

Gillian CLARK, *Monica: An Ordinary Saint*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015. 1 vol. 199 p., 13 ill. (WOMEN IN ANTIQUITY). Prix : 29,95 €. ISBN 978-0-19-998839-6.

In this detailed and vivid book, Gillian Clark highlights the figure of Monica, the mother of Augustine. As becomes clear from Chapter 1, "Introduction", the book has a multifaceted goal, addressing wider questions about the lives of Monica and contemporary women, as well as the issue how it happened that Monica, as "one of the best known women of classical antiquity" (p. 1), became a saint. Instead of merely tracing back Monica's fame to her renowned son, Clark aims to clarify the exceptionality of Monica's own life against the background of the position of women in late antiquity in general. Accordingly, Clark takes a comparative approach, using, besides Augustine's writings, also insights from various other literary and archaeological sources, which are informative for the lives of Monica and her female contemporaries. Each subsequent chapter discusses one aspect related to Monica's life. Chapter 2, "Monica's House" explores questions related to Monica's domestic life, such as the size and location of the house, its decoration and organization, the economic status of the family, aspects of the housekeeping, and the style of clothing. Clark draws attention to a wealth of archaeological and literary material. However, the analysis is more informative for the life of women in general than for Monica in specific. This is indicated most clearly by Clark's remark that "Monica had options" (p. 54): she might have had a private bath or visited the public baths, gone to the market or had slaves to do the shopping, lived in a town house or a villa, changed her house according to new fashion or left it the same (which is probably more likely, given the material evidence), owned some of her own property or she could have been relatively poor (as Augustine suggests), practised wool work or bought the textiles at the market. Clark is most certain about Monica's dress: she must have worn decent clothes, the "happy medium between seductive dress and looking like a widow" (p. 56). Chapter 3, "Monica's Service", concentrates on Monica's status as a wife, mother and neighbour. According to Clark, Augustine's characterization of Monica is driven by the traditional oppositions between husband and wife, parent and child, master and slave: "the three basic household relationships of superior to subordinate" (p. 66). As a Christian, however, Monica is not presented as entirely subordinated: she spiritually exceeds her pagan husband, whom she finally converts. At the end of the chapter, Clark focuses on the topic of domestic violence. Based on Augustine's writings, Clark argues that Monica was never beaten by her husband despite his sexual aberrations, from which she derives that "Monica's advice to her friends was that they had only themselves to blame for the bruises which resulted from complaints about a husband's way of life" (p. 79). In my opinion, this argumentation is problematic, since the claim that Monica advised her neighbours seems not to be backed up with further evidence. Moreover, it remains uncertain whether we should take at face value Augustine's remark that his mother was not beaten by her husband. Here (and, to a lesser degree, in the rest of the book), it would have been useful if Clark had problematized the way in which we can use Augustine's writings and other contemporary sources about women as reliable sources of information for a modern biography of Monica and her female contemporaries. In Chapter 4, "Monica's Education", Clark draws attention to the exceptionality of Monica's learning, which

she compares to the education of some contemporary women (Hypatia, Sosipatra and Macrina). Unlike these famous learned women, Monica did not have a formal education. Yet, as Clark's reading of Augustine's philosophical dialogues convincingly demonstrates, Monica is represented by her son as a quick learner who expresses herself in a clear and forceful manner and a personal style distinct from that of her male conversation partners. This raises questions about her level of education. In general, Clark argues, normal education was not deemed appropriate for women, since they did not need the skills in public life. Accordingly, in his *Confessions*, Augustine does not mention that Monica was educated, instead tracing her philosophical skills back to the things she learned in the domestic life, her sharp intelligence, as well as her daily conversation with God through reading of the Scripture and prayer. Chapter 5, "Monica's religion", concerns Monica's religious identity in a contemporary context that was characterized by a variety of sometimes interrelated pagan and Christian religious forms. The chapter is mostly inspired by the reading of Augustine's writings, which describe Monica as a faithful member of the Catholic Church. However, as Clark shows in a refined way, matters were not that straightforward. The attitudes of contemporaries (for instance, emperors and fellow Christians) as they are expressed in documents like the Theodosian Code and Symmachus' *Relatio* show that it was not yet settled which path was right in Monica's day. Consequently, besides paganism, Monica could also have chosen to adhere to Donatist, Manichaean or Arian interpretations of Christianity. It is uncertain whether she ever did, though. According to Clark, Monica was raised in a Christian family and possible non-Christian religious devotions or a Donatist upbringing are not supported by further evidence. Instead, Monica is presented by Augustine as highly important for his own religious development, as Clark argues: her tears connect him to the Church and she is the one who strengthens the relationship between her son and Ambrose. Chapter 6, "Saint Monica", addresses, in my opinion, the most thrilling question of the book, namely how Monica, who was in fact a rather "ordinary" woman (cf. p. 144) became a saint. As Clark shows in a rich and illuminating way, Augustine's writings contain "all the material there is for Saint Monica" (p. 152): she is presented as a confessor (ready to die for her faith) and ascetic (as a devout and celibate widow). Nevertheless, Clark contends, Augustine does not endow her with "sanctity as an aura of power" (p. 153) similar to some famous women featuring in contemporary hagiographical writings, such as Gregory of Nyssa's Macrina, Gregory of Nazianze's Gorgonia and Jerome's Paula. Compared to these women, Monica is not described by her son as equally faultless and committed to the ascetic life. In other words, she is not unambiguously staged as a saint. As Clark demonstrates, it took almost eight centuries before Monica became venerated as a saint, under influence of the growing importance of Augustinian monastic circles. In 1162, Gauthier of Arrouaise translated Monica's relics from Ostia to Artois, at the occasion of which he composed a *Life of Monica*. Her fame was further spread by Jacob de Voragine's *Golden Legend*. The discovery of relics and the emergence of new Augustinian convents stimulated the dedication of patron churches in 14th and 15th century Italy, which were often decorated with artistic cycles featuring Augustine and Monica. Monica was strongly associated with ideals of motherhood, which resulted in her designation as patron saint of mothers in 19th century writings. However, in the

