

## Introduction

Exegi monumentum aere perennius  
regalique situ pyramidum altius,  
quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens  
possit diruere aut innumerabilis  
annorum series et fuga temporum.  
non omnis moriar, multaue pars mei  
vitabit Libitinam: usque ego postera  
crescam laude recens, dum Capitolium  
scandet cum tacita virgine pontifex.

I have completed a monument more enduring than bronze, higher than the royal structure of the pyramids, which neither devouring rain nor the wild north wind can ever destroy, nor the innumerable succession of the years, nor the flight of time. I shall not wholly die, and a great part of me will escape Libitina. I shall continue to grow, fresh with the praise of posterity, as long as the *pontifex* climbs the Capitol beside the silent virgin.

—Horace *Carmina* 3.30.1–9

In the epilogue to his first collection of odes, the Augustan poet Horace links his vision of poetic immortality to the ritual activity of the Vestal Virgins. His metaphorical *monumentum* may be loftier than the pyramids, but his poetry will find readers only as long as Rome remains standing —only as long, that is, as *pontifices* and Vestals continue to sacrifice to the gods on the Capitol. Few modern scholars would quarrel with the idea that the Vestals, like the Capitol itself, served as a potent symbol of Rome and the permanence of its empire. But what of their female colleagues, the numerous women who held official positions within the public religious system during the period of the Republic? The ancient evidence suggests that these priestesses also had a considerable presence in the life of the community. It is unfortunate, therefore, that they remain not only silent, but also nearly invisible in many modern accounts of Roman religion. This book aims to restore Rome's priestesses to their proper place in the religious landscape. It argues that priestesses performed a wide range of

ritual activities, and that they did so in an official capacity, and on behalf of the Roman people. Ultimately, it proposes a new interpretation of Roman religion, one that emphasizes a reliance upon cooperation among various priestly figures, both male and female, to maintain Rome's relationship with her gods (*pax deorum*).

Despite copious evidence to the contrary, historians of Roman religion have generally supposed that women, with the exception of the Vestal Virgins, were excluded from official priestly service at Rome.<sup>1</sup> For many years, a general lack of interest in women and their roles in Roman society reinforced this assumption.<sup>2</sup> Even after pioneering studies of women's ritual activities began to appear in the middle of the twentieth century, scholars continued to construe priesthood as an exclusively male activity.<sup>3</sup> Olivier de Cazanove even argued that Roman women suffered from "sacrificial incapacity" (*incapacité sacrificielle*)—that is, exclusion from sacrifice, including especially animal sacrifice, and its related activities.<sup>4</sup> John Scheid concurred, asserting in one influential essay, "The cult and the priestly powers were, above all, men's business, on both the public and the private levels. The priestly act, celebrated in the name of a community, could not be entrusted to a woman, considered incapable of representing anyone but herself."<sup>5</sup>

De Cazanove and Scheid classified women who performed priestly roles as "exceptions" to this rule.<sup>6</sup> The priestesses of Ceres and Magna Mater, so they argued, officiated in naturalized "foreign" cults without undermining the principle of female sacrificial incapacity. Native Roman priestesses, on the other hand, were described as intruders crossing into "male" territory either as "adjuncts of their husbands," like the *flaminica Dialis* (priestess of Jupiter) and the *regina sacrorum* (queen of the sacred rites), or, in the case of the Vestal Virgins,

<sup>1</sup>In his entry on "priests (Greek and Roman)" in the fourth edition of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, for instance, North (2012: 1209) writes, "In Rome . . . priests are (with the exception of the Vestal Virgins) males, formed into colleges or brotherhoods." Other recent accounts of Roman priesthood support this assertion either explicitly or implicitly (see, for example, Szemler 1972: 6–8; Beard 1990; Scheid 1993 (French original Scheid 1992a); Estienne 2005a; Porte 2007), as do the popular handbooks (North 1989: 619; Beard, North, and Price 1998: 71, 296–297; North 2000: 19; Scheid 2003: 131; Warrior 2006: 42). For a more inclusive view of priestly service in the city of Rome, see Edlund-Berry 1994; Richlin 1997 (= Richlin 2014: 197–240); Böhm 2003; Schultz 2006b: 69–81, 140–142; Flemming 2007; Rüpke 2007b: 223–228, 2008 (German original Rüpke 2005); Rives 2013: 141–142. For priestesses elsewhere in the Latin west, see further below.

<sup>2</sup>In Wissowa's (1912: 501–523) discussion of the pontifical college, for instance, the *flaminica Dialis* (priestess of Jupiter) merits only a few brief references (1912: 502, n. 7, 506, 507, 516, n. 117) despite appearing in Latin citations elsewhere in the text (1912: 516, n. 115, 517, n. 125). The question of her husband's dependence upon her status as *flaminica* (on which see chapter 1) is never raised.

<sup>3</sup>Important early studies include Le Bonniec 1958; Gagé 1963; Guizzi 1968. For an overview of historical trends in the study of women's roles in Roman religion, see Schultz 2006b: 2–3; Tzanetou 2007; Holland 2012b: 204–206, 213; Colantoni 2012: 272–273; Richlin 2014: 28–33.

<sup>4</sup>De Cazanove 1987. Earlier work (Piccaluga 1964; Gras 1983) had focused only on women's supposed exclusion from handling sacrificial wine (see further below).

<sup>5</sup>Scheid 1993: 57. See also Scheid 1992c (French original Scheid 1991), 2003. As Colantoni (2012: 273) has noted, Scheid's work "has served as a lightning rod of sorts," attracting critical comment from Staples 1998: 5–8; Schultz 2006b: 6–7, 131–137; Flemming 2007; Hemelrijk 2009; Richlin 2014: 28–29.

<sup>6</sup>De Cazanove 1987: 168–169; Scheid 1993: 57.

as “honorary men.”<sup>7</sup> Relying upon the work of Mary Beard, whose landmark article “The Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins” suggested that Vestal identity was constituted by a combination of matronal, virginal, and male elements, Scheid argued that the most prominent exceptions to the rule of sacrificial incapacity were in fact “ambiguous” and, for this reason, “allowed to wield some of the religious powers traditionally reserved for men.”<sup>8</sup>

The view that women were excluded from official public cult became generally accepted. In recent years, however, a number of important studies have challenged specific aspects of this general picture, including the theory of female sacrificial incapacity.<sup>9</sup> Celia Schultz, Rebecca Flemming, and Emily Hemelrijk have argued persuasively not only that earlier scholars had ignored abundant counterevidence proving women’s sacrificial capacity, but also that their arguments had been built upon a misreading of their antiquarian sources.<sup>10</sup> One example is the well-known ritual formula that appears in the title of de Cazanove’s article:

exesto, extra esto. sic enim lictor in quibusdam sacris clamitabat: hostis, vinctus, mulier, virgo exesto; scilicet interesse prohibebatur. (Festus (Paulus) 72L)

Exesto: “be away!” For thus the *lictor* used to shout during certain sacred rites, “foreigner, prisoner, woman, virgin, be away;” clearly prohibiting them from being present.

