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FRANCIS CAIRNS	
Tibullus 2.5: The Date, the Parilia, and line 35	3
GREGORY I. CARLSON, S.J.	
Phaedrus, a Fable, and Fun	12
UWE FRÖHLICH	
<i>Nulla salus bello</i> : Vergils Drances	15
WILLIAM FURLEY	
The <i>Metamorphoses</i> Metamorphosed. Ted Hughes' <i>Tales from Ovid</i> (1997)	21
HANS ARMIN GÄRTNER	
Zur Haltung des Iuvenus gegenüber der klassischen Epik	29
MARIO GEYMONAT	
Immensità dei paesaggi virgiliani di cielo, di mare, di monti	36
ANDREAS HEIL	
<i>Redde Nasoni suum acumen. Ov. trist. 3,4a,37-40</i>	45
KONRAD HELDMANN	
Jupiter und Callisto	51
WILHELM HOLLSTEIN	
Ovids <i>Fasti</i> und das <i>aes grave</i> mit der Prora	59
NIKLAS HOLZBERG	
Applaus für Maro. Eine ‚augusteische‘ Interpretation von Mart. 9,33	68
MATTHIAS KORN	
Die Falernus-Episode in den <i>Punica</i> des Silius Italicus (7,162-211)	74
HELMUT KRASSER	
Vom <i>salaputium disertum</i> zum Bad im Amphitheater. Kaiserlicher Scherz und poetisches Programm	79
WOLF-LÜDER LIEBERMANN	
Dichtung und Lebenswahl – wider den ‚Ästhetizismus‘	84

GLENN W. MOST Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> 14.671	94
RENE PFEILSCHIFTER Ovid über Odysseus oder: Dichtung und Mythos	102
WERNER SCHUBERT P.D.Q. Bach und Vergils <i>Aeneis</i> . Ein zu Unrecht vergessener Fall musikalischer Rezeption – oder ein zu Recht vergessener Unfall?	110
ROBERT SEIDEL Ein deutscher Horaz in Heidelberg. Johannes Adams <i>Parodiae Horatianae</i> (1611)	120
ERIKA SIMON Feuer, Wasser, Luft und Erde	129
PETER STROHSCHNEIDER Sängeragone. Eine Problemskizze	133
IBOLYA TAR Das Wassermotiv bei Horaz	141
ANDRÉ WALTHER Horaz über Akkulturation (<i>epist.</i> 2,1,156f.)	146
KATHARINA WALTHER <i>Illum turbat amor</i> . Die Liebesbeziehungen des Turnus in der <i>Aeneis</i> vor dem Hintergrund seiner Rezeption in Petrarca's <i>Africa</i>	152
HARTMUT WULFRAM Stadt und Land in einem Tag	162
ANNE NOWAK / JULIANE VOSS Metamorphorische Nächte. <i>Nox</i> bei Ovid – Textstellen in Graphik und Karikatur	169
Antike Geschichtsschreibung in komparatistischer Perspektive	
JÖRN RÜSEN Der Mutschler-Spagat. Persönliches zum Kulturvergleich der Historiographie	177

MAURIZIO BETTINI Comparing the Romans	182
SIEGMAR DÖPP Fasziniert von Thukydides. Zu zwei Rezeptionstypen bei Sallust	189
YANG HUANG Perceiving the Nomadic Other. A Note on Herodotus' Scythians and Sima Qian's Xiongnu	196
MARTIN JEHNE Der Hirschfaktor des Valerius Antias	201
ELISABETH KLECKER Chinesische Werte? Eine Promotionsschrift der Wiener Jesuiten- universität	210
CHRISTOPH KUGELMEIER Götter, Kaiser und Kalifen auf nächtlicher Wanderschaft. Die westöst- liche Metamorphose eines Motivs der antiken Geschichtsschreibung	217
ACHIM MITTAG Am west-östlichen Erzählfenster. Notizen zu einem Gedicht Li Shangyins (813?-858)	225
YURI PINES Where Had the Barbarians Gone? The Cultural Other in Early Chinese Historiography	235
JÖRG RÜPKE Wie steht's mit dem Vergleich? Vergleichende Geschichtsschreibung und Vergleichende Religionsgeschichtsschreibung im Vergleich	241
DIETER MEYER Ein Sieg der europäischen <i>ratio</i> . Zum Rügenkapitel des Saxo Grammaticus (<i>Gesta Danorum</i> 14,39)	246
HELWIG SCHMIDT-GLINTZER Sprache, Welt und Lebensspanne bei Zhuangzi	254
VALAHRIDUS [WILFRIED STROH] Iaponica Baldeana	260
RUDOLF KETTEMANN Zu Fritz-Heiner Mutschlers interkulturellem Diskurs zwischen dem alten China und der griechisch-römischen Antike	269

