

## *Uxorius:* The Praise and Blame of Husbands

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When the Romans praise a good husband, in what way do they praise him? My question reflects the programmatic statement from Cato about what praise of a man looks like:

et uirum bonum quom laudabant, ita laudabant, bonum agricolam bonumque colonum. amplissime laudari existimabatur qui ita laudabatur. (Cato *Agr.*, preface)<sup>1</sup>.

*And when they used to praise a good man, they praised him in this way, as a good field worker and a good farmer. He who was praised in this way seemed to be most fully praised<sup>2</sup>.*

Many other texts contribute to painting a picture of what the Romans thought (or at least wanted to be regarded as thinking) constitutes a good man, but they have very little to say on the subject of what constitutes

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1 — All abbreviations are as in OLD/LSJ, except that *Aeneid* is abbreviated to *Aen.*.

2 — All translations are the author's, with the exception of those from Plutarch, which are adapted/taken from Perrin's Loeb translation.

a good husband<sup>3</sup>. Explicit discussions of ideal manhood tend, not surprisingly, to revolve around the public role of men, particularly in the spheres of the military, government, public speaking, and also – because of its special symbolic status in Rome as in many other societies, including modern America – farming. Insofar as we can build up a picture of ideals relating to what we moderns would call ‘private life’, this relates far more extensively to the role of the *paterfamilias*, and also the actual *pater*, than to the *maritus*<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, the fact that Roman thought, at least in public expression, privileges public roles over private ones makes public analysis of the most intimate aspects of a person’s life almost oxymoronic<sup>5</sup>.

By contrast, it is almost impossible to identify societal praise of a woman which is separate from praise of a wife. Individual women may incidentally come in for approbation (and abuse) for all sorts of individual characteristics, such as Ovid’s praise of a young female poet (*Tr.* 3.7) and Pliny’s guarded admiration of the lively leisure but careful grandparenting of Ummidia Quadratilla (*Ep.* 7.24)<sup>6</sup>, but these are individual traits rather than aspects of social norms. The ideal woman, almost whatever her class, can be summed up in four words: *domum seruauit, lanam fecit* – she kept house, she made wool (*CLE* 52.8). The ideal wife looks very little different. Funerary inscriptions express the same, generalising sentiments about normative societal expectations, regardless of social class, with which I am concerned here.

3 — Gleason (1995) is an important work on the subject of Roman manhood. It is telling that the book contains no consideration of how the Romans constructed the role of husband.

4 — Apropos of the double marriage of the younger Cato and Marcia, Cantarella (2002) 270 mentions that the story became one of the topics for deliberation in the rhetorical schools. She quotes Quint. *Inst.* 10.5.13: *conueniatne res talis bono uiro* which Cantarella translates as ‘whether such behaviour befits a decent man’. That is indeed no doubt the way this phrase would be read by Romans. One might wish to argue that a Roman audience should have been able to hear a question as to whether ‘such behaviour befits a good husband’, but it is more likely that the question was overwhelmingly considered from the perspective of the man in society, a good man rather than a good husband. Under a *sine manu* marriage, which became increasingly common during the later Republic, a woman technically remained a member of her natal family, rather than joining her husband’s family, but I suspect that the difference on the ground was rather less than that implied by the official situation. See Treggiari (1991) 16–34. Parkin and Pomeroy (2007) 79 state that ‘the main uses of the term *familia* are for the male line of the family and groups of slaves’, which would strictly mean that it would not include a wife, if married *sine manu*. There is a trend in modern scholarship towards interpreting the Roman family as something closer to the modern Western companionate family than is implied by the apparently all-controlling patriarchal structure of the Roman family: see, for example, Wall, Robin, and Laslett (1983) and Treggiari (1991). It seems to me not impossible that we can find traces both of tyrannical patriarchy and of affectionate family life in Roman culture, as indeed in many other premodern cultures.

5 — The interrelation of public and private complicates this discussion. It is further complicated by a trend, which is by no means unknown in other ancient and modern societies but is particularly marked in the early Imperial period, of publicising the private, by presenting domesticity as both a sign and a support of desirable sociopolitical identity. And, of course, the opposite. See Milner (2005) for the rise of a rhetoric of domesticity in the Augustan period.

6 — See Shelton (2013) 240–55.

Hic sita est Amymone Marci optima et pulcherrima, lanifica pia  
pudica frugi casta domiseda.

(CIL 6.11602)

*Here lies Amymone, wife of Marcus, best and most beautiful, a wool worker, dutiful, modest, frugal, chaste, one who stays at home.*

Woman and wife in one, in this case presumably not of the highest social class, given her Greek name, presented to the world only when distanced by death.

Literature also gives us several normative pictures of wifely perfection, such as Livy's account of Lucretia before the arrival of her husband and the other young Romans:

Quo cum primis se intendentibus tenebris peruenissent, pergunt inde Collatiam, ubi Lucretiam haudquaquam ut regias nurus, quas in conuiuio luxuque cum aequalibus uiderant tempus terentes sed nocte sera deditam lanae inter lucubrantes ancillas in medio aedium sedentem inueniunt. Muliebris certaminis laus penes Lucretiam fuit. Adueniens uir Tarquiniique excepti benigne; uictor maritus comiter inuitat regios iuuenes.

(Liv. 1.57)

*After they had arrived in Rome as dusk was falling, they make their way thence to Collatia, where they find Lucretia behaving not at all like the daughters-in-law of the King, whom they had seen wasting time in a party and luxury with their friends, but late at night given over to her wool, sitting amongst her maids working by lamplight in the middle of the house. Lucretia won the prize in the contest of womanhood. Her husband and the Tarquins were welcomed on their arrival; the victorious husband graciously invites the royal youths in.*

I quote this well-known passage not only for its simple demonstration of the topoi of good and bad womanhood and its equation between good womanhood and good wifedom, but also for the word *maritus* used to describe the victor. It is a word which explicitly refers to the role of a man in connection with his wife. By contrast, extensive discussion of the *uir bonus*, in a range of discourses, would usually give only a tiny hint to that part of the meaning of *uir* which is rendered by the English 'husband'. If the *maritus* is here also *uictor*, that is because of his wife's attributes: the way to be a good husband is to have a good wife<sup>7</sup>. The narrator of Virgil's *Aeneid* is equally clear about the characteristics of an ideal wife, as is shown by the painfully ironic, gender-inverted simile in which Vulcan, rising from his (actual) wife's bed to create new armour for her illegi-

7 — On this point see the brief discussion below of Trajan's marriage in Pliny's *Panegyricus*.

timate son, is compared to an idealised wife who gets up before dawn (*Aen.* 8.408-13).

Chastity, modesty, frugality, obedience, wool working, not getting drunk, bringing up children who look like their father – these things constitute the good woman and the good wife; their opposites straightforwardly constitute its opposite<sup>8</sup>. The manner in which one may express praise or blame for the good husband, however, is much more difficult to elicit from Roman culture. It is the aim of this chapter to explore some of the language used with regard to men specifically as husbands. My interest here is primarily literary, in the sense that I am concerned with what Roman writers and readers, functioning in a range of genres, thought and wanted to be thought to think about good husbands. It will not be possible to explore every aspect of male-marital expectations, especially in a context where absence may be as important as presence, so I shall limit myself to consideration of a number of areas which seem to me to hold some common ground, in that they reflect tensions inherent in personal and social identity in the Roman world: how do love and marriage fit together; how does a couple deal with inequality; how does a hierarchical society deal with the necessity of coupledness; how does a society which looks at itself through an invisible and unconscious male lens perceive the differences of gender of which it is only too aware; how does a society with a strong positive notion of discipline, including self-discipline, deal with emotion; and how does the priority of the public sphere over the private negotiate a role – husband – which is both intensely private and essential to society. It will transpire, moreover, that much of the picture exists only in metaphorical palimpsest, hidden beneath an unspoken assumption that it is not really a man's job to be a good husband. We might even say, against Thucydides (2.45.2), that the best thing that can be said about a husband is that there's nothing to be said about him. It must be acknowledged that the vast majority of both the husbands discussed here and those attempting or refusing to say anything about husbands belong to a small subset of married males and their observers in the ancient Mediterranean world (although the limited evidence from tombstones seems to suggest that some of the attitudes are not only elite ones). The 'biases of our sources', however, are precisely the point of interest here. Part of this enquiry will attempt to show places where ancient expectations differ from modern ones, but equally important is to suggest areas where commonly held modern views of ancient marital attitudes and behaviours may be open to challenge.

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8 — Parkin and Pomeroy (2007) 92-3.

A single word which sums up Roman societal praise of a wife consists of a feminine construction built out of a word for husband: *uniuira*, the wife (female person) of only one husband. Although words formed as compounds containing *unus* plus a noun are not very common in Latin, the *Oxford Latin Dictionary (OLD)* lists fourteen different examples including, in addition to *uniuira*, also the very similar *unimarrita* (*CIL* 6.30428) and the rather more sexually explicit *unicuba*, which is applied at *CIL* 3.3572 to a *matrona* who gains the additional adjective *uniuuga*<sup>9</sup>. One is hardly surprised to find that there is no masculine equivalent, no [*uniuxorus*]<sup>10</sup>. There is, however, an adjective usually found in the masculine which is constructed out of *uxor*.

When Mercury, on the instructions of Jupiter, arrives in Carthage to find Aeneas working hard at the construction of Dido's city, he uses blame of the Trojan's behaviour and role as husband in order to shame him into abandoning his wife and fulfilling his Roman destiny:

ut primum alatis tetigit magalia plantis,  
Aenean fundantem arces ac tecta nouantem 260  
conspicit. atque illi stellatus iaspide fulua  
ensis erat Tyrioque ardebat murice laena  
demissa ex umeris, diues quae munera Dido  
fecerat, et tenui telas discreuerat auro.  
continuo inuadit: 'tu nunc Karthaginis is altae 265  
fundamenta locas pulchramque uxorius urbem  
exstruis? heu, regni rerumque oblite tuarum!

