Eris vs. Aemulatio

Valuing Competition in Classical Antiquity

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B R I L L

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Mihi es aemula: Elite Female Status Competition in Mid-Republican Rome and the Example of Tertia Aemilia

Lewis Webb

Mihi es aemula.1

Introduction

Status competition was l’esprit du temps in mid-republican Rome (264–133 BCE), an impetus for elite male action, as prior studies have shown.2 If it was vital to elite men, did it also motivate elite women? (By elite, I mean the top tier of the two-tier equestrian aristocracy in mid-republican Rome.) Although Phyllis Culham and Emily Hemelrijk have found status competition among elite women, hitherto no study focuses on the phenomenon.3 So this chapter turns a lens on mid-republican Rome, investigating the rich evidence for what I term ‘elite female status competition’.

Cicero alludes to such competition in his Pro Caelio.4 In a celebrated proso-popoeia Cicero summons Appius Claudius Caecus (RE 91, cos. 307, 296) ab inferis to condemn his descendant Clodia Ap.f. (RE 66), scion of the elite patri-

1 Plaut. Rud. 240. RE numbers are provided throughout, patronymics at the first occurrence of female names. On female nomenclature: Kajava 1994. For the magistracies: Broughton 1951; 1952. Latin text comes from the PHI Latin Corpus, Greek from the TLG. Translations are my own. Dates are BCE.
4 In defense of Marcus Caelius Rufus (RE 35, pr. 48).
Ciceran gens Claudia. Cicero’s Caecus highlights the social position, status, and character of Clodia’s consular ancestors and husband and contrasts it with (what Cicero deems) her debased character (Cic. Cael. 33–34). As Caecus, Cicero demands to know whether Clodia’s famed ancestor Quinta Claudia P.f. (RE 435) had admonished her to compete with her in familial renown for female status (Cic. Cael. 34):

If our male ancestor masks haven’t moved you, didn’t my descendant, that famous Quinta Claudia, admonish you to compete with her in familial renown [i.e., renown for the family] for female status?

Nonne te, si nostrae imagines viriles non commovebant, ne progenies quidem mea, Q. illa Claudia, aemulam domesticae laudis in gloria muliebri esse admonebat?

Such a question suggests the existence of status competition between elite women.5 Invective is a problematic species of evidence, but here it prompts further enquiry. By invoking Quinta Claudia’s name during the opening of the Megalensia on 4 April Cicero reminded his audience of her statue in the temple of the Magna Mater and her memorialization on stage, lasting testaments to the gloria she obtained for her prominent role in the inaugural procession for the Magna Mater in 204.7 Quinta Claudia and her actions were woven into Roman cultural memory, a powerful exemplum of laus domestica for the gens Claudia.8 In conjuring up Clodia’s consular relatives, male ancestor masks, and Quinta Claudia, Cicero connected testaments to male status with those to female status.9 He shamed Clodia with the memory of her exemplary ancestors and the phenomenon of elite female status competition.10

How and why did elite women compete for status? Was it vital to them? In this chapter I will address these questions for elite women like Quinta Claudia in mid-republican Rome, a characteristically competitive period, as is

5 See Austin 1977, 93 and OLD s.v. aemula (1); laus (2); domesticus (1, 2); gloria (1a). On laus domestica, familial renown, and the family brand see section 5.2.
6 Here between members of the same clan, but on competition between unrelated elite patrician and plebeian women see, e.g., Livy 10.23.1–10 with Oakley 2005, 245–259.
9 Austin 1977, 93. Ancestor masks: Flower 1996. But, as I argue elsewhere (Webb 2017, esp. 175–176), these ancestor masks were also symbols of female status.
expounded below. I begin with some background on status competition and a brief sketch of the domains of elite male status competition (section 2). Thereafter I present my own assessment of elite women and propose some domains of elite female status competition through a survey of literary and epigraphic sources (sections 3 and 4). To elucidate this phenomenon I illustrate and interrogate its presence in the life of Tertia Aemilia L.f. (RE 179), an elite woman and a contemporary of Quinta Claudia (section 5). I conclude that such competition was an essential aspect of elite women’s lives, for it enhanced personal, familial, and gentilician (clan) status: gloria and laus domestica (section 6)

2 Status Competition in Mid-Republican Rome

In this chapter ‘status’ (prestige, glory) is equated with gloria, interconnected with but distinct from ‘social position’ (rank), locus (cf. gradus, dignitas). I conceptualize status as the symbolic capital of individuals, their ‘prestige, reputation, [and] renown’ (Bourdieu 1985, 724). Symbolic capital contributes to social position, that is, it helps to define social hierarchies. Symbolic capital is a form of recognition or credit—a kind of accumulated prestige and renown—and the form in which other forms of capital are recognized as legitimate. These other forms of capital include economic (wealth and assets), cultural (knowledge and values), and social capital (relationships, social obligations, and networks).

Status competition—competition for prestige and glory—is equated with aemulatio or certamen gloriae. I define status competitions as those aiming for superiority in status, not for material resources per se. They encompass practices that can enhance or diminish the status of competitors, including

12 Gloria as status: Enn. Ann. 12.365, 14.382 Skutsch; Plaut. Amph. 1140; Aul. 541; Cato fr. 252 ORF. Locus as social position: Plaut. Aul. 28; Poen. 516; Ter. Eun. 241; Lucil. 4.150 Marx; C. Gracch. fr. 44 ORF; Cic. Mur. 16; Pis. 52. Cf. OLD s.v. gloria (1a); locus (17, 18); gradus (8); dignitas (3). See also Hellegouarc’h 1963, 369–383, 385, 388–415.
14 Various formulations: Auct. ad Her. 4.31, 34; Cic. Cael. 34; Off. 1.38.5–11; Tusc. 4.16–17; Sall. Cat. 7.6; Livy 35.47.4. Aemulatio (aemulor or derivatives): Coelius fr. 45 FRHist; Plaut. Mil. 839–840; Pseud. 196; Rud. 240. Certamen: Plaut. Bacch. 399; Cas. 516. Cf. OLD s.v. aemulatio (1, 2); certamen (1).
(but not limited to) conspicuous displays of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital.\textsuperscript{16} Conditions for such practices include ‘perpetual comparison and general comparability of achievements and merits’ (Hölkeskamp 2010, 123). While both elites and non-elites compete for status, elites tend to have relatively more economic capital to engage in conspicuous display (Fisher 2011, 178). Such conspicuous displays were not confined to the \textit{nouveaux riches}, but were practices engaged in by ‘Rome’s most traditional ruling elite’ (Beck 2016, 146), that is, the highest patrician and plebeian senatorial elite.

