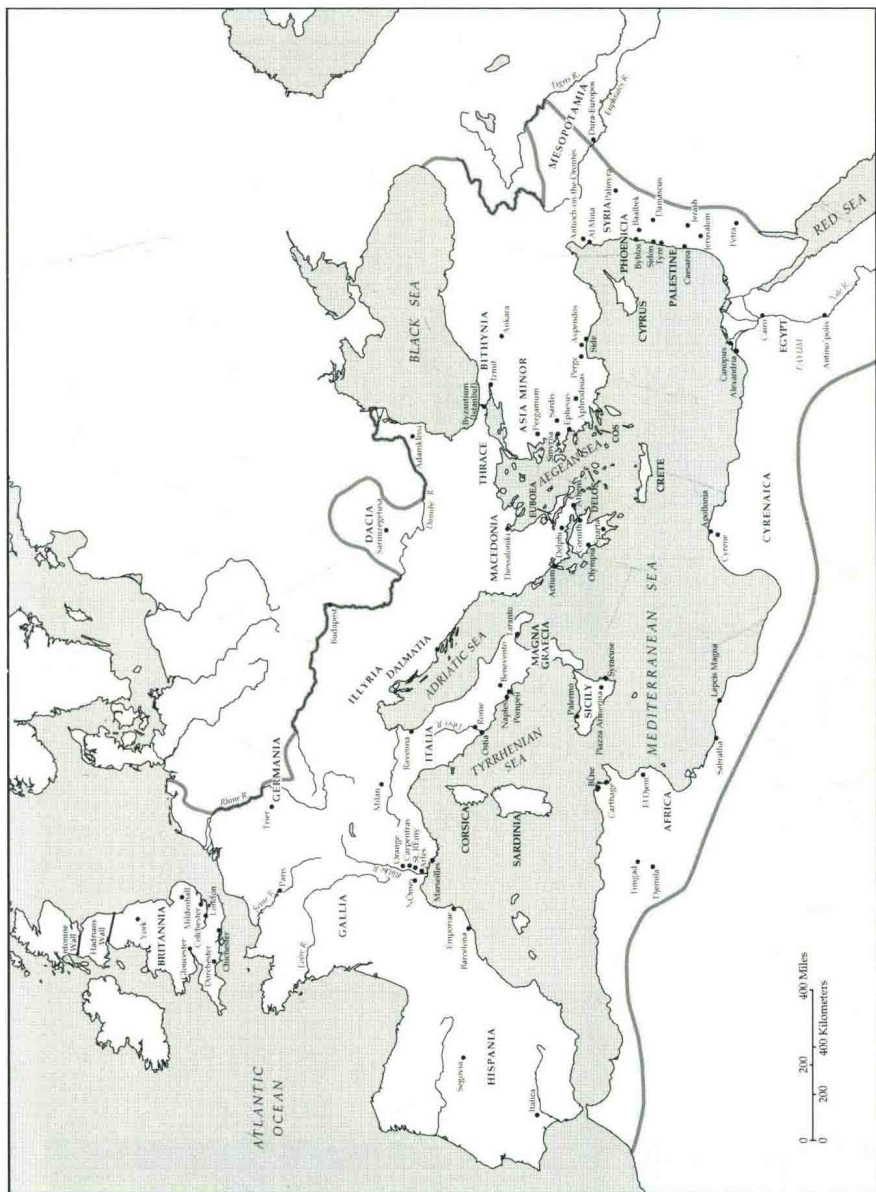
as always, provided moral support and counsel on the big picture. I have tried to incorporate all of their wise suggestions but, of course, any remaining errors, distortions, or omissions are all my own doing.

Vassar College was instrumental in providing student research assistants who have made the work a pleasure. The Ford Foundation supported Christine Wegner's summer research that started the project, and Christine may have gotten more out of this than we both realized. Rachel Kozinn served admirably, and Courtney Biggs provided exemplary assistance in seeing the book through to the end with a sense of humor. Kathryn Madden not only assisted in fact-checking, but produced the index on a tight schedule. I thank them for their hard work and attention to detail. Thomas Hill of Vassar's Art Library supplied a steady stream of cappuccino and bibliographic assistance. Ellic Davies and Liliana Aguis also helped out in the library and office. I was not alone in this endeavor – neither at the office nor at home, where my husband and daughter distracted me in ways that allowed my mind to wander and then come back, refreshed.

Poughkeepsie  
January 2005



Italy in the third-second centuries B.C.



The Roman Empire in the late second century C.E.

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