Although de Cazanove and Scheid interpret this passage as evidence for women’s exclusion from all public sacrifices, the text clearly states that they were prohibited from attending only “certain sacred rites” (*quibusdam sacris*).<sup>11</sup> Rather than confirming a general ban on female participation in sacrificial rituals, the formula suggests that women were normally present and, therefore, had to be actively excluded with a shout of “*exesto*.”<sup>12</sup>

The passages thought to confirm an interdiction on women’s handling of important sacrificial materials such as wine, grain, and meat are equally unpersuasive. The ancient prohibition on women’s consumption of undiluted wine (*temetum*), for instance, is widely reported in the written sources.<sup>13</sup> It is always,

<sup>7</sup>Scheid 1993: 57. The phrase “Vestal virgins, honorary men” appears in the index of Hopkins 1983.

<sup>8</sup>Scheid 1992c: 384.

<sup>9</sup>See, for example, Spaeth 1996; Staples 1998; Schultz 2006b; Takács 2008.

<sup>10</sup>Schultz 2006b: 131–137; Flemming 2007; Hemelrijk 2009. See also Gaspar 2012: 132–136; Rives 2013. Recent work on sacrifice in classical Greece has also challenged the orthodox view (expressed most forcefully by Detienne 1989) that Greek women were excluded from animal sacrifice (see especially Osborne 1993; Dillon 2002: 131–135; Connelly 2007: 179–190).

<sup>11</sup>De Cazanove 1987: 167–168; Scheid 1992c: 379.

<sup>12</sup>Compare Cic. *Leg.* 2.21, which prohibits women from performing nocturnal sacrifices, with the exception of those performed according to religious custom (*rite*) and on behalf of the people (*pro populo*).

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Cic. *Rep.* 4.6; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.25.6; Val. Max. 2.1.5, 6.3.9; Pliny *H.N.* 14.89–90; Gell. *N.A.* 10.23.1–5; Plut. *Num.* 3.5, *Quaest. Rom.* 6 = Mor. 265b–e; Serv. ad *Aen.* 1.737. For a discussion of this evidence as it relates to the theory of female sacrificial incapacity, see especially Schultz 2006b: 132–134; Flemming 2007: 92–97; Hemelrijk 2009: 257.

however, situated within a domestic context and usually associated with fears of adultery and the safety of the household storeroom, over which the matron was supposed to keep watch. Women are described as handling or drinking wine in ritual settings, and we should not assume that a restriction tied to daily life, one explicitly concerned with enforcing matronal temperance and chastity, applied to the religious sphere as well.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the late antique commentator Servius rejects such a view when he reports that in ancient times (*apud maiores nostros*), women refrained from drinking wine “except on certain days and for the sake of the sacred rites” (*nisi sacrorum causa certis diebus*, ad *Aen.* 1.737). Women regularly drank wine on religious occasions and, during later periods, at other times as well.

Similar criticisms may be leveled against another passage cited in support of female sacrificial incapacity: “Why, in ancient times, were wives not allowed to grind grain or cook?” (Διὰ τί τὰς γυναῖκας οὐτ’ ἀλεῖν ἔτων οὐτ’ ὀσποιεῖν τὸ παλαιόν, Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 85 = *Mor.* 286f). De Cazanove and Scheid interpret this text as a religious rule excluding women from animal sacrifice and its related processes, including the preparation of *mola salsa*, the salted grain used to consecrate sacrificial victims.<sup>15</sup> In his answer to the question, however, Plutarch places the restriction firmly within a domestic setting and interprets it as a concession granted by the Romans to their Sabine wives.<sup>16</sup> Both the privilege and its etiology are presented as curiosities of the legendary past. In fact, the ancient sources routinely associate women with the production and storage of food products, including those necessary for public and private rituals.<sup>17</sup>

There is ample evidence, moreover, that women could communicate with the gods through sacrifice. The Vestal Virgins offered a sow at the December rites of Bona Dea.<sup>18</sup> The *flaminica Dialis* sacrificed a ram to Jupiter on the market days (*nundinae*).<sup>19</sup> Like the male *pontifices* and *flamines*, the *flaminicae* and the Vestals were permitted to use the *secespita*, a type of sacrificial knife.<sup>20</sup> On the Kalends, the first day of every month, the *regina sacrorum* sacrificed a sow or a sheep to Juno.<sup>21</sup> According to Cicero, the *sacerdos Cereris* performed rites (*sacra facere*) on behalf of the Roman people, perhaps including the sacrifice of a pig.<sup>22</sup> The *saliae virgines* (Salian Virgins) performed a sacrifice (*sacrificium*

<sup>14</sup>Ov. *Fast.* 3.523–542; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 20 = *Mor.* 268d–e; Macrob. *Sat.* 1.12.25; Festus (Paulus) 455L.

<sup>15</sup>De Cazanove 1987: 162–168; Scheid 1992c: 380. See also Versnel 1993: 266.

<sup>16</sup>See also Plut. *Rom.* 15.4, 19.7, with Schultz 2006b: 132, 134; Flemming 2007: 91–92; Hemelrijk 2009: 256.

<sup>17</sup>See especially chapters 1 and 6.

<sup>18</sup>Cic. *Har. resp.* 12, 37, *Att.* 1.13.3, with chapter 6.

<sup>19</sup>Macrob. *Sat.* 1.16.30, with chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup>Serv. ad *Aen.* 4.262, with chapter 1.

<sup>21</sup>Macrob. *Sat.* 1.15.19, with chapter 2.

<sup>22</sup>Cic. *Balb.* 55, with chapter 3.

*facere*) while dressed in military garb.<sup>23</sup> A priestess known as the *damiatrix* offered a sacrifice (*sacrificium facere*) to the goddess Damia.<sup>24</sup>

Laywomen are recorded as officiants as well. Cato enjoins the *vilica*, the slave housekeeper on his country estate, to supplicate (*supplicare*) the *Lares*, the deities of the hearth.<sup>25</sup> In 207 BC, Rome's *matronae* (married women) sacrificed to Juno Regina, apparently without the assistance of a priest or magistrate.<sup>26</sup> Women who had been married only once (*matronae univirae*) had the right of sacrificing (*ius sacrificandi*) in the cults of Pudicitia (Sexual Virtue).<sup>27</sup> An *armita* was a virgin who sacrificed (*sacrificans*) with the fold of her *toga* thrown over her shoulder, while the *simpulatrix* was a woman devoted to divine matters (*rebus divinis*) who took her name from the *simpulum*, a ladle used to pour wine at sacrifices.<sup>28</sup> The number and variety of these examples argue forcefully against a formal rule of female "sacrificial incapacity," even if women enjoyed fewer opportunities to preside over animal sacrifices than men.<sup>29</sup> The Romans welcomed women at the republican altar.