This ‘relentless competition for prestige’ (Rüpke 2007, 176) flourished in mid-republican Rome.\textsuperscript{17} Sallust speaks of the ‘desire for status’ (\textit{cupido gloriae}) among elite men, a desire that led to the ‘greatest status competition between themselves’ (\textit{gloriae maxumum certamen inter ipsos}), wherein they wanted ‘to be observed’ (\textit{conspici}) doing deeds and to have ‘great status’ (\textit{gloria ingens}) and ‘honorable wealth’ (\textit{divitiae honestae}) (Cat. 7.4–6).\textsuperscript{18} Envy, expense, and sorrow accompanied such competition, but these social tensions and repercussions are not my focus.

Socio-economic factors fostered this competition. As Bernard discusses in this volume, by the late fourth century the expansion and transformation of the patrician elite into the patricio-plebeian senatorial elite promoted competition among elite men for the highest public magisterial offices (consulships, praetorships), as these offices conferred status and offered opportunities to gain greater status, as well as wealth through spoils.\textsuperscript{19} Economically, increasing state and personal wealth from war indemnities, spoils, mining, taxation, trade, and agriculture in the third and second centuries provided this elite with the resources to engage in status competition.\textsuperscript{20} This competition was mediated by a rich visibility culture, where \textit{to be was to be seen}. Public recognition and visibility constituted and defined elite identities, for, as Flower argues, conspicuous displays (spectacles) ‘expressed the roles, values, and hierarchy of the office-holding elite’, ‘created a sense of identity, solidarity, and tradition for the community as a whole’, and ‘reproduced the social and political order’ (Flower 2004, 338). These public, conspicuous displays conferred status on the participants, a status that manifested itself and was memorialized ‘within the city and through traditional venues and media’ (Flower 2004, 338).\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] See n. 2.
\item[20] Kay 2014, esp. 9–18, 21–42, 131–188; and Bernard in this volume.
\item[21] Barton 2002; Flower 2004.
\end{footnotes}
With their personal wealth elite men engaged in myriad forms of visible status competition. The domains of elite male status competition included (but were not limited to) magisterial and sacerdotal public office, ‘public religious rites’ (sacra publica) and ‘games’ (ludi), dress, retinue, family, building projects, houses and villas, banquets, patronage, oratory, jurisprudence, public funerals, and warfare.\textsuperscript{22} In many of these domains visibility and wealth were of the utmost importance, with the caveat that public conspicuous display was praised, private luxury condemned.\textsuperscript{23} This conspicuous display was risky. It offered potential benefits (e.g., election to public office), but if the censors considered a man’s conduct dishonorable, he could receive a public ‘censorial mark’ (nota censoria) and even be stripped of equestrian rank or expelled from the Senate.\textsuperscript{24} Despite these risks the attainment of status was at the heart of public life for elite men. In what follows I present an assessment of elite women and argue that their competition operated in similar domains.

3 Elite Women

Elite women are defined here as senatorial women, the daughters and wives of the ca. 300 senators in the mid-republican Senate, female members by birth or marriage of the patricio-plebeian senatorial elite, an aristocracy of office. These women can also be defined as those with (potential) access to male ancestor masks (imagines), and in contradistinction to non-senatorial equestrian women, non-elite freeborn women, freedwomen, and female slaves.\textsuperscript{25} Our earliest epigraphic sources provide insight into their social position and

\begin{thebibliography}{25}


\bibitem{23} Cic. \textit{Mur.} 76, with Zanda 2011, 10–11.

\bibitem{24} Cic. \textit{Clu.} 42, 117; Livy 23.23.4; \textit{Per.} 14; Val. Max. 2.9; Plut. \textit{Vit. Cat. Mai.} 17; Gell. \textit{NA} 17.21,39, with Zanda 2011, 36–48.


\end{thebibliography}
status: elite female names included a patronymic and gamronymic, signifying
their association with their natal and marital families and their freeborn status,
for example, ‘Paulla Cornelia, daughter of Cnaeus, wife of Hispallus’ ([P]aulla
Cornelia Cn(aei) f(ilia) Hispalli [uxor], CIL VI 1294, RE 445). As daughters,
their social position and status were interconnected with those of their natal
male relatives, particularly their fathers and brothers, and as wives, with those
of their marital male relatives, their husbands and sons. Their sexual status
(filial, marital, maternal, divorced, widowed), public behavior, religious activ-
ity, and sacerdotal public offices also enhanced (or diminished) their social
position and status. While elite women did not have legally defined social
positions, they did derive informal ‘rank’ from their natal and marital families:
some women were praetorian or consular, etc., reflecting the highest magiste-
rial public office attained by their father or husband(s).

26 Cf. CIL VI 1274, 10043. Outside of the epigraphic context elite women were probably
referred to with their nomina in formal contexts and a range of personal names in informal
contexts, including nomina, praenomina (particularly for multiple homonymous women,
e.g., female agnates), relational expressions (filia, uxor, etc.), diminutives, nicknames, and
pet names. See, e.g., Cic. Div. 1.103 (mea Tertia); 2.83 (Aemilia); Fam. 2.15.2 (Tullia mea); 4.5.1
(Tullia filia tua); 14.1.5 (mea Terentia); 14.4.3 (Tulliola mea); 14.19.1 (Tulliola nostra); QFr. 2.6.1

27 Fathers: Cic. Cael. 33; Phil. 3.16; Rosc. Am. 147. Brothers: Cic. Rosc. Am. 147; Livy Per. 19; Val.
Max. 8.1.damn.4; Gell. NA 10.6.2; Suet. Tib. 2. Husbands: C. Gracch. fr. 48 ORF; Cic. Cael. 34.
Sons: Polyb. 10.4.4–5.7; Nep. fr. 59 Marshall; Livy 40.37.6; Val. Max. 4.4.pr. See Dixon 1988;
Hemelrijk 1999, 10.

28 Hemelrijk 1999; Treggiari 2002; Langlands 2006; Schultz 2006; DiLuzio 2016. An elite
woman’s social position, influence, and authority improved when she became a mother,
and grew (along with her independence) if she was widowed. See Hemelrijk 1999, 9–10.