Römische Werte und Lebensentwürfe

MAXIMILIAN BRAUN		
Augustus, die Macht und die Medien		277
EGON FLAIG		
Tradition und Innovation. Kaiser Claudius und das römische Selbstverständnis		287
URSULA GÄRTNER		
<i>De lusu et severitate</i> . Zum Wert des Spiels bei Phaedrus		294
STEFAN GERLINGER		
<i>Virtus</i> ohne Ende? Zum Rollenverhalten zwischen Mann und Frau		303
WOLDEMAR GÖRLER		
Tugend durch Reichtum? Ein verkannter Dativ bei Lucilius		310
ANDREAS HALTENHOFF		
<i>Noctes Campanae</i> . Gedanken eines Strohwitwers: Plinius, <i>epist.</i> 6,4		314
ANTJE JUNGHANS		
Die Fabel von der Äffin mit den zwei Jungen. Annäherung an ein Erzählmotiv		322
WYTSE KEULEN		
In der <i>tenuitas</i> liegt die Würze. ‚Affektierte Bescheidenheit‘ in Gellius, <i>Noctes Atticae</i> 12,1,24		329
MATTHIAS KLINGHARDT		
Tanz ins Glück. Religionsgeschichtliches zum Musen- und Charitenreigen		338
WOLFGANG KLUG		
‚Aphoristisches‘ bei Lucan		351
FRANCESCA MENCACCI		
Aulus Gellius und ein <i>exemplum</i> des ‚guten Gebrauchs‘ des Witzes		356
CHRISTIAN MUELLER-GOLDINGEN		
Das glückliche Leben		364

CHRISTOFF NEUMEISTER		
Konfrontation zweier Lebensläufe. Zur gedanklich-sprachlichen Struktur von Tibulls Elegie I,10		368
GERARD O'DALY		
Choosing to be a Christian Poet. Prudentius, <i>Praefatio</i> and <i>Cathemerinon</i> 2.37-56		373
MARKUS PEGLAU		
Die <i>caritas patriae</i> des Alkibiades bei Nepos		379
FRANÇOIS QUEYREL		
Les Caryatides de l'Érechtheion dans le Forum Auguste		386
NILS RÜCKER		
<i>Exempla fidei</i> . Die Figur des Regulus in der <i>Passio Sanctorum Perpetuae et Felicitatis</i>		397
JOCHEN SAUER		
Kommunikation und Werte im poetologischen Diskurs: Catull und Properz		407
DIETMAR SCHANBACHER		
Die ‚ <i>magna quaestio</i> ‘ des römischen Gesellschaftsrechts (Gai. 3,149)		416
KURT SIER		
Lebenswahl als Ritual: Lukrez 2,614-617		424
UTE TISCHER		
Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten (Gell. 1,9)		431
JOHANN TISCHLER		
Das Jordan-Motiv in Zaubersprüchen		438
PHILIPP WEHMANN		
Römische Wertbegriffe und Werteerziehung im Lateinunterricht der Sekundarstufe I		448
ANNE WEIS		
Gender Symmetry. Pliny <i>epist.</i> 6.32, Women's Processions, and Roman Life Choices		454

Noctes Dresdenses

- PETER WITZMANN
Das werthe Althertum redet noch bis itzo vor uns. Grabinschriften
aus einer in Dresden wiederaufgefundenen Gruft 463
- THOMAS HAFFNER
Caesar in Wort und Bild für Kurfürst Christian I. von Sachsen 471
- BERNHARD KAISER
Cupressus Saxonica. Ein Cento Virgilianus über den Tod des
sächsischen Kurfürsten Christian II. 479
- VERONIKA RÜCKER
Werteerziehung an der Elbe. Die Ländliche Lehr- und Erziehungs-
anstalt für Knaben in Blasewitz bei Dresden 486
- ANTJE SUCHARSKI
„Ich bin der eine, Seneca, nach dem du schreibend suchtest.“
Zum Seneca-Bild bei Durs Grünbein 497

Lerngegenstand. Bezüglich der Komplexität sind jedoch Abstriche zu machen und dem eigenständigen Arbeiten sowie der Aktualisierung besondere Bedeutung beizumessen, um das Thema in die Lebenswelt der Lernenden zu transportieren. Dies vorausgesetzt, gewinnen die Lernenden Zugang zu dieser anspruchsvollen und wertvollen, ihre eigene Persönlichkeit direkt betreffenden Thematik.

