STORIES OF DAILY LIFE FROM THE ROMAN WORLD

What did Roman children do first when they arrived at school in the morning? What excuse for missing school could be counted on to stave off a whipping from the teacher? What did a Roman banker do when someone came to borrow money? What did a Roman wife say when her husband came home drunk? The answers to such questions can be found not in mainstream ancient literature (whose writers had their minds on higher things) but in language textbooks for ancient Latin learners. These 'Colloquia' offer an ancient introduction to Roman culture, covering shopping, banking, bathing, dining, arguing, going to school, etc.; recently rediscovered, they are here presented for the first time in a format aimed at readers with no knowledge of Latin, Greek, or the ancient world. They come complete with introductory material, extensive illustrations, and a full explanation of their fascinating history.

ELEANOR DICKEY was educated at Bryn Mawr and Oxford, has taught in Canada and the United States, and is currently Professor of Classics at the University of Reading in England. She is a Fellow of the British Academy and has published more than 100 scholarly works, including *Greek Forms of Address* (1996), *Latin Forms of Address* (2002), *Ancient Greek Scholarship* (2007), *The Colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana* (2012–15), *Learning Latin the Ancient Way* (2016), *Introduction to the Composition and Analysis of Greek Prose* (2016), and *Learn Latin from the Romans* (2017). She is a dedicated and passionate teacher who enjoys introducing students to the ancient world and has brought decades of experience to making this book clear and accessible to people with no prior background in classics.

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Extracts from the Ancient Colloquia

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with illustrations by the author

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Dedicated to
JUDY K. MORRIS
and
JONAS MORRIS
with gratitude for many decades of inspiration

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Preface

The ancient Colloquia, a set of elementary language-learning materials from the Roman empire, contain fascinating information on many aspects of daily life in the Roman world, but they have long been neglected because until recently they had neither a modern edition nor a translation into any modern language. Most classicists have never heard of them, as indeed I had not until a few years ago. But as soon as I started working on these texts I fell in love with them; I felt they had tremendous potential and wanted everyone to be able to use them, a desire that led to production of a full scholarly edition of the Colloquia with translation and detailed commentary (Dickey 2012–15). That edition contains the arguments for the editorial and interpretive decisions underpinning the work presented here.

This book, by contrast, aims simply to present the Colloquia to non-specialist readers, people who would like to know what these texts tell us about ordinary life in the Roman empire and who are prepared to take my restoration and translation of the text on trust. Readers should be aware that alternative interpretations are often possible; note in particular that all words in italics are editorial additions, as are all speaker designations.

Because the Colloquia provide so much interesting information about daily life during the Roman empire, modern teachers may wish to use them as a cultural textbook, rather as ancient teachers did. For this purpose the Colloquia are only partly suitable, since many topics that we might expect to find in a well-rounded textbook on Roman civilisation are not mentioned in the Colloquia: love, marriage, agriculture, the army, and death, for example. But within their limitations, that is when combined with other sources that cover different topics, the Colloquia offer an excellent introduction to daily life during the empire. Therefore in designing this book I have tried to keep in mind both the needs of readers who would like to use the book as a general introduction to those aspects of Roman culture that the

Colloquia illuminate and readers whose main goal is to understand the Colloquia themselves.

Context for the Colloquia extracts presented here, therefore, is provided not only by the introductions to each passage and accompanying illustrations, but also by two additional chapters. The first of these (Chapter 11) includes parallel passages from other sources that readers might want to use alongside the Colloquia, selected on the basis of four criteria: that they be directly relevant to topics discussed in the Colloquia, roughly contemporary with the Colloquia, fun and interesting in their own right, and not from works that really ought to be read intact if one is interested in Roman daily life. For example, the letters of Cicero and Pliny, the novel of Petronius, the poems of Juvenal, and the plays of Plautus contain a good deal of information about daily life, and Quintilian's treatise on the education of an orator offers valuable insights into ancient education, but those are all works that can and should be read as wholes if one is interested in the topics they address; excerpts taken out of context would be inadequate to represent their contents and perhaps misleading. Indeed many people interested in daily life do read these texts separately and might well start with them rather than with the Colloquia, making extracts from them redundant here. The texts selected for use as parallels here are normally short; they include selections from the joke book of Philogelos, Vindolanda tablets, papyrus letters, inscriptions and graffiti, recipes from Apicius' cookbook, and poems of Martial. The final chapter offers a more detailed explanation of what the Colloquia are and how they were created, used, and transmitted to our time.

