

Rethinking women and work

Interpreting funerary inscriptions

Though the majority of funerary inscriptions reference women exclusively in the role of daughter, wife or mother, we do have surviving examples telling us different stories. What aspects of these women's lives do the following inscriptions choose to commemorate?



AURELIAE · C · L · NAIS
PISCATRIX DE HORREIS GALBAE

For Aurelia Nais, fisherwoman from the granaries of Galba (*Nais was a freedwoman who ran a fish-shop*)



SELLIA EPYRE
DE SACRA VIA
AURIVESTRIX

Sellia Epyre, a gold clothworker from the Sacred Way



ITALIA · QUASILLARIA

Italia, a *quasillaria* (a spinner) (*set up by her husband Scaeva, a book-keeper*)

OPTATA · PASAES
OSTIARIA

Optata Pasaes, a doorkeeper / janitor

GNOME · PIERINIS
ANCILLA ORNATRIX

Gnome, slave girl of Pieris, hairdresser

HYMNIS · CELLIA
PSALTRIA

Hymnis Cellia, musician who played the cithara

HYGIA · MARCELLAE · L
OBSTETRIX

Hygia, freedwoman of Marcella, midwife

STATILIA · T · L · TYRANIS
PAEDAGOGA

Statilia Tita, freedwoman of Tyranes, tutor / teacher

PHILAENIS · L · LIVI
NUTRIX

Philaenis, freedwoman of Livus, wetnurse

How important do you think the occupation of these women was in their lives?
Do you think this makes them unusual?

How successful do you think these women might have been,
from looking at these inscriptions?

Thinking about the range of professions listed, which of these would men have undertaken as well, and which were particularly female occupations?