(Verg. *Aen.* 4.259-67).

*When first he touched the huts with his winged feet, he caught sight of Aeneas laying the foundations of citadels and beginning buildings. He had a sword, starry with yellow jasper, and a lion's skin hanging from his shoulders burned with Tyrian purple, which rich Dido had made as a gift, and had marked out the threads with delicate gold. Straightaway he accosted him: 'Are you now laying the foundations of lofty Carthage and building a fine city, under your wife's sway? Alas, forgetful of your kingdom and your own affairs!*

It is worth remembering that the description of Aeneas in his gaudy eastern finery is focalised through the disapproving god, while the Mercurian and Roman viewpoints make the work of founding a city, normally a positively valued activity, into something not much better

9 — On the notion of wifely exclusivity, i.e. to only one man, see Williams (1958) 23 and Treggiari (1991) 235.

10 — The nearest candidate I can find for a word like *uniuira* applied to a husband is the relatively colourless *unanimus*, such as is applied to the married couple by the speaking lock of hair at *Catul.* 66.80. In general, the word is more likely to apply to friends than lovers, and says nothing about exclusivity of relationship. See further below, on adultery.

than slave labour. I have translated *uxorius* as ‘under your wife’s sway’, in keeping with the tone of the passage, but literally the word simply means belonging or pertaining to a wife. The problem for Romans, however, is that ‘belonging or pertaining to a wife’ is of itself at risk of becoming morally loaded in a negative way. Clearly Mercury does not intend the adjective *uxorius* as a compliment. What is surprising is that the spread of the word elsewhere in Latin literature is less clearly pejorative than in this passage.

The adjective *uxorius* has a perfectly respectable life when applied to items or situations which comfortably relate to the wife, of which the simplest is the phrase *res uxoria*, referring to a wife’s property and hence by extension marriage as a whole<sup>11</sup>. OLD offers two main categories for the definition of *uxorius*: one fairly neutral, belonging or pertaining to a wife or the married state, the other more loaded, and generally not very positive. It is worth noting, in passing, that the neutral usage of the word is one which clearly pertains to legal and formal marriage, however sarcastically Mercury may be using it in the context. One such usage, OLD *uxorius* 1c, in the neuter singular as substantive, is of ‘money paid in respect of a tax on bachelors’, Paul. *Fest.* p.379M. The second main category is ‘fondly or excessively attached to one’s wife; marked or caused by such fondness’. The examples given are Mercury’s infamous words and several others that bear consideration. Before we consider the most interesting cases which pertain to the second category, however, it is worth noting the extent to which even the supposedly neutral category is, in the right context, open to the negative implications which Mercury assigns to his words.

Tacitus uses it once with a sneer and once with apparent, if nuanced, admiration. The first instance comes in the historian’s presentation of Tiberius’ behaviour after the death of Augustus, which he describes as calculated to obviate criticisms that he only got where he was because of Livia’s power over the elderly Augustus. In typical Tacitean style, there is a hinted sneer implied through alternative focalisation, being what other people might have thought...

Ut uocatus electusque potius a re publica uideretur quam per uxorium ambitum et senili adoptione inrepsisse.

(Tac. *Ann.* 1.7.24).

11 — See for example Quint. *Inst.* 7.4.11.4, together with many instances in the jurists. A nice reference is Ovid’s line at *Ars* 2.155: *dos est uxoria lites*. For the extension of the adjective applied to a range of relevant nouns, see for example Ter. *An.* 829; Cic. *Amic.* 34.3, *Top.* 66.4, *Off.* 3.61; Apul. *Met.* 72.15.

*So that he might seem to have been called and chosen by the state rather than to have wormed his way in through a wife's ambition and by an old man's adoption.*

The second instance occurs in an account of the debate in the Senate arising from Severus Caecina's proposal that provincial magistrates should not be permitted to take their wives on foreign service. Valerius Messalinus, son of the Augustan Messala, argues against the motion, on the grounds that the severity of antiquity is no longer necessary, because of the relatively peaceful state of the Tiberian empire.

Bella plane accinctis obeunda: sed reuertentibus post laborem quod honestius quam uxorium leuamentum?

(Tac. *Ann.* 3.34.1).

*Wars must clearly be undertaken by those girt for action: but for those returning after their labours what could be more honourable than the solace of a wife?*

While a hint of inappropriate softness in the phrase *uxorium leuamentum* is hard to ignore, nonetheless this wifely behaviour, and husbandly interest in it, is presented as natural and honourable. Messalinus carried his point<sup>12</sup>.

Slightly stronger again is the negative aura surrounding wifely love in [Quintilian] *Declamationes Maiores*:

Genus infirmissimae seruitutis est senex maritus, et uxoriae caritatis ardorem flagrantius frigidis concipimus adfectibus.

([Quint.] *Decl.* 2.14.7).

*An elderly husbands' is a kind of very weak slavery, and we conceive the passion of wifely love more hotly when our affections are going cold.*

This instance is bound up in the universal negativity of the stepmother: the case is one where a blinded son and his stepmother are accused of murdering the father.

The example just considered will belong to the strand of Roman thought which is most unthinking in its assumptions about the inherent inferiority of women. According to this way of thinking, if something is *uxorius*, especially if it is associated with the husband of the *uxor*, it is almost bound to be bad, firstly because women are naturally bad (and exceptions only reinforce this pre-judgement by their very exceptionality), and secondly because it implies an inversion of the proper hierarchy

12 — Ginsburg (1993) argues that Tacitus models the passage on Livy's account of the debate over the Lex Oppia (Livy 34.1-8), a locus classicus for the public discussion of women.

(proper, that is, within the worldview of this prejudice). I would like to call this stand of Roman thought ‘natural chauvinism’, not because I am claiming that it is actually a-historically natural, but because it seems so to itself. The nature of this way of thinking is brought out by an example from Valerius Maximus. In a brief list (V. Max. 6.7) of women who showed extraordinary faithfulness to their husbands, two women who saved their husbands from proscription (perhaps without the greatest dignity to the husbands concerned) are prefaced by the story of Tertia Aemilia, wife of Scipio Africanus, who was so friendly and patient, as well as devoted, to her husband that she turned a blind eye to his affair with a maid (so that the conqueror of the world should not, in effect, be conquered by a woman) and was even so generous as to free the slave woman after Africanus’ death and give her in marriage to one of her freedmen<sup>13</sup>. The other two women, by contrast, save their husbands’ lives by making them passive and slightly ridiculous. It is Tertia Aemilia who is described as showing *uxoria fides*, whereas one might fear that the other two men might display themselves as *uxorius*. Valerius does not actually say so, but it seems to me that the series of stories might well display the kind of ambivalence that Romans feel about things belonging or pertaining to wives.

One of the examples cited in *OLD* occurs in the highly charged location of the second poem of Horace’s *Odes*, the word itself given stress by its unusual position in the last line of a Sapphic stanza but elided into the previous line<sup>14</sup>:

Iliae dum se nimium querenti  
iactat ultorem, uagus et sinistra  
labitur ripa Ioue non probante u-  
xorius amnis.

(Hor. *Carm.* 1.2.17-20).

*While he boasts of himself as avenger for Ilia greatly complaining, the wife-loving river, wandering, without Jupiter’s approval, slips over his left bank.*

Here, *uxorius* applies to the badly behaved River Tiber, whose flooding is the subject of the ode, and who rises up beyond his banks without the approval of Jupiter, to avenge the wrong done to his beloved wife Ilia. One might be inclined to think that the absence of divine approval and

13 — Cf. also V. Max. 4.6.ext.3. Treggiari (1991) 237 discusses Aemelia’s ‘magnanimous treatment’ of her husband. She is inclined to be more generous than I am about stories of this nature.

14 — Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 27 nicely say that the runover ‘suggests the river out of control’. As is usual for any instance of *uxorius* in Latin poetry outside Mercury’s notorious words, they refer to the *Aeneid* passage, commenting ‘the word may be less prosaic than “uxorious”, but the picture of the doting Tiber remains frivolous’.

the inherent violence of the flooding river indicate a negative valuation for *uxorius*, a notion perhaps supported by the implied authorial disapproval of Ilia's complaints. Reading from this Jovian perspective, one might also remember that the so-called wrong of which Ilia complains and which Tiber avenges is the rape by the god Mars which constitutes the origin of the Roman race<sup>15</sup>. In this context, Horace's use of *uxorius* indicates the river's choice of care for a wife over care for her offspring and Roman society, and is thus negatively portrayed from the ordinarily chauvinistic Roman perspective. I would suggest, however, that such a viewpoint is not the only one created by the poem, but rather that we are also invited to focalise through the loving husband-River. At the least, therefore, the description of him as *uxorius* must provoke an indulgent smile.

Other examples are even more suggestive of the possibility that *uxorius* might not quite be so damning as Mercury thinks. In a *controversia* of Seneca the Elder (1.6), the back story to be debated is of a young man who was captured by pirates and saved by the good offices of the chief pirate's daughter, whom he then married. Later, his father wanted him to divorce the pirate's daughter in order to marry a rich heiress. The young man refused. Evaluation of the moral norms expressed through this controversy is complicated by an important element in the public representation of good and bad wives, which is the enormous topos of the 'rich wife', with all the attendant difficulties that she brings to a matrimonial relationship based on the expectation of male superiority. From that point of view, we might be predisposed to side with the young man in his choice for a poor wife, with whom he has the relationship of *gratia* (meaning that he is indebted to her), over a rich wife who brings him a large dowry. Moreover, the emphasis within the controversy is not only on love, but also on the debt of gratitude and the fulfilment of a promise, both positive values for Romans. I would suggest that, despite the premium on filial obedience in Roman culture, we are nonetheless meant to sympathise with the young man and his existing wife. One of the competitors in the controversy offers a nice epigram in which the self-deprecating use of the term *uxorius* is, I think, intended in fact to evoke sympathy<sup>16</sup>:

15 — Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 26-7 comment on the uncertainty among scholars over the cause of Ilia's complaints, which they claim 'can only be "because she was thrown into the river"'. They also give a brief history of the reception of this problem, in particular the possibility that Ilia might be complaining about the assassination of Julius Caesar, the subject of the poem as a whole. The initial wrong done to her, however, was the rape, and it was in her distress from this event that she was received and loved by the river, at least according to Ovid, whose account in *Am.* 3.6. 45-82 makes quite clear that Ilia's distress is the result of *patruique nefas delictaque Martis* (49). Ovid's account is an elegiac and emotional elaboration of the story reported in Ennius *Ann.* 34-50 (Skutsch). Perhaps Horace's brief frozen picture of the river in spate as a loving husband is an important, if understated, intertext for Ovid with Ennius.