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Gender Symmetry

Pliny *epist.* 6.32, Women's Processions, and Roman Life Choices

Over the years, F.-H. has often corrected my Latin and this offering is based on one such passage. In the opening years of the 2nd century CE, the younger Pliny (*epist.* 6.32) wrote to a friend, Quintilianus:

I know that you are retiring (*continentissimus*) and that you have brought your daughter up to conduct herself as befits your daughter and the grandchild of Tutilius. Since, however, she is about to marry the very worthy (*honestissimus*) Nonius Celer, upon whom consideration of public office (*ratio civilium officiorum*) imposes a certain need for elegance (*quandam nitoris*), she ought to have clothes and a retinue (*veste comitatu*) in keeping with her husband's position. These things cannot increase social standing (*dignitas*), but they can embellish it and give it physical form. I know that you are rich in intellect but restricted in means. I therefore claim part of your burden for myself and, in the manner of a second father, I confer upon our daughter 50,000 sesterces [...].¹

Although the identity of Quintilianus is not known, the passage suggests something of his relationship with Pliny.² Apparently friends of long

¹ *Quamvis et ipse sis continentissimus, et filiam tuam ita institueris ut decebat tuam filiam, Tutili neptem, cum tamen sit nuptura honestissimo viro Nonio Celeri, cui ratio civilium officiorum necessitatem quandam nitoris imponit, debet secundum condicionem mariti <uti> veste comitatu, quibus non quidem augetur dignitas, ornatur tamen et instruitur. Te porro animo beatissimum, modicum facultatibus scio. Itaque partem oneris tui mihi vindico, et tamquam parens alter puellae nostrae confero quinquaginta milia nummum plus collaturus [...].* As I recall, this passage was translated 'rather loosely' for F.-H.'s taste so he should not be held responsible for its remaining shortcomings.

² On the identity of Quintilianus and others cited in the passage, see Sherwin-White 1966: 398. Tutilius may have belonged to the generation of Martial

standing, perhaps from boyhood, they have made different life choices: Pliny, to pursue a political career in Rome, Quintilianus the modest life of a scholar, perhaps in Cisalpina. Now Quintilianus' daughter has made a good match and he is expected to outfit her for a more public sort of life than he has chosen for himself. Seeing his predicament, Pliny offers to help in a way that cannot be refused: he becomes 'a second father' to the girl, assuming Quintilianus' responsibility as his own.

Epist. 6.32 draws upon themes developed at greater length elsewhere in Pliny's correspondence: first, that the mark of successful parenting is to raise a child very much like his or her own father,³ and second, that Pliny is unfailingly generous with his friends, their wives, and their children.⁴ As argued extensively by others, the information communicated in these letters is not incidental but intended to display Pliny's own character and virtues: in *epist.* 2.4, for example, the offer to fund another dowry highlights the difference between his own responsible financial behavior and that of the girl's father, who has fallen into debt and is unable to provide for her.⁵ *Epist.* 6.32 offers a milder contrast between Pliny and Quintilianus and may also draw attention to the choices made by the young couple—Celer who is *honestissimus* by contrast with the *continentissimus* Quintilianus and on his way to a public career, and Quintilianus' daughter, more adaptable than her father, who will need help from Pliny, a 'second father' to fit with and further Celer's image.

This is not the 'meatiest' letter in Pliny's corpus, but it has interesting details, especially that of the "clothes and retinue" (*veste comitatu*) that are to be part of the girl's dowry or her trousseau. Since most of the activities associated with the ideal wife in imperial literature

(ca. 40-104 CE) and his family, like Pliny's, may have been composed of local landowners in Comum and lawyers in the civil courts. According to Sherwin-White 1966, young Celer is also likely to have been a lawyer.

³ Cf. *epist.* 2.18 and Carlon 2009: passim, e.g. 54, 118, 156.

⁴ In *epist.* 1.14 (Carlon 2009: 40f.), Pliny advises a friend on an appropriate bridegroom for his daughter; in *epist.* 2.4, as here, he contributes to a girl's dowry (Carlon 2009: 123-126).