The question of women's subordination to male authority in the ritual sphere is less easily settled. It indeed seems that married priestesses like the *flaminica Dialis* and the *regina sacrorum* were subject to the authority of their priestly spouses, though not to the extent implied by Scheid's characterization of them as "adjuncts of their husbands."<sup>30</sup> Other priestesses were more independent. The administration of cults under female control seems to have been left to the women themselves, particularly where men were actively excluded. Such self-government was naturally an "internal autonomy" that relied upon the continued consent of the people and the senate—that is, of Roman men.<sup>31</sup> But priestesses were not the only public officials whose activities were circumscribed by a higher authority. The *augur*, for instance, whose most important duty was to interpret signs from the gods (*auspicia*), was subordinate to the authority of the senate and the magistrates.<sup>32</sup> He could act only at their request or, in the case of the inauguration of a priest, at the behest of the *pontifex maximus*, the chief of the pontifical college. The *pontifex maximus*, moreover, could impose a fine (*multa*) on any member of his college, restrict a colleague's ability to leave the city, and even compel a private citizen to take up a priestly office against his will.<sup>33</sup> As we shall see, the

<sup>23</sup> Festus 439L, with chapter 3.

<sup>24</sup> Festus (Paulus) 60L, with chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup> Cato Agr. 143.2.

<sup>26</sup> Livy 27.37.8–10, with Schultz 2006b: 34–37.

<sup>27</sup> Livy 10.23.9.

<sup>28</sup> Festus (Paulus) 4 (*armita*), 455L (*simpulatrix*).

<sup>29</sup> For the likelihood that women sacrificed less frequently than men, see Hemelrijk 2009: 264; Rives 2013: 142–144.

<sup>30</sup> Scheid 1993: 57.

<sup>31</sup> As stressed by Mæhle 2008: 67–68.

<sup>32</sup> North 1986: 257; Beard 1990: 36; Briquel 2003.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Cic. *Phil.* 11.18; Livy 27.8.4–10, 37.51.1–7, 40.42.8–11; Val. Max. 1.1.2; Livy *Per.* 19, with Wissowa 1912: 510–513; Beard, North and Price 1998: 106–108.

subordination experienced by female priests was qualitatively different from that experienced by male priests, but subordination in and of itself is no reason to exclude them from the scholarly conversation.

Another problematic issue in the study of Roman priestesses has been the assertion that women's religious activities were "marginal" and "deviant," restricted to the household or to "suburban sanctuaries and the temples of foreign gods."<sup>34</sup> The tendency to downplay the formal significance of women's rituals owes much, in my view, to the assumption of a gendered division between public and private.<sup>35</sup> The Romans, however, did not define the public sphere in quite the way scholars have supposed.<sup>36</sup> Rituals described as marginal in modern scholarship—those concerning so-called private matters such as chastity, marriage, fertility, childbirth, and the nurture of children—were fully integrated into the formal structures of civic life. The festival calendar is crowded with such rites.<sup>37</sup> What is more, a consciousness that women's cult activity ensured the survival of the state pervades the written sources. When the Greek rites of Ceres were interrupted following the Roman defeat at Cannae in 216 BC, for instance, the senate ordered Rome's *matronae* to limit their mourning period to thirty days "in order to prevent any other public or private rites from being abandoned for the same reason" (*ne ob eandem causam alia quoque sacra publica aut privata desererentur*, Livy 22.56.3).<sup>38</sup> Threats to the community were not limited to the battlefield. Women's worship addressed the perils of agricultural failure, famine, disease, and infant mortality. Like the military establishment, it could not be permitted to lapse.<sup>39</sup>

Women also participated in cults with a more obvious martial or political focus, including those long regarded as male-dominated.<sup>40</sup> Juno Sospita and Juno Regina, for instance, took an interest in political matters and exercised considerable authority over the fate of the Roman people.<sup>41</sup> The cult of Fortuna Muliebris and the "Festival of the Handmaidens" on the Nonae Capratinae (July 7) were thought to commemorate the heroism of women whose actions had saved the city from destruction.<sup>42</sup> Rome's *matronae* regularly participated

<sup>34</sup>Scheid 1992c: 377. For a critique of this view, see especially Staples 1998: 5–6; Schultz 2006b: 20–45.

<sup>35</sup>For a discussion of how the trope of "separate spheres" has influenced the study of Greco-Roman antiquity, see Golden and Toohey 2003: 3–4, 15. More generally, see Kelly 1984: 1–18; Nelson 1990; Clark 2004: 230–231.

<sup>36</sup>For a general discussion, see Wallace-Hadrill 1996.

<sup>37</sup>Boëls-Janssen 1993: 469–477; Takács 2008: 25–59; Richlin 2014: 228–230.

<sup>38</sup>Under normal circumstances, women remained in mourning for ten months (Ov. *Fast.* 1.35, 3.134; Plut. *Num.* 12.2; Cass. Dio 56.43.1).

<sup>39</sup>Though demographic evidence for the Roman world is limited, scholars generally agree that as many as thirty percent of newborns died before their first birthday and nearly half before age ten (Saller 1994: 23–25). Crop failure is likewise difficult to quantify. At the very least, we can be certain that the annual harvest yield varied considerably under Mediterranean conditions (Prudent. *C. Symm.* 2.997–1000, with Erdkamp 2005: 51–53). Human and agricultural fertility were serious concerns on both an individual and a communal level.

<sup>40</sup>See especially Dorsey 1989; Schultz 2000, 2006b: 22–45.

<sup>41</sup>Hänninen 1999a, 1999b; Schultz 2006a, 2006b: 22–28, 33–37.

