

identity, in gender roles and reversal, in celebrities, in youth vs experience. It is a safe environment in which to explore such issues and to understand how our different perspectives may affect our point of view.

The book will appeal to Classical scholars and students of reception studies, and to anyone who loves a quest, literal or metaphorical, and wants a starting point for a discussion of any of the issues covered in it. It may prompt you to look out your childhood copy of Charles Kingsley, or track down the 1978 Dr Who series *Underworld*. It may make you see James Bond or Phileas Fogg with new eyes. Perhaps we all have our own golden fleece. If this is you, this book is only the start of your journey.

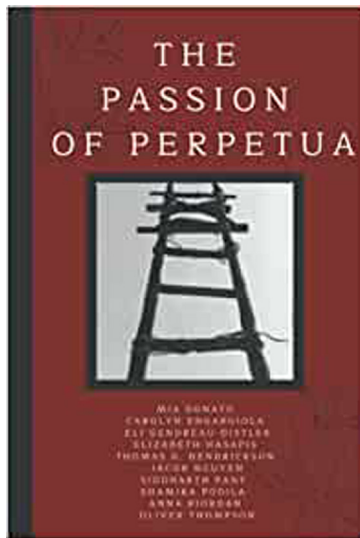
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## The Passion of Perpetua

Donato (M.), Engargliola (C.), Gendreau-Distler (E.), Hasapis (E.), Hendrickson (T.G.), Nguyen (J.), Pant (S.), Podila (S.), Riordan (A.) and Thompson (O.) (edd.) Pp. x+93 Cambridge: Pixelia Publishing, 2021. Paper, £6.33 ISBN: 978-1-7370330-0-4

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For teachers and students wishing to read beyond the Classical authors typically prescribed in schools, and who have the time to do so, for students of Church history, and for the self-directed learner, *The Passion of Perpetua* is a welcome and accessible edition of a text which is little-known in schools.

This is a new student edition of the third century text, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, by different authors, including, principally, the voice of Perpetua herself. As a

narrative, it is readable, economical, edifying and engaging, a lively choice for the classroom. It tells of Perpetua's alienation from her father, her miraculous visions, her trial and imprisonment with fellow Christians and her eventual voluntary martyrdom in the gladiatorial arena, standing united with her devoted slave, Felicity. The work involves extensive collaboration (ten joint authors are acknowledged and still more contributed). What is particularly exciting is that students from Stanford Online High School each took ownership of a section of text, and peer-reviewed the sections of others.

Later Latin is ideal for a school text: it has the advantage over Classical Latin of using simpler syntactical structure and shorter sentences. At the same time, it gives students a taste of 'real' Latin, composed in antiquity, an authentic text, offering eyewitness insight into the later Roman Empire.

The text is presented in a reader-friendly format, each short section following a very brief English introduction. The Latin is presented with macrons, and a thorough running vocabulary and linguistic commentary on each page, aiding fluency; a complete glossary is at the back. Hendrickson's introduction is generous (longer than the text itself) and supports the reader with an historical, cultural and linguistic context. Assuming an elementary understanding of Latin grammar (for example, in the British system the reader would ideally be post-GCSE but need not be much more advanced), Hendrickson explains departures from the Classical grammar and lexis with which the typical school reader will be familiar. He also gives the most accessible explanation of textual transmission that I have ever seen, and a bibliography which invites further study.

While mainstream Classical authors continue to dominate school curricula (if only because the exam specifications require it), schools today often actively seek to embrace texts which lie outside the mainstream. *The Passion of Perpetua* certainly fits the bill, and not just because it is a later text. In the introduction, Hendrickson writes: 'Perpetua's narrative provides an ideal jumping-off point for discussions about gender, class, religion, race and social order in the Roman world' (p.2). Doubtless the 'diversity boxes' it ticks will be part of its appeal for some. As the story of a woman, and one of African origin, it would for those reasons alone attract readers. That she is a strong woman in a man's world, for example fighting in gladiatorial combat (she describes herself at one point as *facta ... masculus*), makes her a character of particular interest, though Hendrickson's suggestion that 'she was a woman with a complex gender identity' is stretching a point. The speculation that Perpetua's relationship with Felicity may have been a lesbian one, which is occasionally aired, though unsubstantiated, is mentioned in a footnote.

The text will particularly attract Christian educators and theologians because Perpetua and Felicity are saints of the Roman Canon and therefore significant figures of the early Church. But Hendrickson makes no concessions to hagiography, neither acknowledging Perpetua as a canonical saint (although he notes that she and Felicity share a Saints Day) nor describing her with any sense of reverence. His emphasis is more on presenting her as she would have been received in her day, a member of an obscure religious cult, and a woman of exceptionally determined character. From the title of the original text, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, it is not just Felicity's name which is omitted from the title of this edition; *sanctarum* has also disappeared. Another omission which Christian educators might note with surprise is reference to the significance of *passio* in a Christian context. But most surprising of all is Hendrickson's choice of the word 'radicalized' to describe Perpetua after her conversion to Christianity. The connotations of this word in today's world make this an audacious, even a provocative, choice. Here too there is surely a jumping-off point for discussion.

This is the first publication from the new Experrecta series, which is dedicated to publishing Latin texts by female authors for student readership. The series' name Experrecta, a quote from Perpetua (whose accounts of her visions end with her waking up, *experrecta sum*), singles out this text as something of a forerunner. We can look forward to further texts to follow.

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