

# STEPHANIE DRAY

www.stephaniedray.com

LILY OF THE NILE:  
A NOVEL OF  
CLEOPATRA'S  
DAUGHTER  
Hits Bookshelves  
January 2011

A survey of  
women's history  
through the eyes of  
a historical fiction  
novelist.

## Bad Girls of the Ancient World

### HOW TO FALL AFOUL OF THE PATRIARCHY IN THREE EASY STEPS

#### PICK UP A WEAPON

Though examples of warrior women can be found in ancient literature even before the appearance of the Amazons in Homer's tales, women who fought were considered to be unnatural.

#### DABBLE IN PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION OR MAGIC

For the ancients, religion was mostly a matter for the state. The idea that a god of the pantheon might take a personal interest in a woman beyond seducing her or punishing her was preposterous. Consequently, priestesses were often viewed with suspicion. Alexander the Great's mother, Olympias, was always suspected of sorcery, in part, because King Phillip fell in love with her during a religious initiation.

#### BE SEXY

Ancient man feared female sexuality and the sway it might have over his better judgment. The surest propaganda against an ancient queen was to depict her as a licentious seductress; a charge that has never clung with more tenacity to any woman than it has to Cleopatra VII of Egypt.



Queen Cleopatra VII, of Egypt



Queen Zenobia of Palmyra



Olympias of Macedonia

These historical women have been painted and sculpted throughout the ages. If well-behaved women seldom make history, this should tell you something about these ladies.



Queen Dido commits suicide



Pierre-Narcisse, baron Guérin's painting of the famous but fictional romance between Dido and Aeneas

## DIDO

Queen Dido of Carthage (also known as Elissa) was perhaps the original bad girl of the ancient world. If she is a real historical figure, rather than myth, she is the only woman in Western history to have founded her own civilization.

### TIMELINE & RELATIONSHIPS

DIDO OF CARTHAGE	800 BC	Cleopatra Selene's husband, King Juba II, claimed descent from this legendary queen
OLYMPIAS OF MACEDONIA	375 BC	Alexander the Great was the son of this ambitious woman. Selene's ancestor, Ptolemy, was Alexander's general and was also rumored to be his half brother.
ARSINOE II OF EGYPT	316 BC	Selene was a direct descendant of this first female Ptolemaic Pharaoh
SOPHONISBA OF CARTHAGE	220 BC	Selene's husband was a descendant of King Massinissa, who wanted proud Princess Sophonisba for himself
CLEOPATRA VII OF EGYPT	69 BC	Mother of Cleopatra Selene
ZENOBIA OF PALMYRA	240 AD	One of Selene's likely descendants



*Arsinoe II, Daughter of Ptolemy*



*The Seduction of Olympias*

## ARSINOE II

This remarkable queen began the dynastic tradition of brother-sister marriage amongst the Ptolemies and may have ruled as Pharaoh in her own right long before Cleopatra VII was born.

## OLYMPIAS

### SORCERESS

Olympias was a priestess of an ancient mystery cult when King Phillip met and fell in love with her. Rumors that she practiced witchcraft and kept pet snakes would follow her ever after.

### SEDUCTRESS

Rumor had it that Olympias was so desirable she caught the eye of Zeus himself--who seduced and impregnated her. This was a rumor that her son Alexander encouraged.

### WARRIOR WOMAN

Olympias is one of the few ancient queens who took to the battlefield. As an old woman, she led troops in full military regalia. What's more, she won the fight!

## SOPHONISBA

### PRIDE AND HONOR

This princess of Carthage broke her betrothal to King Massinissa when she learned he'd allied with Rome, with whom her kingdom was almost perpetually at war.

When Massinissa eventually won her to his side, she tried to sway him to betray the Romans. After the war, she decided that she would rather die of poison than become a prisoner of Rome. Her suicide would influence North African queens thereafter.



*Sophonisba and her cup of poison*



Cleopatra on her deathbed



Queen Zenobia in chains

## CLEOPATRA

### THE PATRIOT AND WARRIORESS

Like Dido, Olympias and Sophonisba before her, Cleopatra VII concerned herself with matters of state. She ruled alone, without a man at her side, for most of her life. She claimed a special affinity for her kingdom of Egypt, taking on the appellation, *philopatris*. She led her country in war against the Romans.

### THE SIREN

Julius Caesar was a notorious womanizer, so it may have come as some shock to Rome when their famous general didn't abandon the Egyptian queen after their liaison but appears to have claimed her son as his own and elevated her to the status of goddess.

That Cleopatra then famously took up with Caesar's second-in-command, Marcus Antonius, impressed the Romans as an act of wanton immodesty. She came to woo Antony on a pleasure barge--choosing him as a mate rather than waiting to be chosen.

Though she is not known to have taken more than two men to her bed, her image

as as a licentious seductress was used against her to great effect.

### THE SORCESS

While she was known outside of Egypt as a painted harlot, Cleopatra VII was, for her people, the very incarnation of Isis, the great mother goddess.

As a mother of four, Cleopatra was the picture of fertility. It also seems that she was genuinely devout, respectful of native religions, so much so that the Romans believed she was capable of wielding magic and ensorcelling their finest generals.

Her power as a woman was explicitly acknowledged by her Roman enemies as *the* reason for the war.

### PRIDE AND DECEIT

Cleopatra lost her war with Rome, but she may have had the last laugh. She's infinitely more famous than her conqueror, the emperor Augustus. This may have to do with the defiant way in which she committed suicide before he could take her to Rome as a prisoner.

## ZENOBIA

While some say the warrior queen killed herself to escape the shame of being paraded prisoner, other accounts maintain that she was freed by the emperor and went on to live a prosperous life as the wife of a Roman senator. If true, that would make her one of the few bad girls in ancient history to get away with it all.