16 — Sussman (1995) argues that Roman declamation is generally sympathetic towards (very)

CESTI PII. Solent qui coguntur a patribus, ut uxores ducant, illa dicere: 'non sumus etiam nunc apti nuptiis'. ego contra refugio uxorem, quia uxorius sum.

(Sen. *Con.* 1.6.7)

*Those who are forced by their fathers to marry are accustomed to say, 'I'm not yet ready for marriage'. I, by contrast, flee a wife, because I am devoted to my wife.*

Whereas the typical young man (of such discourses as comedy and declamation, which have a good deal in common) will often refuse to take a wife because he is still addicted to adolescent irresponsibility, instead this young man refuses a (new) wife because he is in love with his existing wife. In this context, the term *uxorius* is both self-deprecating and also designed for *captatio benevolentiae*. It is perhaps a little demeaning for a man to be so much in love with his wife, but it is at the same time something he can offer to evoke sympathy from an audience<sup>17</sup>.

Another case where we must see that kind of admiration which is slightly vulnerable to stern reproof is in Statius' lament for Priscilla, written as a consolation to her husband Abascantus (*Silv.* 5.1). The poem, presented as written a year after the bereavement, is nonetheless more emotionally extreme than is normal in the consolatory tradition<sup>18</sup>. It is, of course, also an active encomium to Abascantus himself but, as Gibson says, he is praised 'not just as the emperor's loyal *ab epistulis*... but also as a grieving and devoted husband'<sup>19</sup>. The eroticism as well as the piety of a husband's love in Statius' poetic world comes out already in the prose prologue to the poem, when he says, in delightful epigrammatic style: *uxorem enim amare uoluptas est, defunctam religio* ('for to love a living wife is an act of pleasure, a dead wife an act of religion')<sup>20</sup>. It is remarkable, though in keeping with Statian practice elsewhere, that the *exempla* for Abascantus' grief with which the preface opens are all bereaved mothers,

young men and presents them positively, because it is aware of its audience of Roman teenagers and potential customers.

17 — A similar usage of *uxorius* occurs in the *Minor Declamation* ascribed to Quintilian, 388: *maritum uero nimium quoque uxorium*. Here again the attribute is to be seen as a bit questionable, but something to indulge.

18 — See Gibson (2006) *passim*, and e.g. 89.

19 — Gibson (2006) xxxv. Apropos of the picture of husbandly love produced by the preface, Gibson comments (78) on the emotional relationship between husband and wife, which he places in the context of the "sentimental idea" of family life in Rome', as analysed by Dixon (1991). I would agree with this assessment, although I would suggest that however much real couples, whether or not including this one, failed to live up to the ideal, the sentiments expressed by Statius would resonate with at least some of his readers. My impression, although this is not based on extensive research, is that Statius' manner of speaking about human emotion is more in line with modern expressions than is the Roman norm.

20 — See Treggiari (1991) 258.

not husbands. This is how Statius expresses most fully the extent of his friend's grief; what is remarkable is that he does so with admiration<sup>21</sup>. The opening conceit of the poem, with the idea that Statius would, if he could, fashion a likeness of the lost wife, in the manner of Ovid's Pygmalion, sets this Roman marriage also in the discourse of elegiac love<sup>22</sup>. When after line 16 the poet launches into a sympathetic account of Abascantus' initial grief and the risk of reopening the wound, his language is extravagant, but we are surely meant to admire the husband's devotion, rather than to deprecate his weakness. It is here that the word *uxorius* occurs, in the nominative masculine singular, but applied to his tears, not directly to Abascantus:

nunc etiam adtactus refugit iam plana cicatrix  
dum canimus, grauibusque oculis uxorius instat  
imber.

(Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.30-2).

*Even now the scar, now smooth, shrinks from the touch, as we sing, and the wife-loving shower stands ready in heavy eyes.*

Gibson notes that '*uxorius* can convey reproach... [as in *Aen.* 4.266-7], though Mercury's strictures to Aeneas are much more obviously harsh than this reference to Abascantus' grief'<sup>23</sup>. I would suggest that the English 'uxorious' with which Gibson translates *uxorius* is actually closer to Mercury's usage, and indeed inappropriately so in the Statian context, whereas my 'wife-loving', if less elegant, actually better expresses Statius' thought<sup>24</sup>.

If Statius' poetic world can be taken as indicative of one strand of Roman attitudes to husbands, then we should have no doubt that it is expected that a good husband will love – and notice – his wife. He puts together chastity and passion (*castissimus ardor*, 41, not just *amor*) and describes it as a love which is approved by *domino... censore* (42). This refers directly, of course, to Domitian, Abascantus' boss as well as ruler of the world, and Censor<sup>25</sup>. It is hard, however, not to hear a reference to the famous anecdote about Cato, to be discussed below. This is a couple who can express their love without falling foul of strict convention. That such loving grief on the part of the husband is (presented as) approved by

21 — See Gibson (2006) 77 on the *exempla*. On the power of maternal metaphors elsewhere in Statius, see Augoustakis (2010); McAuley (forthcoming).

22 — As noted by Gibson (2006) 80.

23 — Gibson (2006) 90.

24 — Indeed, one might say that the point of this paper is to show that *uxorius* does not always mean 'uxorious'.

25 — Gibson (2006) 96. Domitian probably assumed the office in AD 85.

Rome is shown by the account of the funeral (208-21), where all eyes are on Abascantus, as if it were his young sons he had lost (218): note again, as at the opening, how Statius expresses the feelings of a husband by means of other familial relationships, which some strands of Roman thought would deem to be inherently stronger than the marital bond. It is for the husband that people grieve (221: *lacrimas fudere marito*). The tomb itself is also said to stand as a monument to the husband's love (238). All this shows a Roman husband praised for his loving. It should be noted, however, that even Statius does not find it necessary to list the characteristics other than loving which make his subject into a good husband, whereas the conventional litany of wifely virtues is presented for Priscilla (43-74). When anything is said about Abascantus' qualities (76-9), the gaze has shifted to that of Domitian, Emperor and potential employer. Not surprisingly, women must have virtues (only) as wives, and men must have virtues (only) as public figures.

Alongside the possibly indulgent and not wholly negative uses of *uxorius* as just analysed, we should note its appearance in that masterpiece of misogyny, Juvenal 6 (206), together with also the example given for the final entry under *OLD uxorius* 2b, neuter plural as substantive 'potions drunk to cause fondness for a wife' ([Quint.] *Decl.* 15.9). Since poisoning is one of the topoi of misogynistic invective<sup>26</sup>, it would be hard to see the last of these in a positive light. Juvenal's use of the word makes it clear that it will bring you no good to be 'under a wife's sway':

si tibi simplicitas uxoria, deditus uni  
est animus, summitte caput ceruice parata  
ferre iugum.

(Juv. 6.206-8).

*If you have wife-devoted simplicity, and a mind committed to one alone,  
put down your head with your neck prepared to bear the yoke.*

Even here, however, the protasis starts as though it is looking positive, with the apodosis pouring cold water over marital devotion. The satirist's sarcastic judgement is that:

igitur longe minus utilis illi  
uxor, quisquis erit bonus optandusque maritus.

(Juv. 6.210-11).

*Therefore by far less useful as a wife to him, whoever will be a good and  
desirable husband.*

26 — See Nolder (2001) 1120 n. 5 and the bibliography listed there.

This rare example of an explicit reference to ‘a good and desirable husband’ may suggest that to be *uxorius* would not be incompatible with being *bonus*, and might constitute a positive representation of a husband, albeit undermined by the bad reaction of the wife, since in Juvenal’s world all women just are like that. As nothing is ever simply valorised in Juvenal, however, it would also be possible to hear a significant degree of irony in the apparent praise of the good husband whose mind is devoted to one wife. The designation *deditus uni* might hint at *uniuira*, thus placing this potential good husband in a submissive and feminine role. Such a role is confirmed when he is forced to bear the yoke.

The final example of *uxorius* that I would like to present comes from Servius’ commentary on the simile of Vulcan as a good housewife, mentioned above, which offers a nice commentary on this essay:

datur intellegi Vulcanum iam omnem suspicionem et iram quam habuit circa Venerem, deposuisse, adeo ut arma etiam ipsi fabricaret adultero. praeterea Vulcanum uxorium fuisse testatur et ipse Vergilius dicens ‘tum pater aeterno fatur deuinctus amore...’

(Serv. *Ad Aen.* 8.373.14).

*We have to understand that Vulcan has put aside all the suspicion and anger which he had regarding Venus, to the extent that he would make arms for the adulterous offspring himself. Moreover Virgil himself is a witness that Vulcan is under his wife’s sway, saying ‘and then the father conquered by eternal love said...’*

What he said (*Aen.* 8.394), of course, was that he was perfectly happy to make arms for Aeneas, because of the power of the love she inspires in him. The words with which Servius indicates the submission of Vulcan to the power of Venus allude to the picture of another of her adulterous affairs, in the famous opening of Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* (*aeterno deuinctus uulnere amoris*, ‘conquered by the eternal wound of love’, 1.34). It is different for the gods, however, and no one would expect a Roman husband to accept his wife’s adultery in this way.

