



Netherlands Institute at Athens

Sabina in Athens

This spring the French translation of Nynke Smits' historic novel Sabina, Vrouw van Hadrianus (2017 Leiden, Primavera Pers) was published by Gallimard in Paris, under the title: Mémoires de Sabine, épouse d'Hadrien. Une histoire d'amour hors norme. Over sixty years after Marguerite Yourcenars famous work on Hadrien, his little-known consort Sabina has finally acquired a life of her own!

In her talk the author will summarize the contents of her book, address issues of fact and fiction and discuss what it might have been like: the life of the Roman empress Sabina (around 100 CE), a life in the shadows of the great emperor and of his famous lover, the boy Antinoos. In her talk the author will lift Sabina out of obscurity while she takes the audience along on a trip through the Roman world. We will travel the Ancient World, from Roman Britain to Egypt, where the reader of the book may learn about the denouement of the story of Antinoos' mysterious death. We will sojourn in the Villa Hadriana and move from Rome to Athens. It was probably Athens where Sabina and Hadrian were most at ease and where Sabina was the happiest.

About the author

Nynke Smits (MA) studied Classical Languages and Culture at Leiden University. She taught Greek, Latin and Classics in Translation at Drew University in Madison NJ, USA for several years. Once moved back to the Netherlands, she taught Greek and Latin in several High Schools until retirement in 2019. In the fall of 2024 her second novel, The Syrische Prinses (The Syrian Princesses) will appear with Primavera Pers, Leiden. The subject of the novel is Julia Domna, wife of the emperor Septimius Severus (2nd century).