29 A senator had a formal social position based on his highest attained magisterial public
office. We can thus speak in ascending order of non-curule (tribunician, quaestorian,
aedilician) to curule (aedilician, praetorian, consular) senators, with consular senators
and the princeps senatus at the summit. Cf. CIL IX 416 (lex Latina Tabulae Bantinae); Plin.
women with the praetorian and consular social position of their male relatives: Cic. Att.
2.1.5 (illa consularis); Cael. 33–34 (consular stemma); Phil. 3.16 (praetorian and consular
stemmata); Planc. 18 (consular maternal stemma); Rosc. Am. 147 (consular stemma). Cf.
consular wives: Polyb. 31.26.6; C. Gracch. fr. 48 ORF. By the early empire senatorial daugh-
ters were legally born into the ordo senatorius, the senatorial order, as codified by the lex
Iulia de maritandis ordinibus (18 BCE) and the lex Papia Poppaea (9 CE): Cass. Dio 54.16.2;
56.7.2; Dig. 23.2.44, 47. By the latter half of the second century CE a senatorial wife legally
held the title (social position, rank) of clarissima femina and an unmarried senatorial
daughter the title of clarissima puella: CIL XIII 1831 (ca. 169 CE); ILAlg-02–03 7909; Dig.
1.9.8, 10, 12 (Ulpian). By the late second century CE a consular wife legally held the title of
consularis femina: CIG 4380b2 = IGR IV 911 (184 CE); ILAfr 414; SHA Heliogab. 4.3; Dig. 1.9.1.1
Elite ‘married women’ (matronae) were members of a social network, the ordo matronarum, ‘order of married women’, whose criteria for entry included marriage, senatorial or non-senatorial equestrian social position, and wealth. According to Valerius Maximus and Appian, by 42 this ordo included at least 1,400 members; some may have been wealthy non-senatorial equestrian women, but its exact composition in the Mid-Republic is unknown (Val. Max. 8.3.3; App. B. Civ. 4.32).\(^3\) Members of this ordo participated in collective public actions (mourning, financial contributions, demonstrations) and religious activity.\(^3\) Later literary and epigraphic sources suggest that the ordo met at

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3. Val. Max. 8.3.3; App. B. Civ. 4.31–32. Valerius Maximus represents this as a tributum on the ordo matronarum (Val. Max. 8.3.3). If these accounts are equatable, the ordo comprised (at least) 1,400 matronae by 42. Thence the membership in 42 was greater than just the 900 wives of the approximately 900 senators in the post-Caesarian Senate. It is possible that the 500 additional matronae were senatorial widows and divorcees, but of this we cannot be certain. If the tax on the property of these 1,400 matronae was intended to make up the entire shortfall, then, on average, each of these matronae had property worth more than ca. 142,857 drachmae/denarii (ca. 571,428 sestertii). After the successful protest led by Hortensia, the triumvirate revised the number of matronae down to 400 and instituted a 2% tax (‘a fiftieth part’) on all men with property worth 100,000 drachmae/denarii or more (e.g., a tax of 2,000 drachmae/denarii) (App. B. Civ. 4.34), numbers that suggest that, in 42, 1,400 members of this ordo each had property worth (at least) more than 100,000 drachmae/denarii (400,000 sestertii), that is, the Late Republican equestrian census qualification or above. Thence, at this later stage, members of the ordo were probably wealthy senatorial matronae (wives, widows, divorcees) and perhaps some wealthy non-senatorial equestrian matronae. On the composition of the Senate see, e.g., Ryan 1998; Lintott 2009, 68–72. On the equestrian census qualification see, e.g., Nicolet 1966, 47–68; Rosenstein 2008, esp. 6–7 n. 27–33.

3. Livy 2.7.4; 2.16.7; 5.25.8–9; 22.11.7; 27.37.8–10; 29.14.10–14; 34.1.5–7; 34.8.1–3; Val. Max. 5.2.1; 8.3.3; App. B. Civ. 4.32–34. See Purcell 1986, 181; Hemelrijk 1987; 1999, 12, 217 n. 21; 2015, 217.
a *conventus feminarum/matronarum*, ‘assembly of women/married women’, on the Quirinal Hill, although this may be a late development.\(^{32}\) Members had particular privileges and insignia, including privileged movement in Rome (i.e., others gave way), the use of elaborate vehicles (*carpentum* and *pilenterum*), the use of gold and purple adornment, and (possibly) funerary orations.\(^{33}\) I propose that this *ordo* was a stratified and competitive heterarchy, a network with multiple interacting and context-specific hierarchies (clan, patriciate, plebeiate, age, sexual status, social position, sacerdotal public office, wealth etc.), many of which are now irrecoverable.\(^{34}\) In general these hierarchies may have reflected the male senatorial hierarchy, such that a woman’s position in the *ordo* matched her social position: at the base, female relatives of non-senators (if non-senatorial equestrian women were members), above them female relatives of non-curule senators, above them the relatives of curule senators, and at the summit, the relatives of consular senators, consular women.\(^{35}\) Distinctions in social position could have been visually signaled by differences in adornment and transport, differences regulated by the *ordo* at the *conventus*, as well as by demarcated religious roles.\(^{36}\) Certainly, consular and praetorian wives had particular privileges, including the right to host the rites for Bona Dea in their own houses during their husbands’ consulships or praetorships, as well as significant influence in society.\(^{37}\) Elite women were wealthy, for they enjoyed their male relatives’ fortunes and had access to their own dowries, inheritances, personal effects,

\(^{32}\) Sen. *De matrimonio* fr. 13.49 Haase; Suet. *Galb.* 5; *CIL* VI 997 (Quirinal); *SHA Heliogab.* 4.3–4 (Quirinal). See Hemelrijk 1987, 230–231; 2015, 215–216; Valentini 2012, 49–52. Prior collective and organised activity by the *ordo* suggests that the *conventus* existed in some form in the Republic; see n. 31.


\(^{35}\) See n. 29.


and elaborate houses and villas. Other women were wealthy as well, especially equestrian women and other freeborn women in the first census class, but they are not my focus here.\(^{38}\)

Elite female social position and status were clearly related to social and economic capital, relationships, and wealth. I will argue below that status competition among elite women was predicated on this wealth and expressed through conspicuous displays, mediated by the rich visibility culture of mid-republican Rome.