<sup>42</sup>See chapter 3 (Fortuna Muliebris); Green 2010 (Nonae Capratinae).

in public expiatory rites in times of civic or military crisis.<sup>43</sup> The Vestals guarded the eternal flame of Vesta and the *pignora imperii*, the “pledges of empire” that guaranteed Roman hegemony, while the *saliae* offered a sacrifice for the success of Rome’s military operations.<sup>44</sup>

More often than not, these rituals enforced an expectation of *castitas* (chastity) and *pudicitia* (sexual virtue). The Vestals and the *saliae* were virgins and only *matronae univirae* were permitted to worship Fortuna Muliebris. Other cults, including those of Pudicitia and Venus Verticordia (Heart-Turner), who was credited with the power to turn “the minds of virgins and women from lust to sexual virtue” (*virginum mulierumque mens a libidine ad pudicitiam*, Val. Max. 8.15.12), were even more explicit in their cultivation of these virtues.<sup>45</sup> It is striking, however, that cults associated with *castitas* and *pudicitia* often received special attention in times of great national crisis.<sup>46</sup> Venus Verticordia, for instance, was introduced at Rome during the Second Punic War (218 BC–201 BC), and received a temple following a notorious case of unchastity within the Vestal order at the end of the second century BC.<sup>47</sup> In the Roman mind, female virtue was implicated in guaranteeing the wellbeing of the civic community, not just the integrity of individual households.<sup>48</sup>

The interdependence of the religious system, in which every public cult contributed to the maintenance of the *pax deorum*, makes it difficult to argue that rituals involving women were “marginal” to the interests of the state. In fact, the ancient sources suggest that finances, rather than gender, played a more prominent role in distinguishing between the *sacra publica*, the public rites in the city of Rome and its immediate environs, and rituals observed privately (*sacra privata*):<sup>49</sup>

publica sacra, quae publico sumptu pro populo fiunt, quaeque pro montibus, pagis, curis, sacellis: at privata, quae pro singulis hominibus, familiis, gentibus fiunt. (Festus 284L)

Public rites are those that are performed at public expense on behalf of the people (*populus*), and also those that are performed on behalf of the hills (*montes*), rural districts (*pagi*), divisions of the people (*curiae*), and shrines. Private rites, on the other hand, are those that are performed on behalf of individuals, households, or clans (*gentes*).

According to the definition offered here, the Roman *sacra publica* fell into two groups. The first contained rites performed by priests and magistrates on behalf

<sup>43</sup> See especially Schultz 2006b: 28–37.

<sup>44</sup> See chapters 6 (Vestals) and 3 (*saliae*).

<sup>45</sup> Langlands 2006: 47–51, 59.

<sup>46</sup> Langlands 2006: 57.

<sup>47</sup> Val. Max. 8.15.12; Plin. *H.N.* 7.120; Ov. *Fast.* 4.157–160; Obseq. 37.

<sup>48</sup> For the civic import of *pudicitia*, see Langlands 2006: 49–50.

<sup>49</sup> As Rüpke (2006: 22) has written concerning the *lex Ursonensis*, “the financing of the cult is the leitmotif that holds together the whole passage on religion.”

of the *populus*, that is, the entire citizenry of Rome. These rites fulfilled the community's obligations toward its gods and were financed by the state, either from the public treasury or with income generated from land set aside for the upkeep of a specific cult or priesthood.<sup>50</sup>

The second category of *sacra publica* comprised a group of rites performed on behalf of various divisions of the city and citizenry of Rome.<sup>51</sup> These include the Septimontium, a festival celebrated by the residents of the seven hills (*septem montes*); the Paganalia, a festival observed by rural villages (*pagi*); the rites of the *curiae* (ancient divisions of the Roman people); and the Argei festival, which involved twenty-seven shrines located throughout the city. These rituals were publicly financed as well, though in some cases with funds maintained by the group involved, rather than from the treasury of the Roman people.<sup>52</sup> Private rites (*privata*), on the other hand, included those performed on behalf of individuals, households, and clans and funded by private resources.

This method of distinguishing between public and private rites has important implications for our understanding of women's roles in Roman religion, particularly their role as public priestesses. A ritual performed for the benefit of the Roman people was classified as public and funded by the public treasury, regardless of the gender of the officiant. Even more fundamentally, since the Romans did not distinguish between "sacred" and "secular," but rather regarded ritual activity as a natural function of the civic community, it follows that priestesses who held leadership positions were essential to public life at Rome.<sup>53</sup> Far from delimiting an area of exclusion or marginalization from the public realm, ritual practice granted women a vital role in the community, particularly on festival days when they offered sacrifices, prayed to the gods, or performed other rituals in the presence of their fellow citizens.<sup>54</sup>

While we should not go so far as to posit a view of Roman religion that assigns full religious equality to men and women, a new model is clearly in order. Beard herself laid the groundwork for a different approach in an "affectionate critique" of her earlier work, arguing in "Re-reading (Vestal) Virginité" that gender categories are not "objective, cultural 'givens.'" <sup>55</sup> By applying unproblematic labels (virginal, matronal, and male) to various aspects of Vestal identity, Beard's earlier work had failed to account for the socially contingent nature of identity markers such as sacrificial capacity, which worked to express

<sup>50</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.75.3; App. *Mithr.* 22; Festus 204L; Symmachus *Ep.* 1.68; Oros. 5.18.27 with Beard 1998: 86–89; Rüpke 2007b: 21–22.

<sup>51</sup> Rüpke 2007b: 24.

<sup>52</sup> For publicly funded rites in the *curiae* and on the Oppian Hill, see (respectively) Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.23.1; *CIL* 6.32455, with chapter 2.

<sup>53</sup> As North (1990a: 52) stresses, "There was no 'Church' to the Roman 'State'—just the Republic (*res publica*)."

<sup>54</sup> Scholars working on classical Greece have come to similar conclusions about the significance of women's participation in civic cult (see, for example, Blundell 1995: 163; Blundell and Williamson 1998; Dillon 2002; Goff 2004; Connelly 2007; Parca and Tzanetou 2007; Kaltsas and Shapiro 2008).

<sup>55</sup> Beard 1995: 169.

gender only in conjunction with other factors such as biological sex, physical health, age, civic status, wealth, and ethnicity.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the ritual sphere was an important space for the formation of socially appropriate gender identities.<sup>57</sup> Through the communal performance of ritual, men and women, both as ritual actors and as spectators, internalized and publicly affirmed the values that were thought to hold the community together, including ideas about proper womanly behavior and the relation between the sexes. “Put simply,” as Beard has written, “the Vestals constructed Roman gender, as much as gender (and its ambiguities) constructed the Vestals.”<sup>58</sup>

The process by which priestly officials reinscribed gender norms was almost entirely implicit and unspoken. Occasionally, however, it receives comment, as when Cicero writes that other women (*mulieres*) may look to the Vestals for evidence “that the nature of women permits complete chastity” (*naturam feminarum omnem castitatem pati*, Cic. *Leg.* 2.29). Invoking the rhetoric of exemplarity, Cicero situates Vestal virginity within a familiar discourse about the regulation of female sexuality.<sup>59</sup> The *flaminica Dialis*, on the other hand, served as a template for a wider range of womanly virtues, including especially fidelity in marriage. According to Festus, Roman brides wore the *flammeum*, the *flaminica*’s signature orange-yellow veil, as a good omen (*ominis boni causa*, 79L) because she was not permitted to divorce her husband. Throughout the republican period, moreover, the *flamen* and *flaminica Dialis* were required to marry by *confarreatio*, an archaic ritual that placed the *flaminica* under her husband’s control (*manus*) and granted her the legal standing of a daughter (*in filiae loco*).<sup>60</sup> When they approached the altar of Jupiter, they affirmed a social hierarchy based upon the subordination of women to men.