Despite the fact that every example of *uxorius* I have considered has potential for some degree of negative interpretation, it is nonetheless the case that every example other than the words of Mercury has also some potential to be regarded positively. It seems to me, therefore, that Mercury is pushing at the most negative end of the representation of a husband as pertaining to his wife.

In asking the question how Romans speak of a good or bad husband, we can turn also to literature with a more direct relationship to real life than that in epic or even satire, without imagining that such literature really allows us to spy through the windows of the Roman domestic space.

Our purpose here is the language in which Romans express approval or disapproval of husbands, in public works of literature, and the kinds of things they choose to talk about. It is here in particular that the almost complete absence of any explicit reflection on the characteristics of a good husband is most telling. This is not just because marriage, especially upper-class marriage, is arranged between the groom (or his own father) and his prospective father-in-law, because other societies with a high degree of parental involvement in the arrangement of marriages do talk explicitly about what a young man can offer as a husband, not just as a son-in-law. Whether the primary choosers are the future bride herself, or, more likely, her parents<sup>27</sup>, one might expect to see discussions of the qualities to be sought – indeed, the more so in the case of rational parental choice rather than romantic adolescent desire. Roman literature, from epic to epigraphy, offers far more discussion of the qualities required in a wife than in a husband. The lectures of the first century AD Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus offer a rare example of a Roman writer<sup>28</sup> who treats the members of a potential marital couple with remarkable equality, but it is unlikely that his viewpoint was widely shared. He advises (lecture 13b) that one should not be influenced in the choice of a marital partner by matters of birth, wealth, or beauty, but should be more interested in health of mind and body, which will favour the production of children and of a harmonious life. For the vast majority of writers, personal characteristics are barely considered in the case of husbands.

The two places where we hear most about husbands and wives are with regard to initial choice and in reflection on tombstones, both very public reflections of the marital relationship<sup>29</sup>. By the time we get to Isidore of Seville in the seventh century, there is mention of explicit criteria for choosing a husband (*uirtus, genus, pulchritudo, oratio*) and a wife (who must be *generosa, bene morata, pulchra*)<sup>30</sup>, but most of the details which we hear from Roman authors about what makes a good husband reflect

27 — Hallett (2002) argues convincingly that Roman mothers expected to have a say in their children's marriages. One might think that this would make it more likely that personal characteristics of the individual under consideration would be given more attention, but unfortunately the traces of this activity in Roman literature are slight. Nonetheless, Hallett's interpretation of Amata's position as a mother whose views on a suitable husband for her daughter have been neglected might count as strong evidence that such views are being occluded rather than never having existed.

28 — It is likely that Musonius himself did not actually write for publication, but that his lectures were recorded by students. See Lutz (1947) 5-6 on this point, and *passim* for the text and translation of Musonius, together with discussion of what is known about this unusual Stoic. Discussion of marriage comes in his lectures 12-14. More recently, see Dillon (2004), especially 22-4 on the positive and (relatively speaking) equitable view of marriage presented by Musonius.

29 — Treggiari (1991), especially chapter 3, offers extensive discussion of the criteria used in choosing a spouse.

30 — Treggiari (1991) 86.

very little on his personal qualities in reference to the prospective wife herself, but rather his public position<sup>31</sup>.

Much more common in Roman public consideration of those about to marry is the question of what makes a good son-in-law. Given the status of marriage as a contract between two men, one might not be entirely surprised by the interest in grooms as sons-in-law, but since the literary representation of marriage by no means ignores the qualities required in the wife, one might expect to see rather more reflection on the qualities required in the husband, in his relationship with the wife rather than merely the wife's father. But as Cantarella's discussion indicates<sup>32</sup>, we should not underestimate the extent to which aspects of Roman culture may work differently from what we expect. A case in point is Pliny's letter 6.26, on the engagement of the daughter of the addressee Julius Servianus to Fuscus Salinator, which culminates as follows:

...spondeo habiturum te generum quo melior fingi ne uoto quidem potuit. Superest, ut auum te quam maturissime similibus sui faciat. Quam felix tempus illud, quo mihi liberos illius nepotes tuos, ut meos uel liberos uel nepotes, ex uestro sinu sumere et quasi pari iure tenere continget!  
(Plin. *Ep.* 6.26).

...I guarantee that you will have the best son-in-law imaginable. It only remains that he should make you as soon as possible the grandfather of children who look like him. How happy that time will be when I shall be able to take up from your laps his children and your grandchildren, as if they were my own children and grandchildren, and hold them with a kind of equal right!

After some comments on the prospective groom's family, ancestry, scholarship, and personal qualities (he is said to be *puer simplicitate comitate iuuenis senex grauitate*, 'a boy in his simplicity, a young man in his friendliness, an old man in his moral seriousness'), Pliny sums up his assessment without any mention of the young man's role (assuming that he is by age a *iuuenis*, rather than a *puer* or a *senex*) as husband. Rather, Pliny is delighted that the addressee will have the 'best son-in-law ima-

31 — A good example is Pliny's recommendation of Minicius Acilianus (*Ep.* 1.14) discussed by Treggiari (1991) at 87-8. Similar is the correspondence of Cicero on the subject of candidates to be his son-in-law (which they achieved by marrying Tullia), discussed by Treggiari at 92. See especially Cic. *Att.* 7.3.12.

32 — Cantarella (2002) discusses the love triangle, or rather reproductive arrangements, between the younger Cato, his wife Marcia, and his friend Hortensius. On his friend's request, Cato divorced Marcia, so that she could marry Hortensius and bear him children. After Hortensius' death, Cato and Marcia were remarried. Cantarella argues that this arrangement was within the cultural horizons of the Romans, for whom the reproductive needs of the city as well as individual citizens were a powerful incentive towards ensuring that a woman's fertility should not be wasted. As Cantarella points out, Cato consulted his own father-in-law over the suggestion, since it would be the latter who would have the right to dissolve the first and engage the second marriage.

ginable<sup>33</sup>. The only way in which the letter almost acknowledges the existence of another party to this marriage (the bride) is in the hope for children, for which she is necessary although not explicitly mentioned, and with regard to which a topos of the praise of women (the production of children who look like their father) is assigned to the father rather than the mother. No doubt there is some degree of politeness in this, in that it is the father-in-law whom Pliny is addressing, but it remains to me surprising that letters of this nature do not include any topos about how well he will look after your daughter – even what a good teacher he will be for your daughter. Perhaps we should assume that the characteristics to be desired in a son-in-law are also those to be desired in a husband, but if so Pliny does not mention it<sup>34</sup>.

Another well-known letter of Pliny offers an account of the author's third wife, Calpurnia. In his invaluable sourcebook on Roman social history, Tim Parkin introduces the letter with the comment that Pliny might be writing 'partly... to assure her relatives, and his wider audience perhaps, what a good husband he is to her'<sup>35</sup>. If that is Pliny's motivation, however, he has very little to say about it. The letter is almost entirely taken up with generous praise of the young Calpurnia. All he says about himself is that Calpurnia loves him for his *gloria* rather than any physical attractiveness. We might say that this is showing a desirable feature in a husband – *gloria* (in Pliny's opinion), but it does not really tell us that he is a good husband to her. He finishes with a polite declaration (or rather intimation) of mutual love, or at least gratitude:

Certatim ergo tibi gratias agimus, ego quod illam mihi, illa quod me sibi dederis, quasi inuicem elegeris,

(Plin. *Ep.* 4.19).

*And so we contend with each other in giving you thanks, I because you gave her to me, she because you gave me to her, as if you had chosen us for each other...*

That very Roman notion – *concordia* – is at the heart of this display of marital harmony. What Pliny leaves implicit is what her husband has to do to achieve that. Perhaps that's because what he has to do is marry the right wife.

Genre, even sub-genre, can greatly affect the representation of a husband. Even pompous old Pliny feels it appropriate to include in his

33 — See Gibson and Morello (2012) 145-6 on this letter, especially the comment that 'the central figures of the letter are the bride's father and his friend Pliny'.

34 — Treggiari (1991) 107 comments that 'we could wish to see in the literature some allusion to parents' concern to find a kind and considerate husband for their girl'. Indeed so.

35 — Parkin and Pomeroy (2007) 85.

selection of letters (*quas paulo curatius scripsissem*, ‘which I had written a little more carefully’, *Ep.* 1.1) examples of apparently private communication to his wife, in which his role is that of a lover, even coming close to borrowing the discourse of extramarital elegy and the *paraclausithyron*<sup>36</sup>. In 7.5, away from his wife when she was recuperating in the countryside and he was kept in the city by business, he is sleepless, sick, unhappy, even tormented, and when his feet lead him to her room he is like a locked-out lover – *similis excluso a uacuo limine recedo* (‘I go back like someone shut out from the empty threshold’, 7.5). In two other letters to Calpurnia (6.4 and 6.7), he expresses both the desire to be with her and great anxiety about her health. The former is something which he is able to express in words which, like his self-description in 7.5, flirt with the edge of eroticism, for example in 6.7:

Sed eo magis ad desiderium tui accendor: nam cuius litterae tantum habent suauitatis, huius sermonibus quantum dulcedinis inest!  
(Plin. *Ep.* 6.7).