4 Domains of Elite Female Status Competition

How did elite women compete for status? Livy, or at least his character Lucius Valerius, claims that married women in mid-republican Rome ‘can receive no magistracies, no priesthhoods, no triumphs, no insignia, no gifts, and no war spoils’ (\textit{non magistratus nec sacerdotia nec triumphi nec insignia nec dona aut spolia bellica is contingere possunt}, 34.8.1–2). He also intimates that their only domains were decorative: ‘elegance [cleanliness], adornment, fine appearance [grooming], these are the insignia of women’ (\textit{munditiae et ornatus et cultus, haec feminarum insignia sunt}, 34.7.9).\(^{39}\) I intend to show that these claims are too restrictive: elite (and other) women could attain public sacerdotal office and were not simply limited to the decorative. I will establish that elite women could compete in the following interacting and occasionally overlapping domains: sacerdotal public office, \textit{sacra publica}, transport, adornment (dress, jewelry), religious instruments, retinues, family, patronage, houses and villas, banquets, and public funerals. Collectively these domains were similar to those for elite men. This is not unexpected, given that elite men and women


\(^{39}\) The speaker is Lucius Valerius (\textit{RE} 350, \textit{pr.} 192) and context is his \textit{suasio} for the repeal of the \textit{lex Oppia} (215–195) in 195. See discussion below and Briscoe 2003, 39–63, esp. 62.
shared their lives, wealth, and visibility culture. Wealthy non-senatorial equestrian and freeborn women may have competed in some of these domains too, but they are not my focus. While elite women did not face the nota censoria for their conspicuous display, they encountered other forms of censure, legislative, economic, familial, and moral.\textsuperscript{40} I will briefly delve into one instance of legislative censure, the lex Oppia (215–195), to demonstrate the importance of such competition for elite women. Throughout, I avoid substantial considerations of sexual morality, concepts well examined elsewhere.\textsuperscript{41}

4.1 Sacerdotal Public Office and sacra publica

As was mentioned earlier, social position, status, and religion were interconnected for elite women. Indeed, the religious realm was the primary forum for their conspicuous displays: elite women could compete for visibility and prominent roles in sacra publica.\textsuperscript{42} Elite (and other) women held sacerdotal public office as priestesses, most notably as the three ‘major priestesses’ (flaminici maiores: flaminica Dialis, Martialis, and Quirinalis), the ‘queen of the sacred rites’ (regina sacrorum), and the six ‘Vestal virgins’ (virgines Vestales), highly visible and prestigious priesthoods.\textsuperscript{43} The patrician flaminica Dialis, ‘priestess of Jupiter’, and the patricio-plebeian Vestals served in particular as living exempla for other elite women, embodying ideal marital, sexual, and religious behaviors.\textsuperscript{44} Elite women also had many non-sacerdotal roles, participating in festivals, leading processions, hosting rites, dedicating statues, and organizing donations (Schultz 2006, 139–150). Moreover, female participation in sacra publica entailed a conspicuous display of religious knowledge and competence, a kind of cultural capital (cf. Schultz 2006; DiLuzio 2016). Particularly prominent functions and actions in sacra publica embedded elite women in Roman cultural memory. Examples include Quinta Claudia (\textit{RE} 435), her contemporary Sulpicia C./Ser.f. (\textit{RE} 107 and/or 108), and Quinta Claudia’s descendant the Vestal Claudia Ap.f. (\textit{RE} 384), all of whom became female exempla.\textsuperscript{45} All three women were consular daughters or wives, which probably facil-

\textsuperscript{40} Women faced legislation, fines, exile, family discipline, and moral censure for some forms of conduct, but not the nota censoria: Culham 1982; Hemelrijk 1987; Bauman 1996, 9, 13, 17, 18; Treggiari 2002, 267, 275–277, 299–319; Langlands 2006, esp. 37–77.

\textsuperscript{41} E.g., Langlands 2006.

\textsuperscript{42} Schultz 2006, esp. 139–150; DiLuzio 2016, esp. 240–244.

\textsuperscript{43} DiLuzio 2016, 17–68, 119–239.

\textsuperscript{44} Schultz 2006, 141–143; DiLuzio 2016, 47–51, 152.

icated their memorialization. In short, *sacra publica* were a central domain for elite female status competition, within which elite women could compete for status in conspicuous ways.

### 4.2 Transport, Adornment, Religious Instruments, and Retinues

Elite women traveled in horse or mule-drawn *vehicula*, 'vehicles', for secular and sacral purposes, including the *carpentum*, 'two-wheeled carriage', for all purposes and the luxurious, blue, softly upholstered *ἀπήνη* or *pilentum*, 'four-wheeled carriage', solely for *sacra publica*. Some of the most elaborate of these had ivory decorations. By their elevation therein, elite women signaled their elevated social position and wealth. As to adornment, there was a public *modus matronarum*, 'matronal fashion', for married women, including: the *palla*, 'mantle', which may have functioned as a veil; the *vittae*, 'woolen fillets' for the hair; the *tutulus*, a hairstyle where the hair was braided into six plaits and drawn up into a bun; purple clothing, perhaps purple *pallae* or *vittae* in particular; and, finally, gold jewelry, such as gold diadems, wreaths, and earrings. Elite women also used elaborate gold and silver religious instruments during *sacra publica*, including 'baskets' (*canistra*) and 'libation dishes' (*paterae*). More-
over, retinues of slaves accompanied elite women when they traveled in public; such a retinue would be discernible from afar, signaling the presence of an elite woman.\textsuperscript{51}

Elite female social position was thus materially and visually distinguishable. Elite women could compete with each other in terms of quality and quantity in these domains, depending on their wealth or social position. For instance, a consular woman perhaps had access to (and the right to use) more expensive forms of transport, adornment, religious instruments, and retinues than a female relative of a non-curule senator.\textsuperscript{52} While material hierarchies can be difficult to recover, an elaborate ivory decorated \textit{pilentum} and purple and gold adornment were probably the most desirable status symbols for elite women in mid-republican Rome.\textsuperscript{53} Ivory was particularly prestigious, for a curule magistrate sat on an ivory curule chair and a triumphal general bore the ‘ivory scepter’ (\textit{scipio eburneus}).\textsuperscript{54} Thence an ivory decorated vehicle may have signaled the presence of a female relative of a curule senator, connoting her elevated wealth and social position.\textsuperscript{55} Collectively these material status symbols or means of display constituted an elite woman’s \textit{apparatus}, ‘equipment’.\textsuperscript{56}

\section*{4.3 \textit{Family and Patronage}}

Elite mothers were concerned with the lives of their children, particularly the political careers and education of their sons and the marriages and security of their daughters. Beyond affection, the successes and failures of their children would have redounded to their own status, as symbols of personal, familial, and gentilician status.\textsuperscript{57}

With their wealth elite women engaged in both private and public patronage, providing benefactions and munificence, although public patronage appears to have been limited to some degree to the religious sphere.\textsuperscript{58} Indeed

\textsuperscript{51} Plaut. \textit{Aul.} 501–502; \textit{Men.} 120; Polyb. 31.26.5.

\textsuperscript{52} See n. 36.