changed cultural context of the 20th century, more and more attention was drawn, often from a psycho-analytical perspective, to her attempts to dominate and manipulate her son, as well as her anxieties to have a good Christian life. All in all, in this detailed and well written study, Clark presents Augustine's mother as a charitable and learned woman, a devoted wife and mother, and above all, a very ordinary saint. Nevertheless, there are some problems with the comparative approach taken in the book. First and foremost, the book does not problematize how both Augustine's writings and other literary and non-literary evidence can be used for the construction of a modern biography of Monica and her contemporaries. Moreover, the analysis is mainly based on the reading of Augustine's writings, while other contemporary evidence (literary, archaeological, etc.) is only occasionally taken into account. It is questionable, finally, to what extent the evidence originating from other sources than Augustine's pen really adds to the picture of Monica; as Clark's book demonstrates, the material does not yield much information about Monica's individual situation, but primarily indicates the various options women – or better, people in general – had in the organization of the household (Chapter 2), the marital life (Chapter 3), and the religious life (Chapter 5). Notwithstanding, the comparison with evidence of female philosophers (Chapter 4) and saints (Chapter 6) does effectively epitomize the exceptional nature of Monica's service, learning and sainthood. Monica's characterization as an ordinary saint is all the more interesting, since it raises issues about the conceptualisation of sainthood in general. Last but not least, the book is well-designed and includes a map of important places, a comprehensive list of Augustine's writings and other resources, an up-to-date bibliography, and a concise index. One minor detail: there are no references to the artworks which are printed in the text, so that it is not always clear why these images are included. However, this does not change the fact that Clark has written a book which is worth reading for people interested in the life of Augustine's mother Monica and women's history in general. Klazina STAAT

Brent DAVIS, *Minoan Stone Vessels with Linear A Inscriptions*. Louvain – Liège, Peeters, 2014. 1 vol. XXIV-421 p. (AEGAEUM, 36). Prix : 105 €. ISBN 978-90-429-3097-1.

L'Australie entre par la grande porte dans le monde des écritures minoennes. C'est en effet un jeune chercheur de l'Université de Melbourne qui a rédigé le bel ouvrage que voici. Il s'agit de l'adaptation d'une thèse de doctorat soutenue en 2011 – la jaquette de couverture identifie étourdiment la thèse avec le présent livre. Ayant été membre du jury, je puis attester que c'est une erreur et que le doctorat a été remanié en vue de son édition. Le travail ne se limite pas aux récipients en pierre inscrits en linéaire A, contrairement à ce que son titre annonce : il s'y ajoute un examen approfondi de cette écriture (imparfaitement déchiffrée) et de la langue (encore toujours non identifiée) qu'elle note. Après une description de la méthode (p. 1-15), suivent deux chapitres majeurs, consacrés aux 49 récipients de pierre inscrits (p. 17-141), puis à l'écriture et la langue du linéaire A (p. 143-278). Viennent ensuite une conclusion générale (p. 279-280) ; la bibliographie (p. 281-314) ; un glossaire (p. 315-317) ; le catalogue des vases inscrits (p. 319-390) ; une brève présentation ethnographique