*But for that reason all the more I am inflamed with desire for you: for the person whose letters have so much sweetness in them, how much sweetness is there in her speech!*

Her health is a subject on which he is more publicly explicit in 8.11, in which he relays to Calpurnia’s aunt the news of her sad loss of a baby but recovery herself, although in 8.10, addressing Calpurnia’s grandfather on the subject of his wife’s miscarriage and subsequent illness, he feels it appropriate to sound firmly disapproving, while also indulgently forgiving, of Calpurnia’s apparent childish recklessness, which he deems the cause of her miscarriage<sup>37</sup>. If we can assume that Pliny has a good sense of how he wants to present himself, I think we can say that he thinks a good husband is much more concerned about what makes a good wife than what makes a good husband; is firm but forgiving; is a lover, in ‘private’; and most of all a good *paterfamilias*. If Calpurnia’s miscarriage seems to feature more visibly in the collection than we might expect, perhaps this is to give proof of her husband’s fertility, even in the absence of the arrival of children<sup>38</sup>.

36 — As noted by Treggiari (1991) 257 and Gibson and Morello (2012) 100. See also Shelton (2013) 102-4 and De Pretis (2003).

37 — Treggiari (1991) 257 wonders whether the letters to Calpurnia’s aunt and grandfather might not ‘have included in their original form more sorrow for her pain and disappointment’, but even if this is true, and there is of course not a shred of evidence, for our purposes the point would be that he considers it appropriate not to include such comments for the picture that he wants to create of himself in the published letters. Gibson and Morello (2012) 33 describe Pliny’s discussions of Calpurnia’s miscarriage as ‘an astonishingly confident display of intimacy’.

38 — Lest we think Pliny’s self-presentation as a loving husband is a consequence of the

A constant challenge for anyone attempting to explore how the Romans talked about good and bad husbands is that so much of the material so quickly becomes a discussion of good and bad wives<sup>39</sup>. This may be hardly surprisingly from an overwhelmingly male authorship and the generic needs of significant number of the texts which explicitly discuss the matter. What is remarkable, however, is how difficult it is to keep the focus on the nature of being a husband (as opposed to a wife) even when one adjusts for such bias<sup>40</sup>. Even Plutarch's generally generous *coniugalia praecepta* (*Moralia* 138B-146) are directed far more to the wife than to the husband. That essay is a wedding gift to the couple, Plutarch's former students, so we would expect it to present a positive view of both marriage and married people, as indeed by and large it does, more so than a casual acquaintance with Roman and Greek marriage practices might lead us to expect<sup>41</sup>. Plutarch is very concerned that there should not be fighting and quarrelling (*Moralia* 138C), but some degree of equality of satisfaction, brought about by Peitho and the Charites. Although the greater part of the advice is directed towards the bride, we do also gain something of a picture of Plutarch's ideal husband.

First of all, he must be patient, someone who 'does not run away or feel annoyed at her first display of peevishness and unpleasantness'. Such a person will be rewarded with 'a docile and sweet life together' (138D). I wonder whether this passage might have an erotic undertone, and be a discreet hint at the kind of gentle response to first intercourse which Treggiari rightly finds lacking in most ancient literature<sup>42</sup>. Such 'peevishness', if so, would not only be a natural reaction on the part of the young bride, but would also display her appropriate virginal reluctance, which would eventually be won over by the patient husband, for mutual benefit. While there is nothing explicit in the text to indicate that the discussion here

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increased rhetoric of domesticity in the imperial world, it would be worth noting the moments of admiration and tenderness in Cicero's letters to his wife Terentia during his exile. See Grebe (2003).

39 — This point is noticed also by Treggiari (1991), for example at 103-4, 229, especially the telling epitaphs there, and 243, where her comment is very much in keeping with my argument: '[t]he more detailed epitaphs, particularly those in verse, show a marked tendency to praise wives for their virtues as wives (and mothers) and husbands for virtues displayed in a wider sphere'.

40 — That the success of a marriage is more the responsibility of the wife than the husband remained a little-examined prejudice into the modern world.

41 — Plutarch's position as both insider and outsider makes him a particularly valuable commentator on Roman mores. On the complex cultural identity of Plutarch, see for example Preston (2001). It will be worth exploring further others of his Roman lives, for example the Life of Anthony, in which the affectionate behaviour of this overgrown lad towards his domineering wives detracts from his greatness as a soldier. See Blomqvist (1997) for the argument that Plutarch was averse to powerful women partly because of his experience of Plotina, wife of Trajan, and that this affects his presentation of husbands in his *Lives*. I note again how quickly discussion of husbands becomes discussion of wives, i.e. a weak husband is his wife's fault.

42 — Treggiari (1991) 107, quoted above – the thought occurs in the context of mention of virginal trauma.

refers to sex, the language of green grapes and ripe clusters, bees' stings, and honeycomb, together with the 'first experiences' in 138E-F might seem to support such an interpretation.

But such patience should not be taken as a sign of an expectation of equality in decision-making. The most important attribute of a husband is that he should be superior. Plutarch's ideal is one which would have resonated with European tradition until close to the present day:

Ὡσπερ ἂν φθόγγοι δύο σύμφωνοι ληφθῶσι, τοῦ βαρυτέρου γίγνεται τὸ μέλος, οὕτω πᾶσα πράξις ἐν οἰκίᾳ σωφρονούσῃ πράττεται μὲν ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοουσύντων, ἐπιφαίνει δὲ τὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἡγεμονίαν καὶ προαίρεσιν.

(Plu. *Moralia* 139C-D).

*Whenever two notes are sounded in accord the tune is carried by the bass; and in like manner every activity in a virtuous household is carried on by both parties in agreement, but discloses the husband's leadership and preferences.*

The other recurrent piece of advice which Plutarch has in his *coniugalium praecepta* specifically for the husband, and one which we might have expected Pliny to express more explicitly in his praise of Calpurnia's eagerness to learn, is that he should be the teacher of his wife, both by instruction and, especially, by example<sup>43</sup>. Age differentials often give additional plausibility to such an expectation on the part of husbands, but even when these do not exist a relationship of teacher and pupil, leader and led, is apparently naturalised into the paternalistic benevolence of the good Roman husband.

Does a good Roman husband beat his wife? The question is a fraught one. In recent years the discourse of wife-beating has walked on the borderline between the outrageous and the customary. 'Have you stopped beating your wife?' is the classic loaded question, since the victim can answer neither yes nor no with impunity. But the point about it is that the activity retains a trace of normality. 'Have you stopped murdering children?' would have nothing like the same effect. I remember about twenty or so years ago reading something about domestic violence, in which the author said that 100 years previously, a man could with impunity beat his

43 — One place where we do, rarely, find the idea of the husband as teacher and of explicit, albeit brief, reference to being a good husband is in Pliny's *Panegyricus* 83, as an illustration of the notion that *quum ipse sis optimus, omnes circa te similes tui effecisti* ('while you yourself are the best, you have made others around you like yourself'). Pliny claims that some otherwise excellent men have been let down by bad wives, such that *et ne maximi ciues haberentur, hoc efficiebat, quod mariti minores erant* ('because they were less good husbands they brought it about that they were not regarded as the most excellent citizens'), but Trajan's wife fulfils the ideal, because of his teaching (*mariti hoc opus, qui ita imbuit, ita instituit*, 'this is the work of her husband, who has imbued and instituted these practices in her').

children, his wife, and his dogs, but that now he was left with only his wife – the point being that at that stage the police were rarely interested in wife-abuse. The situation for the Romans, however, is somewhat different. When I mentioned this research to a group of students, and how hard it was to find classical evidence of what makes a good husband, one of them jokingly said something about ‘one who doesn’t beat his wife’, meaning it as a kind of damning with faint praise. It seems possible at first glance, however, that Roman morality might, by contrast, think that a good husband precisely should beat his wife, as a disciplinary correction in controlling all members of his household. Is that what we in fact find?

Paucity of evidence makes it very difficult to answer this question. I suspect that we usually only hear about violence towards a wife when it becomes severe, leading to her death or serious injury. Physical violence of a lesser nature, which might be described as discipline if it were mentioned at all, may simply not leave significant traces in literature<sup>44</sup>. For this reason, and also because of the general lack of comment on the personal qualities of husbands, there is little evidence for attitudes to wife-beating in antiquity. Some of the few mentions we have of wife-beating seem almost incidental to the main point, as in Quintilian’s discussion (*Inst.* 7.8.2) of syllogism, in which a woman who administers a love philtre to her violent husband (*saepe se uerberanti marito uxor amatorium dedit*, ‘a wife gave a love philtre to her husband who regularly beat her’) might be deemed guilty of poisoning when he commits suicide as a result of her refusal to continue the marriage. Some passages, however, do seem to suggest that not beating your wife is the sign of a good man. The elder Cato, for example, famous as a strict disciplinarian, is presented by Plutarch as opposed to the corporal punishment of wives or children<sup>45</sup>:

τὸν δὲ τύπτοντα γαμετὴν ἢ παῖδα τοῖς ἀγιωτάτοις ἔλεγεν ἱεροῖς  
προσφέρειν τὰς χεῖρας,

(Plu. *Cat. Ma.* 20.2).

44 — A further complicating factor in consideration of disciplinary violence in the Roman world is the symbolic force of whipping as a sign and enactment of servile status. For this reason, there is a powerful strand in Roman discourse which deprecates *uerbera* (beating, usually with a whip or rod, but sometimes used across a range of levels of severity) against free people, as being a humiliation inappropriate to their free status. Unfortunately for my purposes, most of the interest in this matter relates to the position of children and (what we would consider) adult sons. The concern to avoid servile treatment of sons, however, may also have granted some degree of social protection when applied to wives, while some degree of legal protection would be provided by the fact that a wife *sine manu* was not legally subject to her husband’s, but rather her father’s, *potestas*. On the distinction between slaves and sons in the matter of punishment, see Saller (1994) 133-53.

45 — Not surprisingly, perhaps, ancient discussions of family life struggle to distinguish between wives and children. A comedy sequence from my childhood depended amusingly on the accusation that a husband was unable to learn that Elizabeth-and-the-children was not in fact one word.

