

in Stage 13, for example, are different. The ‘error’ in the name Cogidubnus has at last been amended. He is now, correctly, ‘Togidubnus’ and has acquired an anachronistic Queen Catia.

In terms of the socio-cultural elements, there appear to be more sections, including the ‘talking heads’ that appear in the new edition of Book I. I think this makes the information more digestible and easier to work into lessons. There are many new and interesting illustrations, including, somewhat concerningly, a watermarked ‘getty images’ picture on p.84. Personally, I really like a lot of the additional material. I was thrilled to see sections on the Rosetta Stone, the Fayum portraits and extended background information on Romano-Egyptian culture and religion. The section on Roman medicine has also been hugely improved. I like the ‘Thinking points’ that have been added into the text and demarcated in helpful boxes. The vocabulary used in the English sections is certainly high-level and is likely to cause problems for students who struggle with reading. However, long sections tend to be divided up and the use of different fonts is likely to reduce the stress a little. In addition, a change to sans serif fonts should make reading significantly easier for many.

The textbook comes with five years’ use of a ‘digital resource’. It is easy to access through instructions on the inside front cover. Setting up ‘Classes’ however, proved complicated and I was unable therefore to work out its benefit. I had assumed that this digital resource might be a UK equivalent to the North American ‘Elevate’ including worksheets, videos and texts. However, what is provided is a digital, online version of the student book. The resource allows you to ‘write’ over the electronic textbook in red, blue, yellow, or black; bookmark pages; erase marks; and enlarge sections to display the text on an electronic board.

At £19.95 per volume the *Cambridge Latin Course* covers the whole GCSE syllabus in volumes 1 to 4. This makes it more expensive than, for example, the *Suburani* course which in 2 volumes (of £20 each) covers the whole GCSE course. However, the *Cambridge Latin Course* covers a broader syllabus than is required for the Eduqas Latin GCSE exam (and in fact WJEC Eduqas endorses this volume) so could be more suitable for those taking the OCR exam and looking towards A Level.

Even with the offputtingly long texts; and the need to revise all of my vocabulary learning, teaching, and testing resources, if my school had £600 that I could spend on text books, I would be very tempted to replace my stash of 4th edition *CLC II* and I would really enjoy teaching this new edition.

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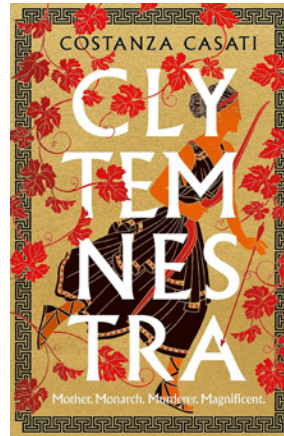
Clytemnestra. Mother, Monarch, Murderer, Magnificent

Casati (C.), Pp. xii + 468. London: Penguin Random House UK, 2023. Cased, £16.99. ISBN: 978-0-241-55474-6.

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Clytemnestra joins the Classical fiction scene at a time when ‘feminist’ retellings are no doubt experiencing a boom, and Casati’s



eponymous debut novel sits rightfully alongside its predecessors by the likes of Miller, Haynes and Saint. Coming in just shy of 500 pages, *Clytemnestra*, although slightly longer than comparative titles, manages to avoid tedium or repetitiveness, making for a narrative compelling to the novice and veteran mythologist alike.

Split into five parts each tackling a different period of our protagonist’s life, the first offers an *in medias res* of sorts, in which the early adolescent Clytemnestra hunts a lynx in her native Sparta.

The childhood that shaped Clytemnestra is a detail often overlooked in the canon, though a rearing punctuated by sparring with your peers and telling stories of successful wolf hunts around the dinner table is something that Casati outlines with immense elegance. Whilst not lacking in its adrenaline, the first part is underscored with tenderness, most notably the mutually protective interactions between Clytemnestra and Helen, and their younger, typically ignored, sister Timandra. The part ends in a love marriage between Clytemnestra and Tantalus, though readers are always poised to remain on their toes. After all, *harpazein*, to take by force, is the verb Leda uses for marriage.

Parts 3 onwards explore the Clytemnestra most modern audiences will recognise, the narrative resuming after a 15-year gap in which Clytemnestra’s four children to Agamemnon are born. Undoubtedly, however, Part 2’s exploration of her first marriage is the book’s greatest success in explicating Clytemnestra’s villainous arc. To say a reader ought to sympathise with Clytemnestra is perhaps a step too far, though one can recognise her motives. It is not until the fifth and final part, in which her murders become markedly more indiscriminate and fickle, that we begin to wonder whether things have got slightly out of hand. Casati strikes a fine balance in creating a protagonist who is admirable in her conviction, yet more crucially, although pitiable in some regard, is somebody a reader never quite *actively* pities.

Casati has taken great lengths to ensure *Clytemnestra* is accessible to non-Classicists, the narrative itself preceded by a number of auxiliary tools. Family trees of the houses of Atreus and Tyndareus (especially useful when Casati uses patronymics), a character list with brief introductory sentences on each, and a map of the narrative’s setting serve as useful reference points. More impressively, Casati makes consistent use of Greek terminologies and values within the text, all italicised and with a definition seamlessly woven into the narrative. To provide further clarity, at the end of the book, an Ancient Greek glossary lists all the italicised terms in the text, from *aristos Achaion* to *xiphos*, allowing any gaps in understanding to be easily and concisely plugged.