The illustrations are chosen on criteria similar to those governing the selection of parallel texts and aim to provide readers with images directly useful for understanding the Colloquia and the aspects of the Roman world to which they pertain. The illustrations are the visual equivalent of an ancient text in translation, in that they are all clear drawings of intact objects, immediately intelligible to the novice. Of course, many objects worth illustrating do not survive intact, and therefore the drawings sometimes show partial restorations (e.g. missing portions of a mosaic filled in when it is reasonably clear what they originally contained), modern reconstructions (e.g. the baths at the Xanten Archaeological Park), or artists' conceptions existing only on paper (e.g. Gismondi's drawing of Roman apartment buildings).

Restorations and reconstructions are signalled in the captions. Drawings rather than photographs are provided both because drawings are usually clearer and easier to understand than the type of photographs that can be included in a reasonably-priced book, and because partial restoration is much easier in a drawing. All the drawings are my own, though in some cases they are closely based on ones produced by earlier scholars (as acknowledged in the captions). These illustrations are no doubt less beautiful and evocative than photographs of ruins would be, just as a translation of a Latin poem is less beautiful and evocative than the original, but it is hoped that readers will find them clearer and more understandable to the same degree as a translation.

Restoration has its limits, however, just as translation does: it is important to be sure that one represents antiquity as it actually was, not as we like to think it was. For this reason one famous image does not appear in the chapter on ancient schooling; it can be found in the Appendix, with an explanation of why I do not think it belongs earlier in this book.

The choice of which aspects of the Colloquia to bring out in my explanatory text has been based on an assessment of which aspects of the information contained in the Colloquia are likely to be most useful and interesting to modern readers, given what other sources we already have about the ancient world. For example, although the Colloquia frequently mention food they are not really a good source for learning about ancient food, because we have many other ancient works that discuss food in far more depth; someone whose main goal is to learn about ancient food would not want to use the Colloquia as his or her first port of call. On the other hand the Colloquia are one of our best sources for information on ancient schools, not only because they say more about schools than about food, but also because other texts say less about schools: it would be entirely sensible to come first to the Colloquia when wanting to find out about ancient schools. I have accordingly focussed the explanatory material much more on topics for which the Colloquia represent an important resource than on topics for which they do not.

All translations are my own.

All dates are AD unless otherwise specified.

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and to John Peter Wild for advice about several of the illustrations; all these people also offered much-needed encouragement. Fergus Millar kindly offered a correction to my original translation of passage 3.2. Vincent Hunink, who translated the Colloquia into Dutch for publication as *In een Romeins klaslokaal* (Athenaeum, 2017), challenged my interpretations of a number of passages, resulting in some important improvements over my earlier translations of the Colloquia: I am extremely grateful for his thoughtful suggestions, even on points where we ultimately had to agree to disagree. Likewise Arian Verheij, who translated my English for the same volume, has significantly improved the work by his insightful corrections. I am also grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for generous funding that enabled me to finish this project, to Ineke Sluiter and the University of Leiden for providing excellent facilities in which to work on it, to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for the funding that enabled me to carry out the research on which it is ultimately based, to Rolando Ferri for introducing me to the Colloquia and helping me understand them, to Michael Sharp for patient encouragement over a long period, and to Marianna Prizio, Malcolm Todd, and Henry Maas of Cambridge University Press for their care, attention, and sharp-eyed intelligence.