*He used to say that the man who struck his wife or child, laid violent hands on the holiest of holy things...*

Although Cato is not presented as generally averse to violence (Plutarch gives instances of him flogging slaves and proud of it, for example, 21.3), nor would any Roman expect him to be, the passage here is clearly designed to chalk up an aversion to familial violence to Cato's credit. On the other hand, the very fact of it being said implies that it is not an attitude that would be regarded as unremarkable. Part of the point here is to show Cato's personal authority as a *paterfamilias*, who has no need to use violence in order to impose his will.

Plutarch's advice to the new husband that he should be the teacher of his wife also touches delicately on the question of discipline. The ideal is for the husband to mould and control his wife by the good example of his own behaviour, and by his careful instruction. In paragraph 12 (139D-E), Plutarch uses the fable of the contest between the Sun and the North Wind to rob a man of his cloak:

τοῦτο ποιοῦσιν αἱ πλεῖσται γυναῖκες· ἀφαιρουμένοις τοῖς ἀνδράσι βία τὴν τρυφήν καὶ τὴν πολυτέλειαν διαμάχονται καὶ χαλεπαίνουσιν· ἂν δὲ πείθωνται μετὰ λόγου, πράως ἀποτίθενται καὶ μετριάζουσιν.  
(Plu. *Moralia* 139D-E).

*This is the way most women act. When their husbands try forcibly to remove their luxury and extravagance they keep up a continual fight and are very cross; but if they are convinced with the help of reason, they peaceably put aside these things and practise moderation.*

The ideal Roman husband achieves this without violence.

A complicating factor in analysis of Roman attitudes to wife-beating is the very high value placed on self-control in Roman moral discourse. Excessive violence (excessive, of course, is a subjective term) is negatively portrayed, especially when it arises from strong feeling and lack of self-control. Roman moralising discourse is much concerned with the importance in being able to control one's anger<sup>46</sup>. Seneca's and Cicero's writings 'on anger' are only the most explicit examples of this major value. A wife-beater is bad, then, because he does not display control of himself. As Clark says: 'the topos of the good *paterfamilias* is distinguished from that of the bad chiefly by the presence of rationality and self-control'<sup>47</sup>.

46 — Clark (1998) 114.

47 — Clark (1998) 119. Arguing that the need for self-control applies to women as much as men, she says (124): 'in sum, the message implicit in these repeated representations of irrational and uncontrolled women is that alone, women are incapable and domestic tranquillity requires a competent, controlling male figure at the head of the household. Above all, the proper punishment of slaves is a task best handled by the wise *paterfamilias*, who is rational, moderate and punishes only

Stories of seriously violent husbands generally seem designed to castigate the poor self-management of the man. In Petronius' *Satyrical*, Trimalchio's ill-treatment of his wife is a sign of his lack of self-control and lower-class taste, especially since it is juxtaposed with excessive devotion. The same motif applies to the stories of Nero killing the pregnant Poppaea with a blow of his foot, *quod se ex aurigatione sero reuersum grauida et aegra conuiciis incesserat* ('because she, when pregnant and ill, castigated him when he came back late from the races', Suet. *Nero* 35.3), and then behaved with equal extravagance in his grief, thus further displaying his lack of self-control<sup>48</sup>. It could be said, then, that stories of non-beating husbands say less about the rights of woman than they do about male care of the self.

It is not entirely clear, however, that Romans would always unproblematically despise violent behaviour as punishment for perceived wrongdoing. In Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Chaereas delivers an apparently fatal blow to his wife, having been deceived into believing her to be involved in an affair. On finding out the truth, he accuses himself of murder, but is saved in court by his father-in-law who argues that it was the deceivers who were guilty. If the adultery had been genuine, the reaction would be deemed plausible<sup>49</sup>. One notorious case which is often quoted is that of Egatius Metellus, who was acquitted of murder – and indeed not blamed, so Valerius Maximus says – after he clubbed his wife to death because she was drinking wine<sup>50</sup>. A fondness for wine stands along with being rich as one of the greatest crimes of Roman wives<sup>51</sup>. No doubt in most circumstances most Romans would not actively condone killing one's wife for drunkenness, but in practice much lesser domestic

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to correct'. Clark's discussion of violence against women in late antiquity, with extensive reference to early Roman tradition, suggests that within Augustine's discourse gentleness on the part of a husband is good, but violence is not too much of a contradiction. With regard to Monica's wish to be buried with her husband with whom she had lived *concorditer*, Clark says (116): 'this sentiment, a stock Roman funerary convention, would have seemed unexceptionable to Augustine's audience but may strike us as more surprising, coming as it did from a woman who, reportedly, spent the bulk of her life with a husband inclined to anger, abuse, alcohol, and adultery'. Augustine may or may not see irony here, but it seems to me not to be so much the case that these features of a husband are deemed acceptable or even laudable by Roman moral discourse, but rather that it is to the credit of a wife to be able nonetheless to live *concorditer* with such a man, especially given the opportunity it provides for the saint's mother to display her Christian patience.

48 — See Bradley (1985) for Suetonius' hostile appraisal of the marital and sexual behaviour of some of his subjects. Bradley's article is a good example of the school of thought which regards Roman upper-class marriage as, in practice, based on social and political criteria rather than affective, and largely short-lived without opprobrium. He argues, nonetheless, that Suetonius measures his emperors against a marital ideal of longevity and exclusivity, however far that might be from reality.

49 — See Kapparis (2000).

50 — See Nolder (2001) 1124-6.

51 — Drunkenness is a motif of misogyny back at least to Aristophanes, as the women's antics in *Th.* bear witness. In Roman comedy, interestingly, it seems not to be applied to citizen women, but only elderly female slaves or former prostitutes, such as the Lena in Plautus' *Cist.* and Leana in *Cur.*

abuse in the ancient world is as invisible as it was in the modern world until a generation ago.

Arguing with wives is definitely not given Plutarch's approval, but the best way to avoid arguments seems to be, for many Romans, to make sure that the wife does not feel her position strong enough to be able to argue, by making sure that the husband is in control. Indeed, one might say that an *uxorius* man is precisely one who allows, or failed to stop, the kind of relationship with his wife in which she has some control over his actions. A fruitful scion of this misogynistic attitude is the 'rich wife' topos, which has particularly lively expressions in Republican comedy. Megadorus' great misogynistic speech in Plautus' *Aulularia* (475-536) about the failings of rich wives seems to recommend him to Euclio as a husband for his daughter. There is in this case the special circumstance of the fact that Euclio is worried in case his rich neighbour is seeking marriage to his daughter in order to get his hands on Euclio's recently discovered pot of gold, but what Megadorus says is only a magnificent manifestation of a standard topos. His preference for a poor but dutiful wife (parsed as 'dutiful because poor') resonates in many cases through Roman culture and, I suspect, does indeed make him a good husband not only in the eyes of a miser but also in Roman eyes generally: a good husband, that is, one who is in control<sup>52</sup>. In Treggiari's discussion of wealth as a desirable characteristic in a wife<sup>53</sup>, it is suggested that the upper classes valued wealth in a bride but that the middle classes considered such benefits outweighed by the fear that 'a well-dowered wife was likely to bully her husband because she had too great a hold over him' (96). I would suggest, however, that this is a matter of the Roman desire to have cake and eat it.

I would suggest that the rich wife topos overlaps, in its comic way, with other stories told about the need for male control in a marriage, of which the following are only a fraction<sup>54</sup>. Quite different in genre and purpose, but similar in outlook, is Livy's account (34.7.13-14) of Valerius advocating the repeal of the Oppian law, 195 BC, and arguing that husbands ought to be able to keep control of their wives, and not to need the law.

52 — It is worth noting that, in his litany of the disadvantages of marriage to a rich wife, Megadorus uses the normally neutral manifestation of *uxorius*, meaning 'belonging or pertaining to a wife', in the phrase *sumptu uxorio*, 835, the only use of the term in Plautus, surely with negative implication. A similar usage, with equally negative implication, occurs in the (non-Plautine) *argumentum* to *Asinaria*, describing how the old man is living *sub imperio... uxorio*.

53 — Treggiari (1991) 95-100.

54 — It is one of the avowed goals of Treggiari (1991) to present Roman marriage as closer to modern companionate marriage than we had thought – a goal with which I am in many ways in sympathy. Her attempts to argue that obedience and submissiveness on the part of the wife were not a major expectation (particularly 238-41) seem to me to misread the rhetoric, which I think is based on an underlying assumption of male superiority, within which it is possible to praise a woman for cooperation which, if we saw it, would look a great deal more like obedience.

Indeed, the ability to control one's wife, and the rest of the household, is an essential part of the ideal character of a gentleman. Plutarch bears witness to this in the midst of his extensive advice on marital harmony:

εὖ τοίνυν ἡρμοσμένον τὸν οἶκον εἶναι δεῖ τῷ μέλλοντι ἀρμόζεσθαι πόλιν καὶ ἀγορὰν καὶ φίλους·

(Plu. *Moralia* 144C).

*A man therefore ought to have his household well harmonized who is going to harmonize State, Forum, and friends.*

Plutarch's account of the elder Cato also plays into the rhetoric of good husband-good statesman. The lines quoted above about the subject's opposition to the corporal punishment of wives are followed by the statement that:

ἐν ἐπαίνῳ δὲ μείζονι τίθεσθαι τὸ γαμέτην ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ μέγαν εἶναι συγκλητικόν·

(Plu. *Cat. Ma.* 20.2).