The gender norms of Roman society, however, could countenance both a husband’s absolute legal authority over his wife and her active role in civic cult. The *flaminica Dialis* was not a passive tool, like the *apex* (the *flamen*’s distinctive hat) or the sacrificial knife.<sup>61</sup> She was a public priestess with her own agency and a well-defined ritual program.<sup>62</sup> As we have seen, her obligations included

<sup>56</sup>Throughout this book, the term “gender” is used to differentiate biological sex from the construction of gender identities through socialization (e.g., dressing a child in pink or blue) and the organization of the relation between the sexes (e.g., the confinement of women to the house). Scott 1986 remains a classic discussion of scholarly views on the concept of “gender.” For an overview of its impact on the study of Greco-Roman antiquity and on that of religion, see (respectively) Foxhall 2013: 1–23; Clark 2004.

<sup>57</sup>For a broader discussion of this phenomenon, see especially Lincoln 1981; Bell 1997: 210–252.

<sup>58</sup>Beard 1995: 170.

<sup>59</sup>As Levine (1995: 104) has observed, priestesses were “set apart by the community as living icons of Roman ideals.” For similar observations about the moral exemplarity of priests and priestesses, see also Dion. *Ant. Rom.* 8.38.1; Cancik-Lindemaier 1996b: 143; Mustakallio 2010: 15–16; Gallia 2014: 235–237.

<sup>60</sup>See chapter 1.

<sup>61</sup>Schultz 2006b: 81.

<sup>62</sup>Festus (Paulus) 82L, with chapter 1. The dynamic between women’s subjection and their agency has been a crucial issue in feminist scholarship from Lerner’s classic *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986) to Levin-Richardson’s (2013) recent analysis of sexual graffiti in Pompeii. As Hollywood (2004: 246–247)

regular blood sacrifices in the *regia*, the official headquarters of the *pontifex maximus* in the Forum Romanum.<sup>63</sup> The presence of priestesses in the Forum (and on the Capitol) naturalized women's active participation in public life and reinscribed a wide range of ideal female behaviors, including even animal sacrifice.

It must be conceded that the priestesses in this book were, for the most part, elite citizen women. Slaves make an appearance as support personnel, and some freedwomen held priestly offices in the cults of Bona Dea and Magna Mater. The most important positions, however, were accessible only to elites. It is not at all clear, moreover, that Roman women saw themselves as a unified interest group.<sup>64</sup> Elite *matronae*, for example, likely considered themselves not in solidarity with, but rather in opposition to married women of lower status in some contexts, and against slave women and prostitutes in others. Distinctions between different groups of women were regularly dramatized through ritual. At the Matralia in early June, freeborn *matronae univirae* asserted their superiority over slave women by inviting a slave into the temple of Mater Matuta and then driving her out with slaps and insults.<sup>65</sup> The ritual sphere granted some women considerable authority, but that authority could be used to enforce hierarchical divisions based on civic status and sexual access to the body.<sup>66</sup>

A focus on gender leads to a fuller understanding of the nature of Roman priesthood, one that better accounts for the remarkable diversity of public priests in republican Rome.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps most significantly, it reveals that the Romans employed a surprisingly egalitarian approach to managing the community's relations with the divine. At a basic level, both men and women could sacrifice and address the gods on behalf of the Roman people. Differentiation occurred at the level of the individual office, but priesthood itself was a fundamentally cooperative endeavor. The joint funerary monument of Licinia Flavilla and Sex. Adgennius Macrinus, which records the wife's service as a *flaminica* in the imperial cult at Nimes and the husband's position as *pontifex*, neatly illustrates this point.<sup>68</sup> As Amy Richlin has stressed in her analysis of this epitaph and others like it, "Women who were priestesses would have been very likely to have male kin who held priesthoods, and probably perceived religious activity as something men and women had in common, not something that separated them."<sup>69</sup>

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has written, "the very conditions that bring about subordination are also the source of agency (however limited or constrained that agency might be in particular situations of subordination—even at times to the point of effacing agency entirely)." The cult of Pudicitia, for instance, placed the burden for cultivating *pudicitia* on married women, allowing them to take ownership of their sexuality, even as it worked to inculcate communally sanctioned attitudes about the regulation of women's sexual behavior (as argued by Langlands 2006: 47).

<sup>63</sup> Macrob. *Sat.* 1.16.30, with chapter 1.

<sup>64</sup> Cooper 1996: 113.

<sup>65</sup> Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 16 = *Mor.* 267d, *Cam.* 5.2, with Richlin 2014: 230–232.

<sup>66</sup> Richlin 2014: 10, 197–240.

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of the unusual variety of priesthoods at Rome, see Beard 1990: 19–25.

<sup>68</sup> *CIL* 12.3175 (= Rüpke 2007b: 224, fig. 22).

<sup>69</sup> Richlin 2014: 213.

## The Sources

The evidence explored in this book comes from a wide variety of male-authored texts, each with its own artistic and didactic aims. The interpretation of these fragmentary and often tendentious sources is not without difficulty. As Christopher Smith has rightly emphasized, “the evidence we have for Roman religion is often ancient interpretation—indeed Roman religion sometimes seems as if it is interpretation, not a transcendent reality which we struggle to grasp or recreate, but a series of ancient readings of [the] reality of the world.”<sup>70</sup> Women’s ritual activities, particularly sex-segregated rituals, are especially liable to distortion in male-authored texts, where negative stereotypes about women abound.<sup>71</sup> The rhetorical use of gender can obscure our view of antiquity. We must contend, moreover, with the fact that nearly all surviving accounts of religion in republican Rome date to the imperial period. Can we be confident that the priestesses in this book really did the things that the ancient sources claim they did?

