

# CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

## AUGUSTAN ROME: FROM REPUBLIC TO EMPIRE

Republican Women

## SOURCES

- Literary evidence
  - Poetry (epic, elegy, satire, epigram etc.)
  - Prose (historiography, biography, didactic etc.)
- Documentary evidence
  - Letters (papyri, wax tablets, wooden tablets)
  - Inscriptions (epitaphs, dedications)
- Archaeological evidence
  - Buildings, portrait statues, historical reliefs, frescos, cameos, coins, funerary monuments
- Bioarchaeological evidence
  - Human remains (skeletons, mummies, cremains etc.)

Marble bust of a mature woman, *circa* 40-20 BCE



## ROMAN WOMEN'S LIFE GOALS

- Marriage (*univira?*)
- Motherhood
- Advancement of husband and children

Fresco depicting a Roman wedding, *circa* second half of the first century BCE





## *PUDICITIA*

- Top: coin depicting the personification of *Pudicitia*
- Bottom: statue of a matron in the *pudicitia* pose

**THE IDEAL WIFE?**

# LUCRETIA

- The rape of Lucretia
- The fall of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic
- The supreme female virtues of *pudicitia* and *castitas*
- Explicit contrast with Tanaquil and Tullia
- However, historical inaccuracies and anachronisms?

Rembrandt van Rijn, 'Lucretia', 1664



THE IDEAL MOTHER?

## CORNELIA

- “We have read the letters of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; they make it plain that her sons were nursed not less by their mother’s speech than at her breast. It was my good fortune more than once to hear Laelia, the daughter of Gaius, speak, and it was apparent that her careful usage was coloured by her father’s habit, and the same was true of her two daughters the Muciae, with both of whom I have talked, and of her granddaughters the Liciniae, both of whom I have heard; one, the wife of Scipio, I imagine that you too, Brutus, have sometimes heard speak.” “Yes,” said Brutus, “and with great pleasure; the more so because she was the daughter of Lucius Crassus”.

(Cicero, *Brutus* 211)



## CORNELIA

- “As regards parents, I should like to see them as highly educated as possible, and I do not restrict this remark to fathers alone. We are told that the eloquence of the Gracchi owed much to their mother Cornelia, whose letters even today testify to the cultivation of her style. Laelia, the daughter of Gaius Laelius, is said to have reproduced the elegance of her father's language in her own speech, while the oration delivered before the triumvirs by Hortensia, the daughter of Quintus Hortensius, is still read and not merely as a compliment to her sex.”

(Quintilian, *On Oratory* 1.1.6)

- Base of a statue to Cornelia
- Originally set up in the Forum, later moved to the Portico of Octavia



## WOMEN AS GOOD EXAMPLES?

- Moral authority
- Intermediaries
- Self-sacrifice
- Inspirational
- Collective action



Altar dedicated by Claudia Synthychē to Cybele, first century CE

WHAT ABOUT REAL WOMEN?



# MARRIAGE



Left: the dressing of the bride before the wedding, fresco, first century CE  
Right: the wedding procession, terracotta urn, third-second century BCE



## WHY MARRY?

- ‘If we could survive without a wife, citizens of Rome, all of us would do without that nuisance; but since nature has so decreed that we cannot manage comfortably with them, nor live in any way without them, we must plan for our lasting preservation rather than for our temporary pleasure’.

(Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 1.6.2)

- From the speech of Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, 131 BCE.
- According to Livy *Per.* 59, Augustus read out this speech in the Senate in 17 BCE in support of his legislation encouraging the birth of legitimate children.