*...he thought it more praiseworthy to be a good husband than a great senator...*

Indeed, biography is a genre in which we might hope to gain some closer insight into Roman expectations of the good husband. It does so – by saying very little. That little is not nothing, however. Cato the Elder's private life is summed up as καὶ πατήρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ περὶ γυναῖκα χρηστὸς ἀνὴρ (Plu. *Cat. Ma.* 20.1) 'both a good father and a useful man towards his wife'. In keeping with his signature austerity, Cato marries a wife who is εὐγενεστέραν ἢ πλουσιωτέραν 'more wellborn than rich' (20.1), a preference which is in keeping with the rich wife topos, as well as with the subject's persona. It is no doubt to be read as a sign of his personal authority that he can be graciously kind in his personal relations, for which Plutarch offers a striking comparison, damning a great Greek with faint praise:

ἐπεὶ καὶ Σωκράτους οὐδὲν ἄλλο θαυμάζειν τοῦ παλαιοῦ πλὴν ὅτι γυναϊκὶ χαλεπῇ καὶ παισὶν ἀποπλήκτοις χρώμενος ἐπιεικῶς καὶ πράως διετέλεσε.

(Plu. *Cat. Ma.* 20.2).

*...nay, there was nothing else to admire in Socrates of old except that he was always kind and gentle in his intercourse with a shrewish wife and stupid sons.*

It is to be noticed again that Xanthippe-and-the-children act as one word.

That kindness and gentleness can be presented as characteristics of a good husband may be discerned also in Cicero's presentation of his brother as good husband (and Atticus' sister as bad wife) in *Att.* 5.1, when discussing the breakdown of their marriage<sup>55</sup>. In both these different contexts, I would suggest that husbandly kindness is positively regarded precisely when it is not a sign of weakness, but rather of strength.

Something which at first sight looks surprisingly modern in Plutarch's representation of Cato as a husband is his remarkable insistence on being involved from the earliest stages of parenting, in a manner which is only become common in the last fifty years:

γενομένου δὲ τοῦ παιδὸς οὐδὲν ἦν ἔργον οὕτως ἀναγκαῖον, εἰ μὴ τι δημόσιον, ὡς μὴ παρεῖναι τῇ γυναικὶ λουούσῃ τὸ βρέφος καὶ σπαργανούσῃ.

(Plu. *Cat. Ma.* 20.2).

*After the birth of his son, no business could be so urgent, unless it had a public character, as to prevent him from being present when his wife bathed and swaddled the babe.*

While we might be tempted to be very impressed and read this as support for the wife, we might note that Plutarch says nothing about actually changing nappies, and that Cato here, as elsewhere, shows himself a control freak. Indeed, I would suggest that the whole of Plutarch's picture of Cato functions to present him more as controller of his household, and as father (rather more than husband), than as the kind of personal partner that we would expect of a husband (and which is not wholly absent from Roman discourse).

How affectionate should the ideal Roman husband be? Famously, Cato expelled someone from the Senate for kissing his wife in public. Taken at face value, the anecdote might seem to suggest that explicit affectionate behaviour on the part of a Roman husband was not well regarded. But it is worth looking in detail at the two versions of the anecdote given by Plutarch. In his *coniugalia praecepta* (*Moralia* 139E), Plutarch says: ὁ Κάτων ἐξέβαλε τῆς βουλῆς τὸν φιλήσαντα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα τῆς θυγατρὸς παρούσης ('Cato expelled from the Senate a man who kissed his own wife in the presence of his daughter'). His judgement, not surprisingly given the context, is that τοῦτο μὲν οὖν ἴσως σφοδρότερον ('this perhaps was a little severe'), while the stated purpose in introducing the anecdote is not to tell the newlyweds not ἐτέρων παρόντων ἀσπάζεσθαι

55 — See Treggiari (1991) 241-3 on kindness as a marital virtue.

καὶ φιλεῖν καὶ περιβάλλειν ἀλλήλους ('to caress and kiss and embrace in the presence of others'), which is indeed disgraceful, he says, but rather to use this as an example to introduce his real point, which is that the young couple should not squabble in public. And so, just as they would not indulge in intimacies in public, so likewise they should not quarrel in public. It is a point about privacy, not affection, and really it is designed to say that the good husband will not embarrass his wife in public. If we look at Plutarch's other account of the Cato anecdote, we can see that here also, within the discourse of biography, it is perfectly plausible to refer to marital affection, within certain constraints. This time, the offending husband is described not as τὸν φιλήσαντα ('kissing') but because τὴν αὐτοῦ γυναῖκα μεθ' ἡμέραν ὀρώσης τῆς θυγατρὸς κατεφίλησεν ('he embraced his wife in open day before the eyes of his daughter', *Cat. Ma.* 17.7). Here the word used for 'kiss' (κατεφίλησεν, rendered as 'embrace' by the Loeb translator) is a much more clearly erotic word<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, Plutarch follows up the incident by recording Cato as saying that he never embraced (the word is now περιπλακῆναι) his wife unless it thundered loudly. Whatever exactly the purpose of the thunder, the crucial point is the punchline:

...καὶ μετὰ παιδιᾶς εἰπεῖν αὐτὸν ὡς μακάριός ἐστι τοῦ Διὸς βροντῶντος.

(Plu. *Cat. Ma.* 17.7).

...and it was a pleasantry of his to remark that he was a happy man when it thundered.

Roman comedy gives us evidence that affectionate behaviour is an expected part of the role of a husband, for all that it does so alongside misogynistic humour directed at wives. In one of the most disreputable of Plautus' plays, *Asinaria*, an old man provides his son with the wherewithal to hire a prostitute for a year, but requires in payment that he should have *droit de seigneur*. Father and son are enjoying a party with the prostitute (at least, father is enjoying it – son isn't) when son's rival arranges for mother to be informed of her errant husband's behaviour. The father, Demaenetus, demands a deep kiss from the prostitute (mother watching, unseen), as a result of which he exclaims on the sweetness of the prostitute's breath by comparison with that of his wife. There is almost certainly a pun on *suauiis* (sweet) and *s(u)auium* (kiss) here:

DE: age tu interibi ab infumo da sauium.

ART: perii misera, ut osculatur carnufex, capuli decus!

56 — See Hawley (2007) for the implications of different words for kissing.

DE. edepol animam suauiore[m] aliquanto quam uxoris meae.  
 PH. dic amabo, an foetet anima uxoris tuae? DE. nauteam  
 bibere malim, si necessum sit, quam illam oscularier.

(Pl. *As.* 891-5).

Demaenetus: *Come on you meanwhile, give me a kiss from the depths.*

Artemona: *I am miserably done for. How the scoundrel kisses, the glory of the sword hilt.*

Demaenetus: *By Pollux, breath somewhat sweeter than that of my wife.*

Philaenium: *Tell me please, does your wife's breath stink?*

Demaenetus: *I'd rather drink seawater, if I had to, than kiss her.*

Just before the revelation, the mother Artemona promises punishment for Demaenetus: *osculando ego ulciscar potissimum* (903, 'I'll get a vengeance with a vengeance by kissing'). When she makes herself known, and all Demaenetus' words come back to haunt him, Artemona demands to know *anima foetetne uxoris tuae?* ('Does your wife's breath smell?', 928), to which the embarrassed Demaenetus answers *murram olet* ('it smells of myrrh', 929). The point here is not that Artemona unproblematically gains the audience's sympathy – far from it – but that the kissing of husband and wife, even those with grown-up children, is part of the normal expectation<sup>57</sup>.

This is not the place for a full discussion of Roman representation of explicit marital affection<sup>58</sup>. Instead, I offer one example of the representation of a married couple as romantic lovers, perhaps coming near to the Roman ideal (or at least one Roman ideal) more easily displayed positively because of the distance provided by the fictional and mythic context. There are many examples in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* of explicitly loving married couples. Again, it is particularly the wife's affectionate behaviour that we are shown, in keeping with the general tendency to present marriage as having more to do with wives than it has with husbands, but there are moments for husbands also. One case is that of the couple whose eventual transformation will be the *aetion* for halcyon days, Ceyx and Alcyone. The happy companionship of this heroic couple, descendants

57 — Hawley (2007) 13: 'The kiss could also, at least in popular mythology, become a test of virtue and socially acceptable gender-specific behaviour. The sources that tell us about the ancient Roman custom of wives kissing their husbands on their return (sometimes mistakenly called the *ius osculi*) hint that it was also seen as a way for men to check whether their wives had been drinking. In Roman custom the drinking of wine by women was discouraged. According to Pliny (*Nat.* 14.89-90), it was the infamous moral conservative (and misogynist) censor Cato who advocated this practice. The alleged custom was indeed thought so odd by the Greek Plutarch that he devotes one of his *Roman Questions* to it (6 = *Moralia* 265B-C). Additionally Cicero notes with approval (*Rep.* 4.6) that kinsmen stop kissing women who have lost their reputation. The withdrawal of this common Roman kiss is thus a public sign of their immorality'.

58 — See Treggiari (1991) chapter 8.

of a star (Lucifer, *Met.* 11.271-2) and the wind (Aeolus, *Met.* 11.444), is troubled by Ceyx's decision to undertake a journey to consult the oracle at Delphi (*Met.* 11.410-13), at which his loving wife is devastated. Ovid dwells romantically on the mutual passionate love of the married couple, including a play on Ceyx's ancestral stariness when the narrator remarks *neque enim minor ignis in ipso est* (*Met.* 11.445, 'for there is no less a fire in him'), which expresses the mutuality and the erotic force of the relationship. Ceyx may be close to the Roman ideal of the good husband: he is very unhappy at leaving his wife, but too protective of her to allow her to accompany him and face the danger with him (as she wishes), but on the other hand his strong need to fulfil his familial and public duty by visiting the oracle of Apollo outweighs, rightly in Roman terms, his unhappiness and hers<sup>59</sup>. Their parting embrace on the seafront is decorously described as *amplexus* ('embrace', *Met.* 11.459), which could be social as well as sexual, but the private scene of Morpheus' deceptive impersonation of Ceyx in Alcyone's dream is as suggestively erotic – albeit understated – as in the closely related story of Laodamia and Protesilaus in more explicitly sexual contexts in elegy<sup>60</sup>.