Many of the texts cited in this study are scholarly in form—that is, they are “writings meant to preserve or elucidate Roman cultural memory in non-narrative, non-mimetic form, with a commitment to the truth.”<sup>72</sup> While they belong to a range of technical genres, they share, to varying degrees, content characterized by modern scholars as “antiquarian.”<sup>73</sup> Antiquarianism emerged together with historiography in the second century BC and shared with it an interest in Rome’s past. Eschewing the literary pretention and chronological structure of historiography, antiquarians preferred the systematic discussion of individual topics and specific details in learned monographs based on what they believed to be the facts of the matter.<sup>74</sup> Antiquarian writing could cover almost any subject, though it generally focused on the habits and institutions of the Roman people.<sup>75</sup>

Ancient scholarship was tralatitious, as modern scholars rightly emphasize, with each author “taking over and passing on the accumulated learning of the last.”<sup>76</sup> The works of the late republican and Augustan antiquarians in particular were virtually canonized by later authors, with the result that the tradition remained heavily weighted towards these periods well into late antiquity.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup>Smith 2000: 136. See also Feeney 1998, 2004.

<sup>71</sup>Consider, for example, Juvenal’s account of the December rites of Bona Dea (*Sat.* 6.314–341, with Lyons 2007; Šterbenc Erker 2013: 52–53) or the popular stereotype of women’s fascination with “foreign” cults (Beard, North, and Price 1998: 299–300). For a more general discussion of the difficulties inherent in recovering information about women’s rituals, see Beard 1995; Fantham 2002; Clark 2004; Schultz 2006b: 6–7; Kraemer 2011, especially 5–11; Richlin 2014: 204–205.

<sup>72</sup>Kaster 2010: 492.

<sup>73</sup>On Roman antiquarian writing, see especially Rawson 1972, 1985: 233–249; Maslakov 1983 (with a focus on late antiquity); Stevenson 1993, 2004.

<sup>74</sup>For the development of systematic organization in Latin prose, see Rawson 1978.

<sup>75</sup>Stevenson 2004: 141–151. See, for example, Cicero’s (*Acad.* 1.9) summary of Varro’s antiquarian writings.

<sup>76</sup>Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 42. See also Stevenson 2004: 125–127.

<sup>77</sup>Stevenson 1993: 20–23; Kaster 2010: 501–502.

In many ways, the tendency to reproduce earlier research reflects one of the aims of antiquarian writing: to serve as a reference for readers in search of information about a single topic.<sup>78</sup> Antiquarianism, in this respect, was a generous, open-handed discipline, willing to facilitate the work of the historians, poets, jurists, and grammarians who visited its storehouse of well-organized facts.<sup>79</sup> As a result, our knowledge of antiquarian scholarship derives almost entirely from citations in texts that cannot reasonably be described as antiquarian in form or function.

Quoting from earlier writings was a common method of research in the ancient world, yet it is worth remembering that someone conducted the initial inquiry.<sup>80</sup> While we must not pretend that ancient scholars operated like modern historians, we should not underrate their work either. The antiquarians often demonstrate a sophisticated ability to collect and synthesize material from a variety of sources, including literary texts, official documents, laws, monuments, and inscriptions.<sup>81</sup> Research on Rome's religious institutions presumably proceeded from oral tradition as well as from the study of religious jurisprudence (the *ius sacrum*), the ritual calendar (*fasti*), and the written records (*commentarii*) maintained by various public priests.<sup>82</sup> These *commentarii* did not provide detailed ritual scripts, but they did contain prayers, liturgical reports (e.g., "a ram offered to Jupiter on the Ides"), and collections of rules, "defined and re-defined or commented on by the priests at public or private request" (e.g., "the *flamen Dialis* is not permitted to ride a horse").<sup>83</sup> The sources available to the antiquarian were rich and varied, particularly when supplemented by personal observation.<sup>84</sup>

The great polymath and author M. Terentius Varro (116–27 BC) necessarily occupies a prominent place in any discussion of Roman antiquarianism.<sup>85</sup> Widely acknowledged as the most learned of the Romans, he wrote over seventy different works covering almost every imaginable area of scholarship.<sup>86</sup> Only the *Res rusticae* (*On Agriculture*) and six books of the *De lingua latina* (*On the Latin Language*) are extant, along with fragments preserved by later authors. Of

<sup>78</sup> Gell. *N.A.* pr. 12, with Stevenson 1993: 288; Kaster 2010: 497.

<sup>79</sup> Kaster 2010: 497. Many antiquarian works were clearly designed as reference works complete with indexes and content lists (Stevenson 2004: 127–130).

<sup>80</sup> For the research methods of the Roman antiquarian, see Stevenson 1993: 127–185, 2004: 124–141, especially 134–138.

<sup>81</sup> Stevenson 1993: 140–146, 291.

<sup>82</sup> For an assessment of the ancient evidence for priestly writing and the oral transmission of knowledge in Roman religion, see especially Beard 1998; North 1998; Rüpke 2004; Scheid 2006; Rüpke 2008: 24–38, all with sound critiques of earlier scholarship.

<sup>83</sup> Scheid 1992b: 122, 2006: 19. For the inscribed records of the *fratres aruales* (Arval Brothers), which may or may not be entirely representative of other priestly *commentarii*, see the new edition by Scheid 1998.

<sup>84</sup> On the role of autopsy in antiquarian research, see Stevenson 2004: 138.

<sup>85</sup> For an updated biography and a list of works, see Sallman 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Cic. *Brut.* 205 (*vir ingenio praestans omnique doctrina*); Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.95 (*vir Romanorum eruditissimus*); Aug. *Civ. Dei* 19.22 (*doctissimus Romanorum*).

particular relevance to the present study are books five and six of the *De lingua latina*, which provide etymologies for Latin words of time and place and recycle much antiquarian learning from his famous *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* (*Divine and Human Antiquities*), which survives only in the quotations of later authors.

The grammarian M. Verrius Flaccus (ca. 55 BC–ca. AD 20), who flourished during the principate of Augustus, was the next generation's leading scholar.<sup>87</sup> His *De verborum significatu* (*On the Meaning of Words*), a Latin lexicon in forty books, included numerous quotations from early Latin authors and a wealth of antiquarian material.<sup>88</sup> Innovative in its organizational scheme (Verrius may have been the first author to arrange his text in rough alphabetical order), the content generally reproduced the works of late republican scholars.<sup>89</sup> The original has not survived, but an abridged version is partially preserved in the mid-imperial lexicon of Sex. Pompeius Festus (later second century AD).<sup>90</sup> Roughly five hundred years later, a Carolingian scholar known as Paul the Deacon (ca. AD 720–799) produced a condensed version of Festus, omitting, unfortunately, many entries related to Roman religion and editing glosses he found too obscure for his audience at Charlemagne's court.<sup>91</sup> His epitome survives in its entirety. Together, Festus and Paul provide a crucial link, albeit in fragmentary and abbreviated form, to the antiquarian tradition of the first century BC.