\textsuperscript{53} Plaut. \textit{Aul.} 168, 500, 502.

\textsuperscript{54} Ivory curule chair: Polyb. 6.53.9; Dion. Hal. \textit{Ant. Rom.} 3.62.1; Livy 5.41.2; Hor. \textit{Epist.} 1.6.53–54; Ov. \textit{Fast.} 5.51; \textit{Pont.} 4.9.27–28. \textit{Scipio eburneus}: Dion. Hal. \textit{Ant. Rom.} 3.62.1; Livy 5.41.9; Val. Max. 4.4.5.

\textsuperscript{55} See n. 48.


\textsuperscript{58} Plaut. \textit{Amph.} 842; \textit{Cist.} 23–32; Cic. \textit{Dom.} 136–137; \textit{CIL VI} 30899. Cf. the Apulian Busa’s (\textit{RE s.v.}}
in Plautus’s *Amphitruo* Alcmena indicates that it was not her dowry but such patronage (and other qualities) that made her a virtuous woman (*Amph.* 838–842). Patronage constituted a conspicuous display of economic, social, and cultural capital, for it signaled elite female wealth, social networks, and generosity.

4.4 **Houses, Villas, Banquets, and Public Funerals**

Elite women received visitors at their houses and villas, which themselves functioned as domains of status competition, indicators of the wealth, social position, and status of their owners (Foubert 2016). Notably, when Cornelia P.f. *mater Gracchorum* (*RE* 407) hosted literati and royal guests at her villa in Misenum, her hospitality pointedly signaled her social position and cultural sophistication.

It was at such houses and villas that elite women participated in secular and religious banquets in and outside of Rome. Banquets were important sites of status competition. They were semi-public events in which economic and cultural capital were displayed and social capital reinforced, providing opportunities for networking, patronage, and the winning of political support, as well as for displaying wealth, social position, cultural sophistication, and generosity. During such banquets elite women engaged in conspicuous display, wearing purple and gold adornment. Moreover, extravagant food and banquet equipment were on display, and place settings reinforced social position.

Finally, elite women had spectacular funerals, including a public ‘funerary oration’ (*laudatio funebris*) by (at least) the end of the second century and a ‘procession of ancestor masks’ (*pompa imaginum*) by (at least) the early first century. At these funerals elite males eulogized the deeds and qualities of their deceased female relatives; perhaps in this way some elite women became *exempla*. These interacting and occasionally overlapping domains of status com-

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petition distinguished elite women from each other, and distanced them from non-senatorial equestrian women, working women, freedwomen, prostitutes, and slaves. Elite female status competition was fundamentally conspicuous, as it was for elite men.

4.5 Lex Oppia

The *lex Oppia* (215–195) restricted the conspicuous display of female transport and adornment. This sumptuary or wartime law prohibited women from wearing purple clothing and gold jewelry heavier than a half-ounce in public, as well as from using a *vehiculum* (*sc. carpentum*) in the city except during *sacra publica*. The legislation was probably designed to express (and perhaps enforce) a form of normative community during the Second Punic War (218–201) and the attendant financial crises. Conspicuous displays of wealth might have otherwise led to social discontent between wealthy elites (and wealthy non-senatorial equestrians and non-elites) and poor non-elites, disrupting wartime solidarity. It may also have been designed to reduce conspicuous, public movement and appearances by women for secular purposes, as is suggested by the limitations imposed on the secular use of (probably) *carpenta*.64

Elite women themselves lobbied for the repeal of the *lex Oppia* in 195. As a body they publicly and successfully petitioned husbands, consuls, praetors, and the plebeian tribunes to propose and ratify the abrogatory *lex Valeria Fundania de lege Oppia abroganda* in the ‘plebeian assembly’ (*concilium plebis*).65 The lobby itself may have been organized by the *ordo matronarum* and led by consular women, as happened in a subsequent lobby in 42, when the consular woman and orator Hortensia Q.f. (*RE* 16) led the *ordo* in a demonstration against a triumviral tax on their wealth.66

Livy fashions two speeches for the occasion of the repeal: a *dissuasio*, ‘opposing speech’ by the consul Marcus Porcius Cato (*RE* 9, *cos.* 195) (34.2–4), and

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65 *Livy* 34.1.5–7, 34.8.1–3.

a *suasio*, ‘supporting speech’ by the plebeian tribune Lucius Valerius (Tappo) (*RE* 350, pr. 192) (34.5–7 with Briscoe 2003, 39–43). Two passages illuminate the entanglement of status competition with the law and its repeal. Firstly, Livy’s Cato claims that wealthy women could not bear the leveling the law produced—that is, the visual and social homogeneity—and contends that, if it was repealed, it would start a competition among wives (34.4.14–15):

[Cato:] ‘This itself is the leveling I cannot bear’ says the rich woman. ‘Why am I not observed as distinguished by my gold and purple? Why is the poverty of others hidden under the pretext of this law, which makes it appear that they would have had, if it were lawful, what they cannot have?’

Is this the competition you want to incite among your wives, Roman citizens, with rich women wanting to have what no other woman can, and poor women extending themselves beyond their means in order not to be scorned for not having it?67

‘Hanc inquit ‘ipsam exaequationem non fero’ illa locuples. ‘Cur non insignis auro et purpura conspicior? Cur paupertas aliarum sub hac legis specie latet, ut quod habere non possunt habiturae, si liceret, fuisse videantur?’ Vultis hoc certamen uxoribus vestris inicere, Quirites, ut divites id habere velint quod nulla alia possit, pauperes ne ob hoc ipsum contemnantur, supra vires se extendant?

Secondly, Livy’s Valerius condemns the law for producing pain, indignation, social homogeneity, and the visual degradation of Roman women in comparison with the wives of the Latin allies (34.7.5–6):

[Valerius:] He [Cato] asserts there was no competition between individual women because each woman had nothing. Yet, by Hercules, there is universal pain and indignation, when they [Roman women] see the wives of our Latin allies granted the ornaments denied them, when they are distinguished by gold and purple, when they are conveyed through the city, while they themselves [Roman women] follow on foot, just as if the empire lay in those women’s communities, not in our own.68

67 Cf. on this passage Briscoe 2003, 53–54.
68 See Briscoe 2003, 62.
Aemulationem inter se singularum, quoniam nulla haberet, esse aiebat. At hercule universis dolor et indignatio est, cum sociorum Latini nominis uxoribus vident ea concessa ornamenta quae sibi adempta sint, cum insignes eas esse auro et purpura, cum illas vehi per urbem, se pedibus sequi, tamquam in illarum civitatibus non in sua imperium sit.