What about adultery? The elegists claim, although they do not always live up to the claim, that a lover should be devoted to only one woman<sup>61</sup>. Does that apply to the husband? We often hear that Roman moral values see nothing wrong in married men having sex with women other than their wives, as long as those women are not the wives of other men<sup>62</sup>. That simply does not count as *adulterium*, which is entirely related to the marital and social status of the woman. To some extent it must surely be true. The *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* is not interested in any offence

59 — The story of Regulus ignoring his wife in order to fulfil his civic duty by returning to Carthage is a similar choice for public over private (Hor. *Carm.* 3.5). Treggiari (1991) 236 says that Regulus regards himself as 'a prisoner of war and so no longer husband'. I would suggest that the point is not just one of legal purity but of the preferential option for the public over the private role.

60 — Catul. 68b; Prop. 1.19.

61 — See for example Prop. 2.7.19 *tu mihi sola places: placeam tibi, Cynthia, solus*, 'you alone are pleasing to me: may I alone, Cynthia, be pleasing to you', in the context of the, for critics problematic, elegy in which the poet seems to suggest that Augustus' marriage reforms would hinder his relationship with his beloved.

62 — Treggiari (1991) 299-309 works hard to argue against the conventional notion of the 'double standard', but I feel she is less successful here than elsewhere, although I agree, and it is the point I wish to make here, that there is significant room in literature for expressions of disapproval for husbands who indulge in extramarital affairs. As she acknowledges (235), even for 'a husband to claim that he had married only once is rare in the inscriptions', although she does not put this together with the question of wider sexual fidelity. Musonius Rufus' Lecture 12 does explicitly advise against men having sex even with their own slave women. His case is based more on the value of self-control than it is on respect for the wife, which is within the conventional range of stoicism. More remarkable, however, is the comparison he offers: 'if it seems neither shameful or out of place for a master to have relations with his own slave, particularly if she happens to be unmarried, let him consider how he would like it if his wife had relations with a male slave' (Lecture 12, trans. Lutz 1947:87).

to a wife caused by her husband's relationship with an 'available' woman. But this is not what we see in literature. Sex with prostitutes and slaves may not have been 'considered immoral' in Roman society, but it is clear that in practice women didn't like it<sup>63</sup>. Maybe women could be laughed at for not liking it, but that only works because outside the world of comedy it is acknowledged that she has a point.

*Asinaria* is again useful. This is a naughty comedy, in which the last word is given quasi-extradramatically to the *grex*:

Hic senex si quid clam uxorem suo animo fecit uolup,  
neque nouom neque mirum fecit nec secus quam alii solent;  
nec quisquam est tam ingenio duro nec tam firmo pectore  
quin ubi quidque occasionis sit sibi faciat bene.  
nunc si uoltis deprecari huic seni ne uapulet,  
remur impetrari posse, plausum si clarum datis.

(Pl. *As.* 942-7).

*If this old man has indulged his pleasure without his wife's knowledge, he has done nothing new or surprising, or different from what others do. There is no-one of such harsh mind and firm heart that he would not do the same thing given half a chance. Now if you want the old man to be let off and not be beaten, we think you'll gain what you want, if you applaud loudly.*

If we want to let the old man get away with it, therefore, we should clap, because 'we', given half the chance, would be no better than him. But the comic force of this depends on a sense that he is at fault, that the only person who would not do as he does is *tam ingenio duro... tam firmo pectore* – i.e., a fine upstanding man. There is no doubt also that Artemona is herself a butt of humour. None of this detracts, however, from what she says about what a husband should be like:

ART. at scelestia ego praeter alios meum uirum frugi rata,  
siccum, frugi, continentem, amantem uxoris maxume.  
PA. at nunc dehinc scito illum ante omnis minimi mortalem preti,  
madidum, nihili, incontinentem atque osorem uxoris suae.

(Pl. *As.* 856-9).

*Artemona: But I, like a fool, thought my husband virtuous beyond all others, sober, thrifty, self-controlled, and especially a lover of his wife.*

63 — Rei (1998) is a good example of the 'substantive' view. She claims, 94, apropos of comedy, that 'characteristically, a wife takes action not to avenge her husband's infidelity, but his violation of the property which the couple shares or which even belongs to the wife entirely. The pursuit of courtesans, both by married and by unmarried men, was not considered immoral in Roman society'. Her references on the acceptability of men running after prostitutes are Cic. *Cael.* 42, Pl. *Cur.* 37-8, Pl. *Mer.* 187-29, but all those passages have their own rhetorical points.

Parasite: *But now from here on know that he beyond all others is the mortal of least value, drunken, worthless, lacking in self restraint, and a hater of his wife.*

Between them, Artemona and parasite say what a husband should be like, which does *not* include running after prostitutes. A few lines later, Artemona reinterprets earlier behaviour of Demaenetus:

hoc ecator est quod ille it ad cenam cottidie.  
ait sese ire ad Archidemum, Chaeream, Chaerestratum,  
Cliniam, Chremem, Cratinum, Diniam, Demosthenem:  
is apud scortum corruptelae est liberis, lustris studet.

(Pl. *As.* 864-7).

*By Castor, that is why he goes out to dinner every day. He says he is going to the house of Archidemus, Chaereas, Chaerestratus, Clinias, Chremes, Cratinus, Dinius, Demosthenes: this man at the house of a prostitute is a source of corruption for his children, he studies at dens of vice.*

Going out to dine with other gentlemen, as Artemona's alphabetical list indicates, is perfectly normal for a Roman gentleman (the names are Greek, but the implication fits as well for Roman or Greek), but if it's a front for running after prostitutes then it isn't acceptable behaviour. Perhaps we might even wonder whether going out to dinner (necessarily, in this case, without one's wife) too often is not the behaviour of the ideal Roman husband, at least from the point of view of half the population.

To return, finally, from the bottom to the top of the poetic hierarchy. There is a powerful strand in Rome thought that a husband should put his duty to the state ahead of duty to his wife. That is Aeneas' salvation. In the course of the *Aeneid's* narrative, in Aeneas' eyes duty to the state gradually gains ground over duty to the wife. Although already the notorious *pietas* image in *Aeneid* 2 epitomises Roman patrilineal preferences, with Creusa lost because she is walking behind, we must be meant, at least initially, to admire Aeneas as the ideal Roman husband when he returns in great distress to look for her. With Dido, her marriage complicated and her ethnicity problematic, the love that we think we glimpse on Aeneas' part is overwhelmed by the patriarchal order to depart from Rome. With Lavinia, the kind of marriage planned is the ultimate political one, entirely duty and no emotion, and in defiance of Lavinia's own wishes<sup>64</sup>. Do we see Aeneas deteriorating from an initial ideal? He certainly hardens emotionally. Or could it be that, at least on one level of the epic's purpose and Roman moral discourse, it is precisely as the coldly dutiful husband of Lavinia that Aeneas reaches the ideal, whereas the man who shouted

64 — That is, if we agree with Lyne (1983), as I do, that Lavinia is in love with Turnus.

at everyone, gods and men, in grief at the loss of Creusa was, in fact, a bad husband by those standards, in which excessive emotion, particularly when directed towards a woman, is deemed dangerous to the safety of the state<sup>65</sup>?

Although when we look through Mercury's eyes, with Roman 'natural chauvinism', we are meant to deprecate Aeneas' action in building up Dido's city, it is only the flipside of what Dido and Anna say early on in Book 4 about what would make a good husband:

quis nouus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes,  
quem sese ore ferens, quam forti pectore et armis!  
credo equidem, nec uana fides, genus esse deorum.  
degeneres animos timor arguit. heu, quibus ille  
iactatus fati! quae bella exhausta canebat!

(Verg. *Aen.* 4.10-14).

*Who is this new guest who has arrived at our seat, how great in bearing, what brave heart and arms! Indeed I believe, nor is it an empty fancy, his race is of the gods. Fearfulness accuses lowborn minds. Alas, by what fates he has been tossed! What a story of wars endured did he sing!*

So he is beautiful, confident, brave, upper-class, and noble in mind. He has suffered, which makes him more lovable, and he is a good talker, at least in public<sup>66</sup>. Dido may be mistaken about Aeneas' communication skills, as Denis Feeney<sup>67</sup> has compellingly argued, but her perception at the time was not unreasonable, and indeed the ability to speak well, mentioned as part of the list of characteristics of a good husband, does not refer to intimate conversation, but rather to the man's public role. It is not about how he speaks to her, but how he speaks in public life, so Dido is not wrong about Aeneas. Even more important is what Anna says at 4.31-49. She moves onto Aeneas' capacity to fulfil an intimate role as father and lover. He is better than all the rivals. Moreover, he would make a good husband to the Queen, such that marrying him would be a politically and socially sensible action, in that he can provide manly protection for Dido's people. In fact, Anna thinks it must be the will of the gods that brought Aeneas here, deliberately to be Dido's husband. It would be great for her and great for the city:

65 — Lucan's presentation (2.326-91) of the remarriage of Marcia and an almost perversely severe Cato (after the death of Hortensius, the husband to whom she had been given by Cato in order to bear children for him, in the story alluded to in footnote 4) gives an example of this Roman preferential option for the public role over the private and would be worthy of further investigation.

66 — Treggiari (1991) 87: 'so Dido, perhaps already subconsciously meditating marriage, falls in love with Aeneas because of his *virtus*, birth, face, and words'. This is closely in keeping with what she identifies as the Roman norm in choice of spouse.

67 — Feeney (1983).

quam tu urbem, soror, hanc cernes, quae surgere regna  
coniugio tali!

(Verg. *Aen.* 4.47-8).

*How you would see this city, sister, this kingdom rise from such a marriage!*

Apart from the minor problem that, from the point of view of Roman history, it is the wrong city that Aeneas is building, then, Mercury's complaint is ill-judged by the standards of the Roman morality of marriage. Dido is happily getting on with her work in the house, making clothes for her husband, while Aeneas is building up not only their own *domus* but also that of the city. In being *uxorius* he is actually being a good husband.

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