## ALTERNATIVELY...

- ‘The husband and wife ... should come together for the purpose of making a life in common and of procreating children, and furthermore of regarding all things in common between them, and nothing peculiar or private to one or the other, not even their own bodies. The birth of a human being which results from such a union is to be sure something marvellous, but it is not yet enough for the relation of husband and wife, inasmuch as quite apart from marriage it could result from any other sexual union, just as in the case of animals. But in marriage there must be above all perfect companionship and mutual love of husband and wife, both in health and in sickness and under all conditions, since it was with desire for this as well as for having children that both entered upon marriage’.
- (Musonius Rufus 13A, first century CE)



RELIVS·L·L  
ERMIA  
NIVS·DECOLLE  
VIMINALE  
AEC·QVAE·ME·FA·ATO  
PRAEC·ESSIT·CORPORE  
CASTO  
ONIVNXS·VNA·MEO  
PRAEDITA·AMANS  
ANIMO  
DO·FIDA·VIRO·VEIXSII  
STUDIO·PARILI·QVM  
VILLA·INAVARITIE  
CESSIT·AB·OFFICIO  
IRELLA·L·L



AVRELIA·L·L  
PHILEMATIO  
VIVA·PHILEMATIVM·SVN  
AVRELIA·NOMINITATA  
CASTA·VVDENS·VOLGEI  
nescia·FEIDA·VIRO  
VIR·CONLEIBERTVS·FVII  
EIDEM·QVO·CAREO  
EHEV  
REE·FVIT·EEVERO·PLVS  
SVPERAQUE·PARENS  
SECTEM·ME·NAATAN  
ANNORVM·GREMIO  
IPSE·RECEPIT·XXXX  
ANNOS·NATA·NECISTOT  
ILLE·MEO·OFFICIO·SC  
ADSIDVO·FLOREBAT·ADO



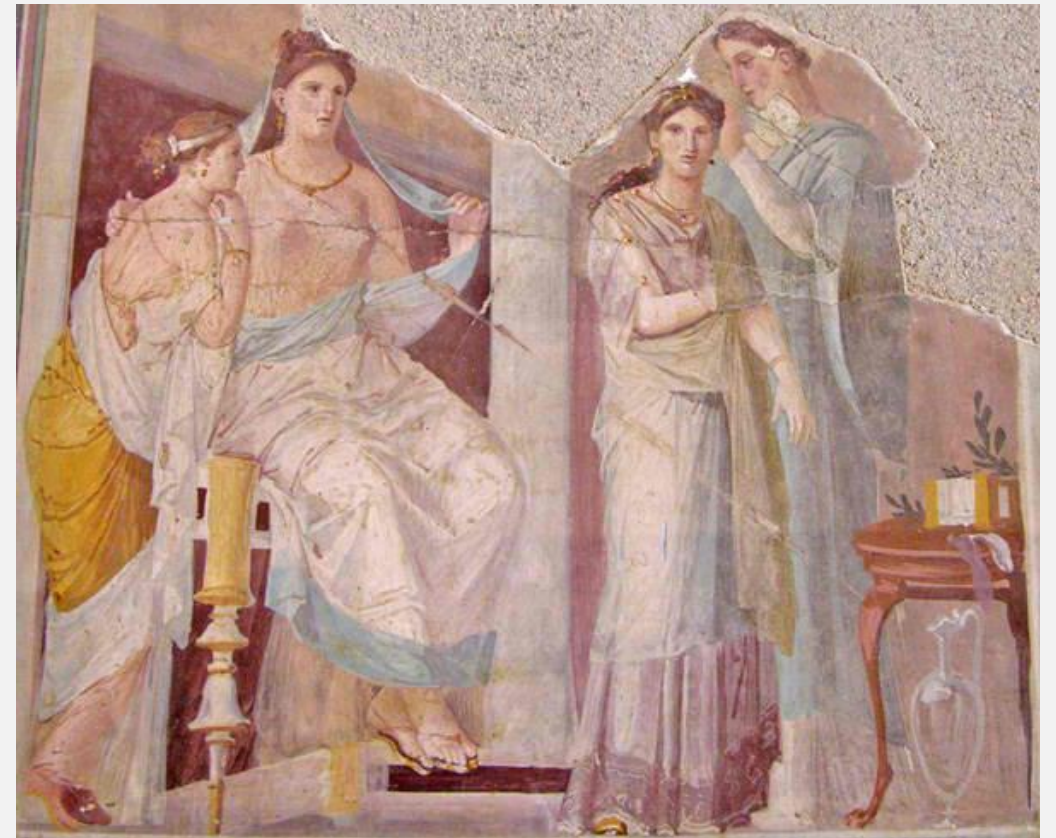
FUNERARY RELIEF OF LUCIUS AURELIUS HERMIA AND  
HIS WIFE, AURELIA PHILEMATIUM, DATED TO THE  
FIRST CENTURY BCE (*CIL* 6.9499)