While the speeches are Livian inventions, the sentiments attributed to Cato, at least, reflect his economic censure of and focus on wealthy women elsewhere. Moreover, the sentiments attributed to Valerius suggest the existence of status competition between elite Roman women and their Latin neighbors and expose the raw emotions (dolor, indignatio) produced by the effects of this law. Collectively these passages suggest the pain felt by Roman women at being denied their privileges, status symbols, and ability to compete with each other (and the wives of Latin allies). We can infer that the lex Oppia effectively reduced the collective status of the ordo matronarum, rendering senatorial (and perhaps non-senatorial equestrian) women invisible to some degree. Such invisibility would have been an affront to women and to their male relatives; the social homogeneity it produced degraded the laus domestica of senatorial (and perhaps non-senatorial equestrian) families. During their successful lobby in 195 elite women co-operated to restore their privileges and means of display, as well as their ability to compete with each other. The lex Oppia and its repeal confirm that transport and adornment were essential domains of elite female status competition. They also indicate how important such competition was for elite women, as Tertia Aemilia’s life will illustrate.

5 Tertia Aemilia L.f. Africani uxor

Tertia Aemilia L.f. Africani uxor (RE 179, married well before 213, death ca. 163–162, henceforth Aemilia) was the quintessential elite woman: daughter of the twice-consular triumphal general Lucius Aemilius Paullus (RE 118, cos. 219, 216, triumph 219) and wife of the celebrated twice-consular triumphal general and

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70 Livy’s Valerius seems to allude to the ordo matronarum in his speech, when he claims that ‘all other orders’ (omnes alii ordines) feel the improving condition of the res publica, but no ‘reward’ (fructus) had come to ‘wives’ (coniuges) (Livy 34.7.1). The implication here is that the ordo of married women, i.e., the ordo matronarum, had not prospered after the end of the Second Punic War. See Culham 1986; Hemelrijk 1987, 229–230; Berg 2002, 43.

Aemilia bore four children. She had two daughters who married future consuls: the elder Cornelia P.f. (*RE* 406), wife of Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica Corculum (*RE* 353, *cos.* 162, 155), and the younger Cornelia P.f. mater Gracchorum (*RE* 407), wife of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (*RE* 53, *cos.* 177, 163). She also had two sons: the elder Publius Cornelius Scipio (*RE* 331, augur 180) and the younger Lucius Cornelius Scipio (*RE* 325, pr. 174). Hers was a home brimming with *laus domesticā*: her *atrium*, ‘entrance hall’, teeming with smoky ancestor masks and honors, to borrow Ciceronian expressions (Cic. *Cael.* 34; *Pis.* 1). As a consular woman by birth and marriage, Aemilia would have occupied the summit of the *ordo matronarum*.

Aemilia and her family were very wealthy. By the end of Africanus’s life he had amassed assets worth at least 260 talents (1.56 million drachmae/denarii), a colossal sum in the early second century, much of it from the spoils of his campaigns in Spain, Africa, and Asia Minor. Aemilia enjoyed this fortune while Africanus was alive, and after his death in ca. 183 she was assigned fifty talents (300,000 drachmae/denarii) in his legacy as usufruct to maintain her in her

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72 Papiria: her father was Gaius Papirius Maso (*RE* 57, *cos.* 231).

73 Pomponia: brothers were Manius Pomponius Matho (*RE* 17, *cos.* 233) and Marcus Pomponius Matho (*RE* 18, *cos.* 231).

widowhood.75 Her daughters received a considerable proportion of the family fortune in their vast dowries, fifty talents each, twenty-five each when they married in the 180s and a further twenty-five each after Aemilia’s death.76 The family assets included a house on the Vicus Tuscus near the Forum Romanum, gardens near Rome, a sepulcher outside the Porta Capena on the Via Appia, and a villa at Liternum in Campania.77 We will see that Aemilia competed for status with this wealth in sacra publica, that she did so to promote laus domestica, and that after her death she herself was memorialized by her female relatives as part of their own status competition.

5.1 Sacra publica
Polybius, tutor and close companion to Aemilia’s biological nephew and adoptive grandson (and grandson-in-law) Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus (RE 335, cos. 147, 134), would have known her well.78 In an excursus on Aemilianus’s generosity Polybius reveals that Aemilia displayed her economic (wealth) and cultural capital (religious knowledge) in sacra publica (31.26.3–5):

Aemilia, for that was this woman’s name, used to display magnificent circumstances in the women’s processions, since she had flourished equally in the life and good fortune of Scipio. For apart from the decorations of her clothing and of her four-wheeled carriage [pilentum], all the baskets [canistra], cups [cf. paterae], and instruments for the sacrifice—some of silver, some of gold—were brought along on the splendid processions with her, and the crowd of female slaves and household slaves following along was correspondingly large.79

συνέβαινε δὲ τὴν Αἰμιλίαν, τοῦτο γάρ ἦν ὄνομα τῇ προειρημένῃ γυναικί, μεγαλομερή τὴν περίστασιν ἔχειν ἐν ταῖς γυναικείαις ἐξόδοις, ἄτε συνημμαχοῦσαν τῷ βίῳ καὶ τῇ τύχῃ τῇ Σκιπίωνος· χωρίς γάρ τού περὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ἀπήνην κόσμου


76 Polyb. 31.27. See Walbank 1979, 505–509; Dixon 1985, 152–156; Champlin 1991, 123; Valentini 2016, 134.


79 See on this passage Walbank 1979, 503, 505.
We can infer that Aemilia engaged in status competition through her apparatus during sacra publica, and demonstrated her religious knowledge of these sacra. She conspicuously displayed her adornment, decorations on her pilentum, her silver and gold religious instruments, and her large retinue of slaves. Despite the above-mentioned prohibitions of the lex Oppia Aemilia could have signaled her elevated wealth and social position through ivory decorations on her pilentum (as a consular woman), other forms of elaborate clothing, silver jewelry, silver religious instruments, and the magnitude of her retinue.80 Plautus refers to women wearing elaborate non-purple dress (Aul. 510; Epid. 230–233), while Livy indicates that a senatorial decree allowed women (temporarily) to wear their most splendid dress to celebrate the Metaurus victory in 207 (27.51.8–10). There was clearly some circumvention of the sumptuary intentions of the lex Oppia (Hopwood 2001, 129–130). Once the lex Oppia was repealed through the lobbying of elite women in 195, Aemilia could have worn a sumptuous purple palla and vittae, along with ornate gold jewelry.