Casati has a real fluidity to her style of writing: her language is unpretentious and unobtrusive, with regular use of dialogue helping to entice the plot along at a comfortable speed. Readers perhaps not familiar with the story of Clytemnestra ought to note that there are references to sexual assault interspersed within the narrative, and Casati does not shy away from its realities and subsequent traumas for a survivor. Physical violence against women is another reality Casati confronts, and Clytemnestra’s resilience in the face of this is pinpointed as a determining motivation for her later vengeance quest. With various sexual

references in the story, whether consensual or coerced, such episodes suggest the book is perhaps not an advisable undertaking for very young readers.

Given the variations which exist within the Clytemnestra myth, Classicists might anticipate predictability. Adhering to Aeschylus' version of the myth whereby Clytemnestra's first husband, Tantalus, and their infant son, are slain by Agamemnon drags Clytemnestra's *raison d'être* to the fore. There are, however, a couple of notable deviations from Aeschylus. Clytemnestra herself notices the fires of Troy at the war's end, and it is not Clytemnestra who slays Cassandra. Surprisingly, Clytemnestra pities the woman and wants her to live, adding a final layer of humanity to this otherwise 'monstrous' protagonist. For an expert in the myth, there is much dramatic irony to be enjoyed, especially in the death of Iphigenia at the end of Part 3, and the advent of Electra's disdain for her mother towards the book's end.

On occasion, Casati makes use of significant temporal lapses in her narrative: a fifteen-year one and a nine-year one, after which we tend not to see any glaring ideological or emotional shifts in Clytemnestra or those around her. Whilst key changes to the narrative are detailed after such interims (primarily births and deaths within the households), one does wonder whether there is a missed opportunity here for additional character development, or conversely, an exploration as to why her psyche remains unchanged. However, this detail is not by any means to the detriment of the plot, and in Casati's defence, covering the scope of the Clytemnestra myth would not have been feasible without such jumps.

For *Clytemnestra* to be Casati's first 'Classical' publication is no doubt a sign of great things to come, with its lively pace and gradual plot-twists making it a veritably easy read. The greatest triumph of the book is perhaps its accessibility to the less familiar reader, which will no doubt lead to the emergence of some new mythology enthusiasts. Yet whether approaching the story with a rudimentary or a comprehensive understanding of the myth, there is much to be enjoyed here. Casati's simultaneous tenderness yet avoidance of overstated sentimentality creates a Clytemnestra an audience cannot help but respect in some facet. Whether for her ambition, rejection of binary gender expectations or her Spartan military skill, this reworking is one which no doubt succeeds in its aim of proving that perhaps we are not as well-acquainted with the complexity of Clytemnestra as we thought.

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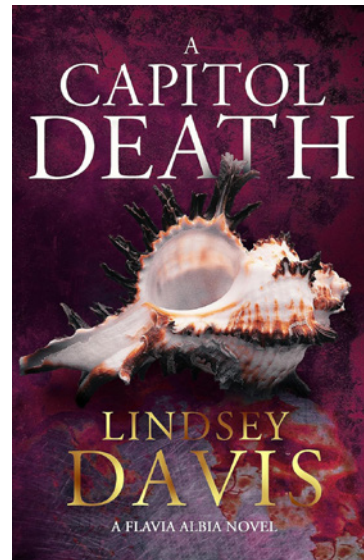
A Capitol Death

Davis (L.), Pp. 383, map. London:
Hodder & Stoughton, 2019. Cased, £20.
ISBN: 978-1-473-65874-5.

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Some people believe that historical novels are a poor substitute for reading 'proper' history. I am not someone who subscribes to this view and have always actively encouraged my students to engage



daughter of Falco, now a grown woman and private investigator in her own right.

Davis' books are always well researched and offer the reader an excellent insight into life in Imperial Rome. Flavia Albia works during the reign of the sinister Emperor Domitian, a period which the author has explored elsewhere in a standalone novel *Master and God*. For engaged students such works are a great starting point, hopefully encouraging further interest and historical inquiry. What I especially enjoyed about this instalment was that the story is set during the days leading up to Domitian's double triumph of 89 AD. Although there are questions over the actual logistics of such an event, Davis gives a colourful and inventive interpretation of how preparations might have proceeded. There is consideration of fun questions such as how the triumphing Emperor might be able to relieve himself during the long procession and how numerous foreign prisoners might have been 'found' in Rome, given the very real fact that Domitian's military victory was, at best, questionable. As usual, Davis has an irreverent approach to the figures of authority and the readers find themselves cheering for the underdogs in the story.

The plot of this book is that a murder has taken place and Flavia Albia is tasked with investigating it. Specifically, an imperial official has been flung from the Tarpeian Rock, in a parody of the ancient punishment for traitors. Much of the action takes place on the eponymous Capitol and a handy map of this area has been provided to help the reader make sense of the geography of the main storyline. This is a book which took me a while to read as I often became interested in a little fact which had been dropped in and I was curious enough to go away and research it. Flavia Albia is a good protagonist as she is, effectively, an outsider within Roman society herself as she was originally a British orphan, adopted and schooled into polite society by the Didii. This makes her explanation to the reader of certain features of Roman life seem more authentic- something that many historical novels struggle to achieve.

As usual with Davis' novels, there is a riotous cast of eccentric characters. It would be difficult to keep control of these, but for a cast list at the beginning of the book, which I found myself flipping back to regularly. The pace of the book is snappy and there is a good amount of action including a second murder, some humorous scenes involving Juno's Sacred Geese and even an insight into the production of imperial purple cloth. Certainly, there must be some