⁵ For discussion of Pliny's themes, with bibliography, see Carlon 2009: 1-17 (*epist.* 2.24: Carlon 2009: 123-126.). *Epist.* 6.32 has been treated primarily by scholars interested in the dowry or in women's dress: Saller 1994: 212, Treggiari 1991: 341f., Olson 2008: 97.

and epitaph keep her rhetorically at home—managing the servants and “working with wool”—we are not accustomed to thinking about her public image.⁶ As an institution, however, what Pliny refers to here as “clothes and retinue”—what we might call the ‘matron’s procession’—was a structural element of Roman public life: Etruscan reliefs of the regal and republican eras show processions with women in carts, with servants.⁷ At the other end of the chronological spectrum, ca. 160-240 CE, Tertullian (*Cult. Fem.* 2.9.4) acknowledges grudgingly the importance of the practice for elite society, admonishing women that “if consideration of wealth, birth, or former status compels [you] to step out [into public] with great show, take care to temper this sort of ill lest, completely unfettered, you practice lack of restraint under the pretext of necessity— [...] *quas divitiarum vel natalium vel retro dignitatum ratio compellit ita pompaticas progredi [...] temperare malum huiusmodi curate, ne totis habenis licentiam usurpetis praetextu necessitates*. As an institution of long duration the ‘matron’s procession’ brings the social reciprocity between marriage partners into sharper focus.⁸

These processions were competitive public theater, a feature clearest in texts of the second century BCE.⁹ According to Polybius (31.26), the wife of the renowned Scipio Africanus, Aemilia (d. 162 BCE),

[...] used to receive the better part of the crowd’s admiration during the women’s processions (ἐν ταῖς γυναικείαις ἐξόδοις) in as much as

⁶ Ideal of the Roman matron: Carlon 2009: 146-185 with bibliography.

⁷ Etruscan relief: Haynes 2000: 121f. fig. 103 (terracotta plaque from Poggio Civitate, ca. 650-575 BCE); the same or similar motifs appear on a late 4th-century sarcophagus from Vulci (Boston MFA 1975.799): Haynes 2000: 287-289 figs. 232b-c.

⁸ Dotal law prescribes that the amount of a dowry be fixed on the basis of the means (*facultates*) and status (*dignitas*) of the negotiating parties and from *epist.* 6.32 the public image of the wife seems intended to reflect that compromise. For examples from the Digest: Treggiari 1991: 341, with nn. 92f.; Saller 1994: 216.

⁹ This probably reflects competition between elite families or groups, discussed normally in terms of the debate over the repeal of the Oppian legislation in 195 BCE: Johnston 1980: 149f. and *passim*; Culham 1982.

she had shared the life and fortune[s] (τύχη) of Scipio.¹⁰ For indeed, quite apart from the embellishment of her person and her wheeled-carriage, and apart from the baskets, cups, and other sacrificial implements, some of gold, others of silver, that were carried along with her in these distinguished processions (κατὰ τὰς ἐπιφανεῖς ἐξόδους), the number of man—and maid—servants who accompanied her were their equivalent.

Aemilia’s contemporary, Papiria, had been separated from her famous husband (L. Aemilius Paullus) for many years and her means were, according to Polybius, “insufficient to achieve the appearance of a well-born woman [...]” (κατὰ τὴν εὐγένειαν φαντασίας). As a result, she had “absented herself from these rank-revealing processions” (ἐκ τῶν ἐπιστήμων ἐξόδων) for a long time. After Aemilia died, her adoptive grandson and biological nephew, Scipio Aemilianus gave her sacrificial accoutrements to Papiria, his birth mother, and “thereafter, whenever [Papiria] made a personal appearance or attended a public sacrifice, she had herself driven out in the trappings of Aemilia, including, in addition to the other things, the muleteers, team, and the lady’s own carriage.” The refurbishment of Papiria’s image impressed the other women who, according to Polybius, “were astounded by the kindness and generosity of Scipio and, all stretching out their hands to him, wished him many blessings.”

It is not clear from the Republican sources whether dress and retinue were part of a woman’s dowry, as *epist.* 6.32 suggests, or funded by her spouse. For Plautus, processions like these exemplify the extravagance of women and the burdens they place on their husbands: his Megadorus complains (*Aul.* 165-168 and 491-535) that women with big dowries are able to exert too much pressure on husbands for ivory-trimmed carriages, maids and muleteers, purple-trimmed garments and cloaks;¹¹ he

¹⁰ Polybius’ description has been discussed from a variety of viewpoints, from women to property law: see e.g. Culham 1982: 89-92 and Dixon 1985: 147-170.