- ‘I am Lucius Aurelius Hermia, freedman of Lucius, and a butcher from the Viminal Hill. This woman, chaste in body, who preceded me in death, my one and only wife, (who) lovingly presided over my soul, she lived, faithful to a faithful husband (who had) equal devotion, since no selfishness ever kept her from her duty’.
- ‘While I was living I was called Aurelia Philematium. I was chaste, modest, with no knowledge of the ways of the world, and faithful to my husband. My husband was my fellow-freedman of the same master, of whom—alas!—I am now deprived. In fact and in truth, he was more like a father to me. When I was seven years old he took me on his lap, but at forty I was taken by death. He flourished in the eyes of all thanks to my steadfast devotion’.

# DRESS

- Clothing is functional in more ways than one
- Clothing distinguishes the *matrona* from the whore, the respectable woman from the shameless woman
- Rhetoric of misogyny?

Fresco of women dressing, first century CE





Statue of a Roman matron wearing the *stola* and *palla*, late first century BCE – early first century CE

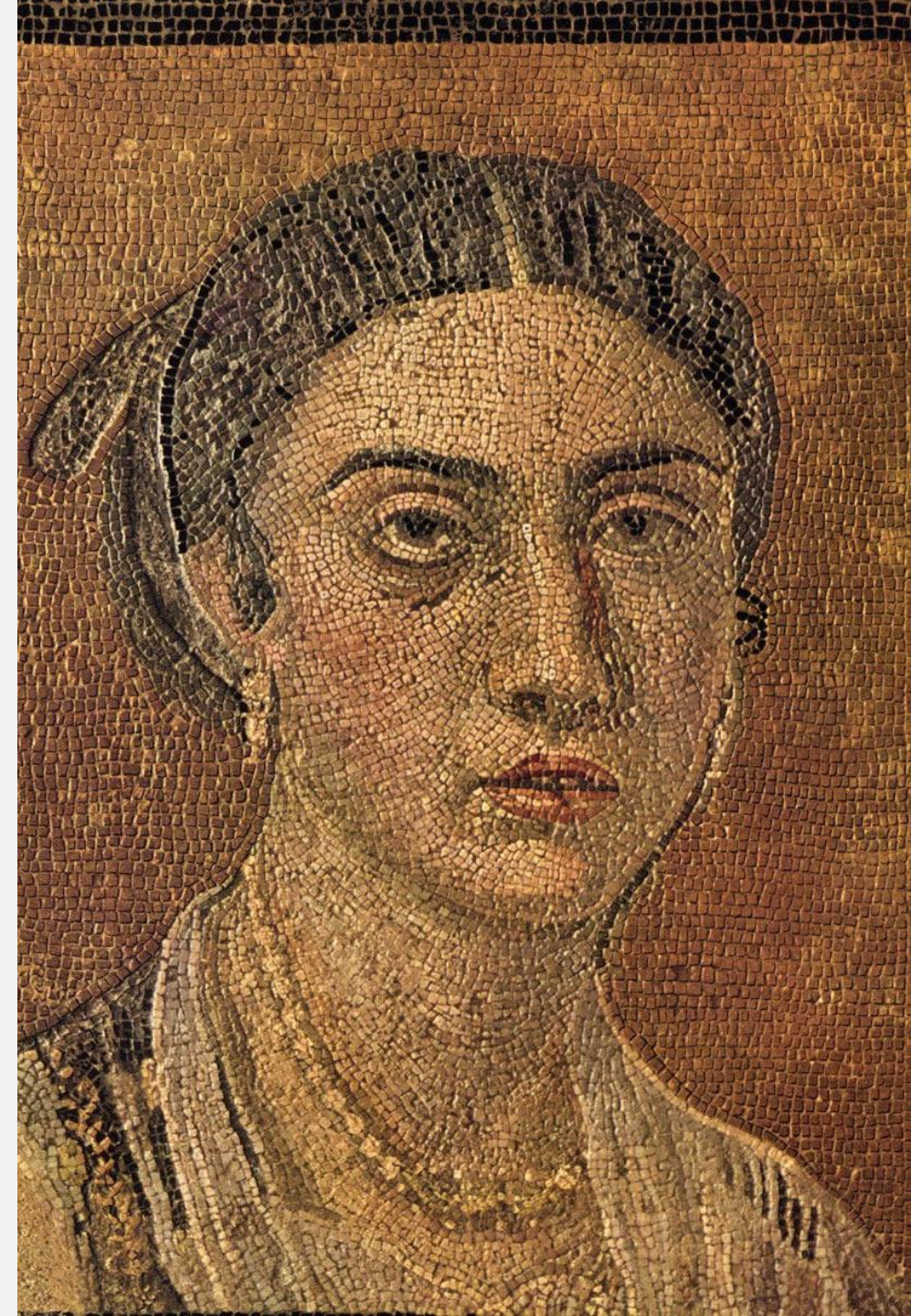


Tunic: blue  
Stola: white  
Palla: yellow



## OPPIAN LAW, 215-195 BCE

- Pro: 'Let the women, then, be adorned not with gold nor precious stones, nor with bright-coloured and purple clothing, but with modesty, with the love of their husbands and children, with obedience, with moderation, with the established laws, with our arms, our victories, and our trophies' (Zonaras 9.17)
- Con: 'Elegance of appearance, adornments and dress — these are women's badges of honour, herein lie their delight and their glory, these are what our ancestors called the woman's world' (Livy 34.7.8-9)



# HORTENSIA

- ‘The oration delivered before the triumvirs by Hortensia, the daughter of Quintus Hortensius, is still read and not merely as a compliment to her sex’.  
(Quintilian, *On Oratory* 1.1.6)
- You have robbed us of our fathers and our sons and our husbands and our brothers, claiming that they have wronged you. But if you rob us of our property too, you will be putting us into a position unworthy of our family, our manners and our female sex. If, on the one hand, you claim you have been wronged by us as you were by our men, proscribe us as you did them. But if, on the other hand, we women did not vote that any of you were public enemies, nor demolished your houses, nor destroyed your army, nor led another army against you, nor prevented you from gaining public office nor from gaining honour, why do we share the penalties when we did not participate in the crimes’? (Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.32-34 )

