

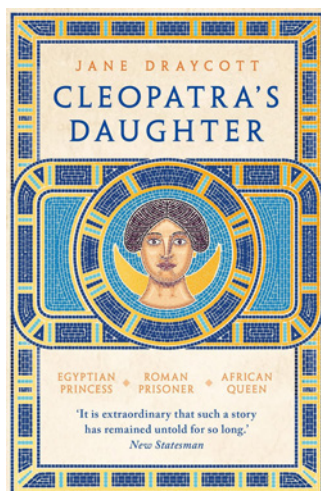
Book Review

Cleopatra's Daughter

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The title of this book refers to Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of the famous Cleopatra VII, last queen of independent Egypt in Antiquity and lover of Julius Caesar as well as Mark Antony. Draycott signals her critical approach to sources from her foreword; she highlights the relative lack of autobiographical evidence; she explains the lack of evidence using feminist theories about historical expectations of women to be unexceptional. On the other hand, she points to the relevance of her subject to today's world, a Black princess in a White man's world.

There is no more engaging way to introduce a figure than by painting a picture of them. Draycott does just that on her introduction using a description (with accompanying image in the visual pages) of a dish from Pompeii. She analyses the realism to prove its possibly being Cleopatra Selene and then links it to the wider context of the dramatic civil war and Augustan Age, thus drawing the reader in with nonetheless highly academic writing.

Following this introduction, the author breezes over early Ptolemaic history and sketches of Alexandria in a concise narrative which clearly examines all extant primary evidence. As a result, we are left in no doubt about two crucial aspects to Cleopatra Selene's background; the relative power of Egyptian royal women and the relative importance of academia in Alexandrian culture.

Draycott handles the biased sources on Mark Antony, Cleopatra Selene's father, in critical fashion; she explains the context of this bias whilst identifying the possible facts of his drunkenness and promiscuity. Conversely, she expertly compares literary and visual sources. In this way, she sets the scene for Cleopatra Selene's memory of these parents, who committed suicide when she herself was so young.

The next chapters examine contextual evidence for Cleopatra Selene's childhood. Every point is supported by a combination of

primary sources, creating a convincing portrait of the little girl growing up on the fringes of extraordinary power. Draycott also pieces together the narrative of Octavian's victory over Cleopatra Selene's parents in a succinct manner which also leaves space to speculate about the impact on the little girl. Furthermore, within this narrative is critical analysis of sources on Octavia, Mark Antony's last official wife, which in turn helps us to understand the bias of these sources towards Octavia and against her rival Cleopatra Selene's mother.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Actium, Octavian consolidated his power. Draycott makes strident but well-supported (coins, reliefs and literary references) statements such as 'he rewrote Egyptian history' to show the wider impact and she contextualises Cleopatra Selene's fall, culminating in her role within the Triple Triumph. Here Draycott makes the thought-provoking point that this public parade would be like it was for Princes William and Harry at Princess Diana's funeral.

There follows a fascinating chapter on Cleopatra Selene's upbringing on Rome's Palatine Hill. Again, Draycott's analysis of primary sources is superb, contrasting Athenaeus' portrait of the excessive luxury in Alexandria with Octavian's famously thrifty lifestyle. Draycott contextualises this contrast of Egyptian and Roman elite culture further by exploring visual sources on Egyptomania and xenophobia. In this way, Draycott paints a convincing and empathetic portrait of the contradictions surrounding Cleopatra Selene after she moved to Rome.

The author skips through the possible courtship of Cleopatra Selene and her husband Juba which is, to her credit, not speculating in an area where we lack specific evidence. Draycott examines in more depth the couple's rule in Mauritania, beginning from a Roman point of view. Here one might argue that she goes too far in generalising about Roman ignorance and Homeric stereotyping of Africans (undermined possibly by her own mentions of Pollio's eye-witness testimony about the area).

However, Draycott is very convincing when discussing Cleopatra Selene's power in Mauritania, supporting her claims with the intriguing bilingual coins which portray both her and her husband in equal size. Furthermore, she gives detailed references to the archaeological records of temples which provide tantalising evidence of Cleopatra Selene exerting religious power by promoting the worship of deities close to her heart, Isis and Selene, over local Mauritanian traditions.

It might have been tempting to end the book with Cleopatra Selene's son Ptolemy, dying during one of the Roman Emperor Caligula's purges. As Draycott admits, Ptolemy's reign is not well documented. However, it is admirable how thoroughly Draycott has combed the sources to make a cautious but convincing case for daughters continuing the line, even to Julia Domna, wife of the later emperor Severus.

The book finishes with an inconclusive discussion of Cleopatra Selene's possible ethnic identity. Again, the author shows her comprehensive knowledge of the literary and skeletal sources and analysis, refusing to be drawn by thin evidence.

As to its use for schools, the book begins with relevant maps and family trees, resources which are necessary and which a reader will keep returning to. The clear prose makes it accessible reading, even possibly for high-achieving key stage 3 students who might be

given extracts to evaluate as extension activities. Moreover, it would be entertaining and enlightening reading for GCSE Classical Civilisation pupils studying the 'Women' module. Finally, the chapters on the Principate years provide a clear narrative and interesting points about the nature of Augustan rule, features which

make it suitable further reading for A level students studying the 'Imperial Image' and 'Politics of the Late Republic' modules as part of A level Classical Civilisation.

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