¹¹ Plautus’ list fits well with Polybius’ and should be considered a good characterization of the procession’s traditional equipage. Johnston 1980: 149 and Moore 1998: 162 argue that Megadorus’ list reacts to the restrictions of the Oppian legislation but it may simply resemble that legislation in that both had the accoutrements of the procession in mind.

parodies the procession as institution in the *Poenulus*, substituting for the matrons a confluence of prostitutes, two of whom, Adelphasium and Anterastilis, debate the advisability of the display, the competition created, and its expense (210-305): Adelphasium, the voice of (masculine) reason, argues (237f. and 284-288) the rationality of dressing “within their master’s means”, which is ambiguous but may again point to the spouse as the bearer of these costs.¹² Elsewhere he relates women’s public adornment to the pursuit of a husband, noting (*Epid.* 215-226) that whores use it to capture a lover (215: *ornatae occurrebant suis quaeque amatoribus, eos captabant*) and that “many (women/girls)” (noun not specified) parade through the streets with entire estates on display (226: *fundis exornatae multae incedant per vias*), a double allusion perhaps to the cost of their clothes and to the property (to be?) exchanged as part of their dowries.¹³ These passages are often read literally—i.e. as a story about real prostitutes attending a real festival of Venus—but the characters are ambiguous—free-born girls, kidnapped as children, sold to a pimp, but rescued by their father, prostitutes who think it more becoming for a *meretrix* to be dressed in *pudor* than in purple and gold (300-305)—and Plautus could have dressed these and other ‘prostitutes’ in the toga if he wanted to make their status clear.¹⁴ His matrons echo the long-established topos of the wife as a drain on her husband’s resources, but these wives demand access to their own money, adding a new, contemporary dimension to the joke.¹⁵

¹² For a broader discussion of the *Poenulus* and its historical context, see Johnston 1980.

¹³ The *meretrices* of *Epid.* 226 we should probably understand to be expensively dressed young women, whose range of fashion choices Plautus lampoons in lines 220-235. On *fundi* and *praedia* as part of the dowry: Saller 1994: 212 with n. 25 and Treggiari 1991: 346, 348-350.

¹⁴ Real prostitutes: Olson 2008: 49, 85. My understanding of these passages and their imagery is closer to that of Stärk 1990: 73-76, who sees Plautine comedy as a fantasy world with exaggerated characters acting out moral messages. The dress-related terminology used for matrons (*stolatae*) and prostitutes (*togatae*) in Latin literature is often ambiguous: the dress codes it reflects were not actually followed and authors used it for satiric or critical effect: Olson 2008: 47-51 and 2002. *Pudor* and *pudicitia* were virtues typically associated with wives: Olson 2008: 88-92.

¹⁵ Women’s greed for adornment is a commonplace as old as Hesiod (for Latin literature, see Olson 2008: 84f.; Schuhmann 1977: 51-54 and 63-65); the

Pliny’s letter to Quintilianus provides a window into the fixing of a dowry and reminds us that, in spite of the rhetorical ideal, the life of an elite woman was highly public, whether at home, where she worked to embody the image of the retiring helpmate, or in the streets of the city where she competed with other matrons for the admiration of the crowd. No one can doubt that Roman men had a wider range of life choices than their wives—and more arenas for social display. Nevertheless, we might infer from this brief account of the procession that it acted as an alternative arena for feminine *dignitas*, allowing elite women to communicate, as Tertullian (*Cult. Fem.* 2.9.4) outlined their choices: *quas divitiarum vel natalium vel retro dignitatum*.¹⁶

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image of the poor husband dominated by his rich wife became its own stereotype (Saller 1994: 220f.). Stärk 1990: 73-76 understands the type of the *uxor dotata* to come from an Italic rather than a Greek tradition; according to Johnston 1980: 144 the imagery was fueled by 2nd-century concern for the growing wealth and power of women. Husbands had nominal control over dowries but wide variation within the legal statutes show that, from at least the 2nd century forward, there were many ways around it: Saller 1994: 207, 210f.; Treggiari 1991: 327-340.

¹⁶ Crafting of a woman’s physical appearance in relation to her social standing: Olson 2008: 96-112.

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