C. Plinius Secundus (AD 23/24–79), better known as Pliny the Elder, and the Greek author Plutarch of Chaeronea (ca. AD 45–before 125) are also important sources for the study of Roman priestesses.<sup>92</sup> Neither author was an antiquarian, though both incorporate much relevant material in their works. Later in the second century AD, Aulus Gellius (ca. 125 AD–after 170) compiled his *Noctes Atticae* (*Attic Nights*), a miscellany in twenty books based on

<sup>87</sup>Suet. *Gramm.* 17.1–3, with Kaster 1995: 190–6.

<sup>88</sup>For the *De verborum significatu* and its survival in later epitomes, see especially the essays in Glinister and Woods 2007. Scholarly activity unquestionably provided an intellectual framework for the restoration (or appropriation) of ancient traditions after the instability of the civil wars (North 1986: 253–254; Gordon 1990: 191; Wallace-Hadrill 1998; Frier 1999: 37, 199). Verrius incorporated major events in the career of Augustus into his *Fasti Praenestini*, an annotated festival calendar displayed in the Forum of Praeneste (for the surviving fragments, see *CIL* I<sup>2</sup>, pp. 230–239 = *InscrIt* 13.2.17). But there are also indications that scholarship could be used as a form of resistance. Labeo's love of liberty (*libertas*) reportedly led him to consider no action legal unless his research into Roman antiquity (*Romanis antiquitatibus*) assured him that it had been sanctioned in the past (Gell. *N.A.* 13.12.2, with Stevenson 1993: 69). In fact, he refused the consulship offered to him by Augustus (Pompon. *Dig.* 1.2.2.47). For a more nuanced view of antiquarian scholarship under Augustus, see Stevenson 2004: 120–121; Glinister 2007: 24–32.

<sup>89</sup>For a discussion of Verrius' sources, see Glinister 2007; Lhommé 2007; North 2007.

<sup>90</sup>The text of Festus survives in the Codex Festi Farnesianus, a mutilated and fire-damaged manuscript from the second half of the eleventh century now in Naples (Bibl. Naz. IV.A.3). The Farnesianus contains about half of the original, beginning in the middle of the letter "M" and trailing off near the end of the letter "V." Although Festus occasionally criticizes Verrius or adds quotations from Lucan (AD 39–65) and Martial (ca. AD 40–102/4), the majority of his material derives from Verrius' original (Glinister 2007: 11–12).

<sup>91</sup>For Paul and his epitome, see Woods 2007.

<sup>92</sup>Pliny (*H.N.* pr. 17) claims to have read about two thousand volumes from one hundred different authors. For a discussion of Plutarch's sources, see Rose 1924: 11–45.

notes and excerpts collected in the course of several decades of wide reading.<sup>93</sup> Unlike Plutarch, Gellius generally cites his sources by name. His chapter on the Vestal order, for instance, relies heavily upon a pair of Augustan jurists—M. Antistius Labeo (d. before AD 22), author of both a treatise *De iure pontifico* (*On Pontifical Law*) and a commentary on the Twelve Tables, and C. Ateius Capito (cos. suff. AD 5).<sup>94</sup> For the cult formula spoken by the *pontifex maximus* when he ritually “seized” a new Vestal during a ceremony known as the *captio*, Gellius cites an unnamed work by a certain Fabius Pictor, perhaps a *pontifex* or *flamen* active during the middle of the second century BC.<sup>95</sup> He closes the chapter by quoting the memoirs of L. Cornelius Sulla (cos. 88, 80 BC) and an oration of M. Porcius Cato (cens. 184 BC) in order to contradict the view held by many that the term “to be taken” (*capi*) ought to be used only of a Vestal.<sup>96</sup> As a whole, the chapter suggests careful research, either by Gellius himself or an unacknowledged intermediary.

Even further removed from the period of the Republic is the late antique grammarian Servius (fl. late fourth–early fifth century AD), author of an important commentary on the poems of Vergil.<sup>97</sup> Many hold that this work is based on an earlier fourth-century AD commentary by Aelius Donatus (b. ca. AD 310). A longer text, commonly known as Servius Auctus, is understood to be the work of an anonymous compiler of the seventh century AD, who (as the name suggests) expanded his copy of Servius with additional material from the Servian source commentary not included by Servius himself.<sup>98</sup> The commentary, particularly in its longer form, is a significant source for Roman religion.<sup>99</sup> Most relevant to the present study is a group of notes identifying allusions to Aeneas and Dido as the *flamen* and *flaminica Dialis*.<sup>100</sup> When Vergil describes

<sup>93</sup>Gell. N.A. pr. 1–5. On Gellius and his antiquarian sources, see especially Stevenson 2004; Holford-Strevens 2005: 65–80, 2015 (with an emphasis on Varro). For his value as a “citing authority,” see also Cornell 2013: 69–73.

<sup>94</sup>Gell. N.A. 1.12.1, 1.12.8, with Stevenson 1993: 68–73.

<sup>95</sup>Gell. N.A. 1.12.14. The identity of this Fabius Pictor is uncertain. The quotation of a Latin cult formula argues against the annalist Q. Fabius Pictor (b. ca. 270 BC), who wrote in Greek (Cornell 2013: 229, n. 7). Q. Fabius Maximus Servilianus (cos. 142 BC) is known to have written a history and often assumed to have written a work on pontifical law (see Cornell 2013: 229 for the details), but is nowhere associated with the cognomen Pictor. Cicero, on the other hand, records a Ser. Fabius Pictor as a legal scholar and an expert in antiquities (*antiquitatis bene peritus*, *Brut.* 81). This may be the same Fabius Pictor cited by Nonius (518.34–37M) as the author of a work on the pontifical law and by Varro (*apud* Non. 223.17M) as the author of a *commentarius*, which indicates that he was writing as a priest (Münzer *RE* Fabius 128; Rüpke 2008: 677, No. 1600, n. 6). Rüpke (2008: 677, No. 1600, n. 5) has thus proposed Ser. Fabius Pictor (ca. 190–after 149 BC) as the source for the ritual formula quoted by Gellius and suggested, more tentatively, that he may have served as *flamen Quirinalis* in the middle of the second century BC.

<sup>96</sup>Gell. N.A. 1.12.16–17.

<sup>97</sup>For the date and identity of Servius, see Kaster 1988: 356–359.

<sup>98</sup>For the relationship between the longer and the shorter forms, see Goold 1970: 102–122. The longer text is also known as Servius Danielis, DServius, or DS after its first editor, P. Daniel. The non-Servian material it preserves is printed in italics in the edition of Thilo and Hagen (1881–1902).