## SEMPRONIA

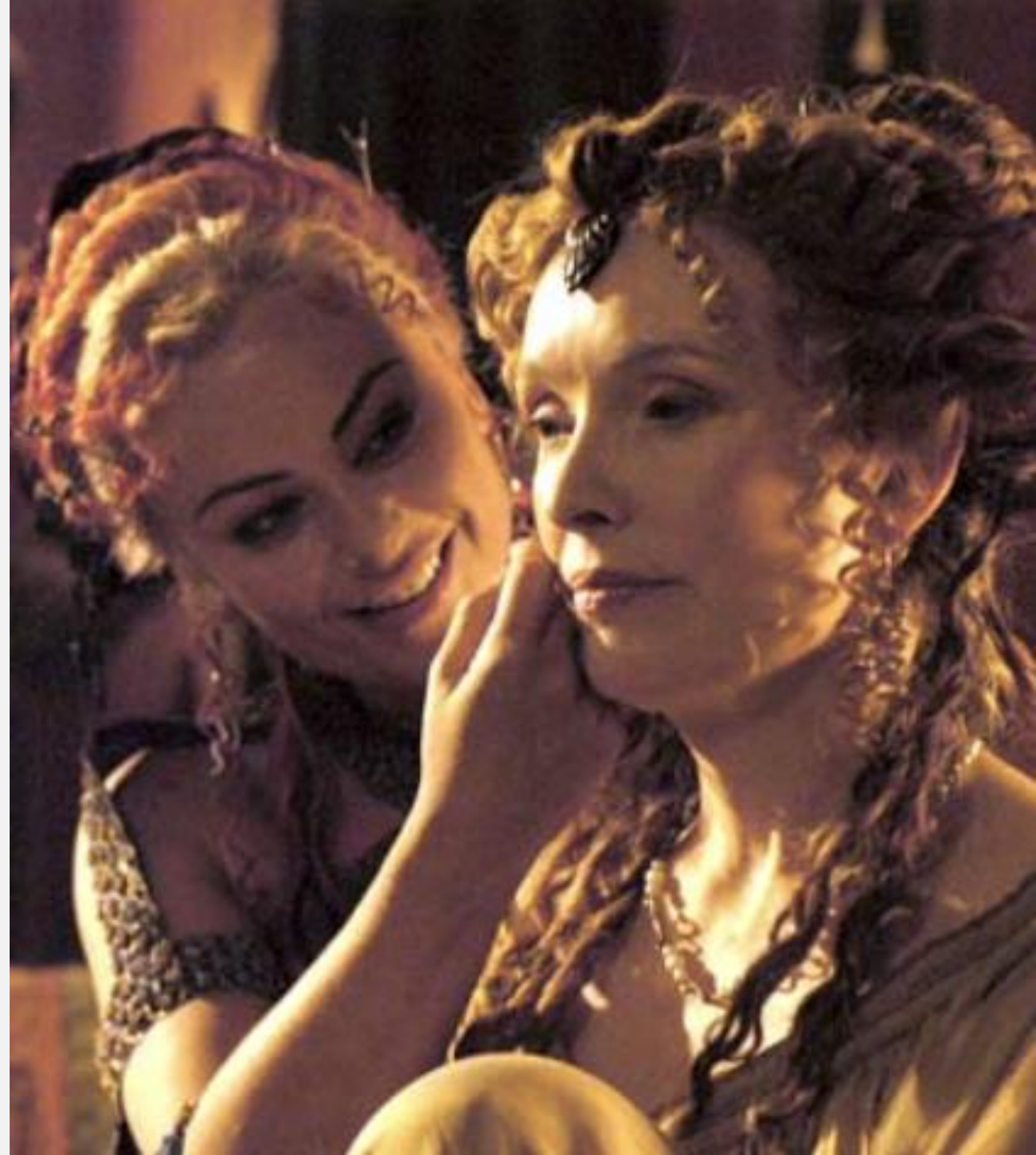
- “Now among these women was Sempronia, who had often committed many crimes of masculine daring. In birth and beauty, in her husband also and children, she was abundantly favoured by fortune; well read in the literature of Greece and Rome, able to play the lyre and dance more skilfully than an honest woman needs, and having many other accomplishments which minister to voluptuousness. But there was nothing which she held so cheap as modesty and chastity; you could not easily say whether she was less sparing of her money or her honour; her desires were so ardent that she sought men more often than she was sought by them. Even before the time of the conspiracy she had often broken her word, repudiated her debts, been privy to murder; poverty and extravagance combined had driven her headlong. Nevertheless, she was a woman of no mean endowments; she could write verses, bandy jests, and use language which was modest, or tender, or wanton; in fine, she possessed a high degree of wit and of charm.”
- (Sallust, *Conspiracy of Catiline* 25.1-5)