There were many opportunities for Aemilia to engage in such status competition. As she was a married woman by the time of (or during) the Second Punic War (218–201), there were many high-profile matronal rites she was eligible to participate in. These included those for Juno Regina in 218, 217, and 207, those for Venus Verticordia in ca. 215, and the inaugural procession for the advent of Magna Mater in 204.81 Aemilia would have been particularly interested in these rites for Magna Mater, as elite women were prominent in the procession and her cousin-in-law (eventual father-in-law of her elder daughter) Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica (RE 350, cos. 191) took a principal role in the procession, conferring more status on the gens Cornelia.82 Given these connections Aemilia may have been part of a sodality for the extravagant elite ‘exchange banquets’ (mutitationes cenarum) for Magna Mater; at these religious banquets she could engage in conspicuous display through adornment, banquet

80 None of which were prohibited under the lex Oppia.
equipment, and cultural sophistication.83 Outside of these exceptional rites Aemilia would have participated in annual festivals, notably the Carmentalia, the Matronalia, the Matralia, the rites for Bona Dea, which she may have hosted (as consular wife) in her own home in 205 or in 194, as well as in occasional rites for Pudicitia Patricia and Fortuna Muliebris.84 It was through sacra publica that Aemilia would most conspicuously have competed with other elite women and, after Africanus triumphed in 201 and became censor and princeps senatus in 199, advertised his and thus her increased status and social position.85 In her conspicuous religious activity as described by Polybius, Aemilia matched her husband Africanus, who notably frequented the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and cultivated an association with Jupiter.86

5.2 Laus domestica
Why did elite women compete? By engaging in status competition Aemilia was not just involved in self-aggrandizement. Rather, she was also promoting laus domestica by advertising the economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital of her family, and reinforcing familial and gentilician status, ideologies, and memory. Here we find further links between elite male and female status competition: not only were the domains similar, but they were mutually supportive. For any Roman politician to be successful in his career and warfare he needed to rely on his relatives and family to promote and guard his interests in Rome while he was absent.87 For a man such as Africanus, who occupied the apogee of the senatorial hierarchy and was beset by envy and personal enemies, such family support was crucial.88 Was Aemilia obliged in some way to engage in status competition? She may have been encouraged by relatives to advertise the laus domestica, for it was a kind of corporate identity, what I term the ‘family

85 Triumph: Polyb. 16.23; Livy 30.45. Princeps senatus: Livy 34.4.4; 38.28.1–2.
86 Livy 26.19.5; 38.51.7–14; Val. Max. 1.2.2 (Par., Nep.); 3.7.1; Gell. NA 6.1.6.
87 Cf. Pomponia, the addressee of the laudatio Turiae, or Terentia: Polyb. 10.4.4–5; CIL VI 1527 (laudatio Turiae); Plut. Vit. Cic. 20.1–3. See Walbank 1967, 199–201; Treggiari 2007; Osgood 2014.
brand’.89 This is the force of the intergenerational rebuke in Cicero’s *Pro Caelio*, in as much as Cicero’s Caecus was berating Clodia for disgracing the brand (and memory) of the *gens Claudia* (Cael. 33–34).90 From this perspective Aemilia’s conspicuous display in *sacra publica* successfully advertised the brands of the *gentes Cornelia* and *Aemilia*.

Aemilia’s interest in the family brand is evinced by Livy and Valerius Maximus. Livy recounts her reputed indignation that Africanus excluded her from the decision to betroth her younger daughter Cornelia *mater Gracchorum* to Gracchus (38.57.5–8 with Briscoe 2008, 201–203). Her indignation reveals her concern for the success of her daughters’ marriages, where success encompassed marriages to men of equivalent social position and status. Moreover, Valerius Maximus praises Aemilia’s remarkable self-control in relation to Africanus’s relationship with one of her young female slaves (Val. Max. 6.7.1). He reports that she ignored the relationship, dissimulating (*dissimulare*) and, after Africanus’s death in ca. 183, manumitted the slave and married her to one of her freedmen (Val. Max. 6.7.1). By demonstrating restraint and even generosity she not only presented herself as an exceptional wife, an exemplum of ‘wifely faithfulness, obligingness, and patience’ (*uxoria ... fides ... comitas et patientia*), but she also refused to accuse Africanus of being ‘guilty of impatience’ (*inpatientiae reus*), preferring to protect his status as ‘conqueror of the world and great man’ (*domitor orbis ... magnus vir*) and hers as ‘wife of the first Africanus’ (*Africani prioris uxor*, Val. Max. 6.7.1 with Langlands 2006, 136–137). These two accounts indicate Aemilia’s clear interest in the future success and memorialization of her family.

Aemilia’s family showed a similar concern for their brand on two further occasions. Firstly, the family punished her younger son Lucius for his disgraceful election to the praetorship of 174, forbidding him from setting up his curule chair and exercising his praetorian functions and removing his signet ring bearing the image of Africanus. The censors subsequently expelled him from the Senate.91 Secondly, the family installed Africanus’s ancestor mask in the temple of *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*, thereby ensuring that all future funerary processions of the *gens Cornelia* incorporated this hallowed location, transforming the temple into an *atrium* for the clan, a physical and ritual reminder of

91 Livy 41.27.2 (praetorship and expulsion); Val. Max. 3.5.1 (punishment). See Flower 1996, 87–88; 2006, 58; Briscoe 2012, 109, 136.
Africanus's status and his cultivated connection with Jupiter.\footnote{Val. Max. 8.15.1; App. Hisp. 89. Cf. Livy 38.56.13; Val. Max. 4.1.6. See Flower 1996, 48–52; Briscoe 2008, 200–201.} In this brand-conscious family Aemilia emerges as a primary promoter of familial and gentilician interests, deeply invested in brand management and memorialization.\footnote{Cf. Cornelia ‘mater Gracchorum’: Plut. Vit. C. Gracch. 19.} Her example indicates that elite female status competition was entangled with \textit{laus domestica}: elite women competed for themselves and their families and clans.