<sup>99</sup>Servius contains fewer notes on cultural and religious matters than Servius Auctus (Kaster 1980: 256–257; Cameron 2011: 572, 575).

<sup>100</sup>This is the most common manifestation of the “Aeneas as priest” theory (see Serv. ad *Aen.* 1.706, with Starr 1997: 65).

Dido climbing her “high pyre” (*altos . . . rogos*, 4.645–646), for instance, the Servius Auctus commentator claims that she is committing a ritual error (*piaculum*), since the *flaminica* was not allowed to climb more than three stairs (unless they were so-called Greek stairs, which were evidently constructed in such a way as to prevent anyone from catching a glimpse of her ankles).<sup>101</sup> While we may reject the interpretation of Dido as a *flaminica*, we need not discard the commentator’s testimony about the rules governing the historical priestess as well.<sup>102</sup> Like their midimperial predecessors, the grammarians of late antiquity copied freely from earlier sources.<sup>103</sup> In sum, the Servian commentary constitutes an important repository of antiquarian learning stretching back to the republican period.<sup>104</sup>

Even more clearly than the exegetical tradition represented by Servius, the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius (praef. praet. AD 430) highlights the antiquarian tastes of late antique scholars and their respect (*verecundia*) for the past.<sup>105</sup> Set during the Saturnalia (December 17–19) in about AD 383, the dialogue purports to describe a gathering of Roman nobles and learned men whose wide-ranging conversation “promises an accumulation of things worth knowing” (*noscendorum congeriem pollicetur*, pr. 4). Few Romanists would disagree that Macrobius provides a treasure trove of antiquarian material about various topics, including the Roman calendar and pontifical and augural law, his sources often quoted, though generally not by name.<sup>106</sup> As Alan Cameron has recently argued, “There can be little doubt that the work of Verrius and the jurists is the ultimate source, via intermediaries like Gellius and Festus, of most references to cult practices in Macrobius and the late antique commentators.”<sup>107</sup>

Antiquarian writing shaped less obviously scholarly works as well, including the etiological elegies of Propertius (first century BC) and Ovid (43 BC–AD 17).<sup>108</sup> Ovid’s *Fasti*, a playful meditation on the Roman festival calendar and its transformation under Augustus, is unthinkable apart from a thriving antiquarian tradition. The poet adopts a mock-scholarly persona throughout, and his method of “research” includes the consultation of ancient books (*annalibus priscis*, 1.7,

<sup>101</sup> Serv. Auct. ad *Aen.* 4.646.

<sup>102</sup> The allegorical interpretation of Aeneas as *flamen* was not universally accepted even in antiquity (see Serv. ad *Aen.* 9.298; Serv. Auct. ad *Aen.* 1.706, 4.262, with Starr 1997: 63–64).

<sup>103</sup> Lloyd 1961; Kaster 1980: 256–258. In fact, the note on Dido’s pyre may depend upon Gellius (*N.A.* 10.15.29), who describes an identical taboo (*caerimonia*) restricting the *flaminica*’s ability to climb stairs.

<sup>104</sup> Late antique grammarians did occasionally misunderstand or misrepresent Roman ritual (Cameron 2011: 604–606). In order to defend the theory that Aeneas is “everywhere” (*ubique*, ad *Aen.* 4.103) depicted as a *flamen*, even after the deaths of Creusa and Dido, for instance, the Servius Auctus commentator must argue that the *flamen Dialis* was permitted to remarry following the death of the *flaminica* (ad *Aen.* 4.29), a claim that directly contradicts the evidence of Gellius and Plutarch (see chapter 1).

<sup>105</sup> For the date and identity of Macrobius, see Cameron 1966.

<sup>106</sup> For a general overview of Macrobius’ sources, see Wessner 1928: 182–196.

<sup>107</sup> Cameron 2011: 578. It is striking that aside from Homer and Vergil, Macrobius mentions no author as frequently as he does Varro (Stevenson 1993: 112).

<sup>108</sup> Miller 1982, especially 401–407.

4.11) as well as autopsy and conversations with priests and lay practitioners.<sup>109</sup> Ovid is often maligned as a source for Roman ritual, but his poem is not uninformed.<sup>110</sup> What is perhaps even more important, his exegesis and “rituals in ink” provide an imaginative vision of ritual practice that is worthy of attention in its own right.<sup>111</sup> When the narrator asks the *flaminica Dialis* to recommend an auspicious day for his daughter’s wedding, both the question and her answer, complete with its antiquarian digression on the taboos she observes when marriage ought to be avoided, invite the reader to reflect upon her role in public cult and to imagine her as a repository of ritual knowledge.<sup>112</sup> Who better to help choose a propitious time for a wedding than the priestess whose veil would hide the blushes of the bride?

The antiquarian evidence, whatever its limitations, receives support from a modicum of material evidence as well as from other written sources of the late republic and early principate—Cato’s *De agri cultura* (*On Agriculture*), the speeches and dialogues of Cicero, and Livy’s history. Almost entirely lacking for the city of Rome itself, epigraphic evidence from Italy and the Latin west suggests that the practice of assigning official priestly roles to women was common and widespread, and that these offices were integral to the self-perception of the women who held them.<sup>113</sup> Admittedly, the state of the evidence prevents us from gaining the kind of detailed view of women’s religious activities that we would like. There are some priestesses about whom we know almost nothing apart from their titles. Even so, we may acknowledge their existence and situate them within a larger narrative of women’s priestly service at Rome. Indeed, this expansion is one of the primary benefits of a comprehensive approach: it allows us to compare evidence related to various offices and to identify potential patterns of organization and conduct. Despite the difficulties and shortcomings outlined above, the evidence suggests that Rome was a city populated with numerous female religious officials. When taken together, these texts enable us to redraw the boundaries of priesthood in ancient Rome.

<sup>109</sup> Miller 1982: 402–403.

<sup>110</sup> As Scheid (1992b: 129) has written, “Ovid is neither ignorant, wrong nor merely descriptive: he is only clever and subtle.”

<sup>111</sup> Beard 2004: 125–126. See also Scheid 1992b: 122–129.

<sup>112</sup> *Ov. Fast.* 6. 219–234, with chapter 1.

<sup>113</sup> For the dearth of epigraphic evidence from republican Rome, see Schultz 2006b: 49, 70–71. On the epigraphic material (mostly imperial in date) from Italy and the Roman west, see especially Spickermann 1994; Ward 1998; Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba 1998; Hemelrijk 2005, 2006; Schultz 2006b: 69–79; Hemelrijk 2007; Gaspar 2012; Richlin 2014: 207–218, 233–238.