## INFLUENTIAL REPUBLICAN WOMEN

- Servilia (c. 100-after 42 BCE)
- Terentia (98 BCE-6CE)
- Clodia (c. 95-? BCE)

Atia (Clodia/Fulvia) and Servilia in HBO *Rome*, 2005-2008



## FULVIA (C. 80-40 BCE)

- Married to three tribunes:
  - P. Clodius Pulcher
  - G. Scribonius Curio
  - M. Antonius

Mother of five children

- P. Claudius Pulcher
- Claudia
- G. Scribonius Curio
- M. Antonius Antyllus
- Iullus Antonius





## FULVIA IN ANCIENT SOURCES

- ‘Fulvia, the wife of Antony, who had nothing of the woman in her except her sex’  
(Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History* 2.74.2)
- ‘She was a woman who took no thought for spinning or housekeeping, nor would she deign to bear sway over a man of private station, but she wished to rule a ruler and command a commander’  
(Plutarch, *Antony* 10.3)
- ‘Fulvia also caused the death of many, both to satisfy her enmity and to gain their wealth, in some cases men with whom her husband was not even acquainted’  
(Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 47.8.2)

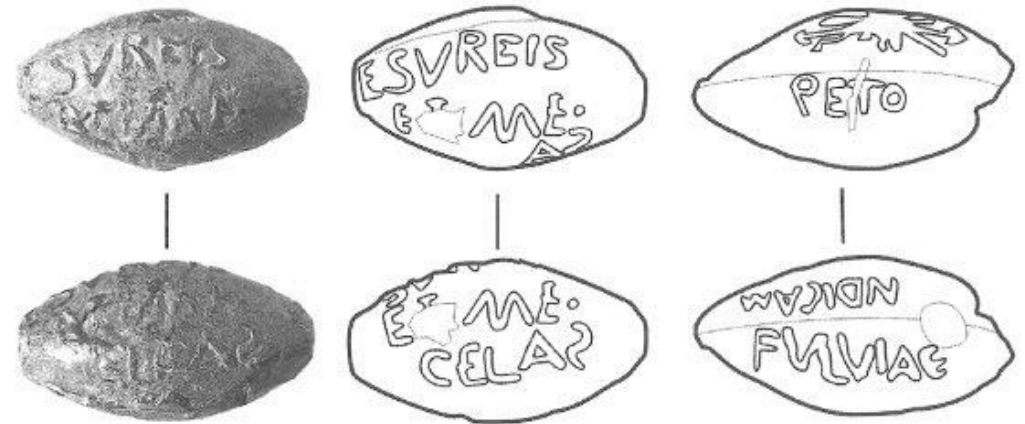






## THE PERUSINE WAR (41-40 BCE)

- 'I'm aiming for Fulvia's clit'
- 'Lucius Antonius you baldy, and Fulvia, spread them cheeks'
- 'Sit on this, gape-assed Octavius'
- 'Hi Octavius, you suck cock'
- Take this, Octavius, you bitch'



## LAUDATIO TURIAE

- Funerary speech, late first century BCE
- Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 6.7.1-3

‘When Quintus Lucretius [Vespillo, the consul of 19 BCE] was proscribed by the triumvirs, his wife Turia hid him in her bedroom above the rafters. A single maidservant knew the secret. At great risk to herself, she kept him safe from imminent death. So rare was her loyalty that, while the other men who had been proscribed found themselves in foreign, hostile places, barely managing to escape the worst tortures of body and soul, Lucretius was safe in that bedroom in the arms of his wife’.





## VESTAL VIRGINS

- Top: relief of Vestal Virgins processing, from the interior of the Ara Pacis



- Right: relief of the Vestal Virgins banqueting, perhaps from the interior of the Ara Pacis



# NEXT SESSION

Seminar: Cicero's *Pro Caelio*

Ioannes Reinhard Weguelin, 'Lesbia', 1878