5.3 Memoria Aemiliae

Aemilia died in ca. 163–162, and her family gave her an elaborate funeral, including ‘trumpets’ (\textit{tubicines}, Gran. Lic. 28.16).\footnote{Polyb. 31.26.6; Gran. Lic. 28.14–16. See Hillard 2001, 48. Cf. her brother Macedonicus’s elaborate funeral: Polyb. 31.28.1–6; Diod. Sic. 31.25.1–2; Plut. Vit. Aem. 39.6–8. See Flower 2004, 335.} If later elite female funerals are any guide, it might have included a \textit{pompa imaginum} and \textit{laudatio funebris}, thereby exemplifying and memorializing Aemilia and her family.\footnote{See n. 62.} After her funeral her \textit{apparatus} was used by her female relatives for their own status competition, as is attested by Polybius’s account of Aemilianus’s generosity to his mother (Aemilia’s sister-in-law), Papiria (31.26.6–8):

Immediately after Aemilia’s funeral all this equipment was given by Scipio to his mother [Papiria], who had been for many years divorced from Lucius [Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus] and whose riches were not sufficient to maintain a splendor suitable for her noble birth. Previously, therefore, she had abstained from prominent processions, but after this, whenever there was a splendid public sacrifice, she went out in Aemilia’s equipment and riches, and when even the muleteers, pair of mules, and four-wheeled carriage [\textit{pilentum}] were the same, the women who witnessed what had happened were stunned by Scipio’s goodness and generosity and, lifting up their hands, all prayed that every blessing might be his.\footnote{Cf. on this passage Walbank 1979, 525.}

\[\text{ταύτην δὴ τὴν περικοπὴν ἂπασαν εὐθέως μετὰ τὸν τῆς Αἰμιλίας τάφον ἐδωρήσατο τῇ μητρί, ἣ ἑως ὅτι ἐξεισάγοντο χρόνοις πολλοῖς, τὴν δὲ τοῦ βίου χορηγίαν ἐξεισάγεταν ἐξεισάγεταν τῆς κατὰ τὴν}\]
There was thus a social expectation for elite women to engage in conspicuous display commensurate with their social position in *sacra publica*, an expectation the divorced Papiria, a consular woman, was unable to meet, prompting her abstention from public life until she received Aemilia's *apparatus*.\(^97\) That other elite women recognized this *apparatus* as formerly Aemilia's (and now Aemilianus's to dispose of) indicates its personal and iconic nature, suggesting that an elite woman's means of display were interlocked with her identity. By implication the *apparatus* imparted something of Aemilia's identity and status to its new owners.\(^98\) Perhaps the elements functioned as a material ‘memory of Aemilia’ (*memoria Aemiliae*), reminding other elite women of her religiosity and status, materializing Aemilia and the *laus domestica* of her family.\(^99\)

Polybius recounts that after Papiria's own death in ca. 160–159, Aemilianus bequeathed this same *apparatus* to his two sisters (Aemilia's nieces), Aemilia L.f. (*RE* 151) and Tertia Aemilia L.f. (*RE* 152 and 180), who also used it in *sacra publica* (Polyb. 31.28.8–9).\(^100\) Collectively these accounts suggest that Aemilianus fostered a reputation for (familial) generosity, that he wanted and encouraged his mother and sisters to engage in status competition via conspicuous display, and that they as elite women felt compelled to do so. Furthermore, they reveal how important it was for elite women to compete in *sacra publica*, how an inability to compete could prompt abstention from public life, and how some elite men like Aemilianus supported this competition. *Sacra publica* were a vital domain of elite female status competition.

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\(^{97}\) Culham 1986, 239–240; Flower 2004, 342–343; Schultz 2006, 149.

\(^{98}\) Skinner 2011, 42; Valentini 2016, 135–137.


6 Conclusions

In mid-republican Rome elite women competed for gloria, engaging in conspicuous display in many interacting and occasionally overlapping domains, including sacerdotal public office, sacra publica, transport, adornment, religious instruments, retinue, family, patronage, houses and villas, banquets, and public funerals. The repeal of the lex Oppia and the lives of Aemilia and her female relatives attest to the investment of elite women in these practices and their entanglement with laus domestica.

Contemporary literature offers many negative evaluations of female wealth and conspicuous display. The old man Megadorus’s diatribes in Plautus’s Aulularia are paradigmatic (Aul. 167–169, 498–502):

[Megadorus:] I care nothing for those great social connections, those spirits, those sumptuous dowries, those shouts, those commands, those ivory decorated vehicles, those mantles, and that purple; such women drive their husbands into slavery with their expenses ... So let no woman say: ‘I brought you a dowry far greater than the money you had. So it’s equitable that I should be given purple and gold, female slaves, mules, muleteers, male followers, boys to greet people, and vehicles to ride in’.

Istas magnas factiones, animos, dotes dapsiles, clamores, imperia, ebura vehicla, pallas, purpuram, nil moror quae in servitutem sumptibus redigunt viros ...
Nulla igitur dicat ‘equidem dotem ad te adtuli maiorem multo quam tibi erat pecunia; enim mihi quidem aequomst purpuram atque aurum dari, ancillas, mulos, muliones, pedisequos, salutigerulos pueros, vehicla qui vehar’.

Megadorus is hyperbolic to the point of absurdity, suggesting that Plautus is parodying contemporary speeches against wealthy women (cf. Cato frs. 93, 158, 221 ORF.

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102 Cf. Moore 1998, 162 on this passage.
Nevertheless, one suspects the character protests too much (*nil moror*): he clearly cared about (and was concerned by) the wealth and conspicuous display of wealthy women. His rich descriptions immediately evoke the wealth and *apparatus* of Aemilia, the dowries of her daughters, and the use of Aemilia’s *apparatus* by Papiria and Aemilianus’s sisters. These are clearly (negative and comic) caricatures of real women, recognizable to Plautus’s audiences—perhaps even as members of that same audience or as present nearby (Plaut. *Poen.* 32 and *Ter. Hec.* 35 with Manuwald 2011, 98). Here and elsewhere Plautus illuminates the contemporary prevalence of their conspicuous display.\(^{103}\)

Status competition was essential for elite women and their families in mid-republican Rome, for it accorded *gloria* and enhanced *laus domestica*. We have seen that Aemilia was an exemplary competitor. In life her *apparatus* signaled her elevated social position and abundant wealth. In death it memorialized her and adorned her female relatives. We can imagine the envy with which other married women observed Aemilia as she attended *sacra publica*, adorned in purple and gold, seated in an ivory decorated *pilentum*, and surrounded by slaves. Long after Aemilia’s death Seneca describes another married woman voicing such envy to her husband, and her lament is a fitting coda (Sen. *De matrimonio* fr. 13.49 Haase):

> ‘That woman appears in public better adorned, this woman is honored by all, I, miserable woman, am despised in the assembly of women.’\(^{104}\)

> ‘Illa ornatior procedit in publicum, haec honoratur ab omnibus, ego in conventu feminarum misella despicior.’\(^{105}\)

**Bibliography**


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\(^{103}\) See n. 101.

\(^{104}\) See Gloyn 2017, 221 on this passage.

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