

# Gender construction and social connections in Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam*

*Mathilde Cambron-Goulet*

This article was originally published in

## **Platonism and its Legacy**

*Selected Papers from the Fifteenth Annual Conference  
of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies*

Edited John F. Finamore and Tomáš Nejeschleba

ISBN 978 1 898910 886

**Published in 2019 by**

**The Prometheus Trust, Lydney.**

This article is published under the terms of **Creative Commons  
Licence BY 4.0**

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

The Prometheus Trust is a registered UK charity, no. 299648

[www.prometheustrust.co.uk](http://www.prometheustrust.co.uk)

# Gender construction and social connections in Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam*

Mathilde Cambron-Goulet

The status of women in the school of Plotinus seems to have been different from what it was in other areas of the intellectual life of the time. Porphyry tells us that there were women among Plotinus' auditors (*Vita Plotini* 9) and also mentions that he gave lessons to his wife Marcella (*Marc.* 10). But is Porphyry's wife Marcella considered a legitimate philosopher-to-be? The ability of women to practice philosophy is an important theme of the letter, as Porphyry's addressee is a woman and as the piece might have been intended for publication, hence Whittaker considers the letter a protreptic to convert women to philosophy.<sup>1</sup> But some testimonies show that the intellectual aptitude of women was questioned at the time, such as Lactantius:

Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* 3, 25, 9-12

Primum, quia multis artibus opus est, ut ad philosophiam possit accedi. Discendae istae communes litterae propter usum legendi, quia in tanta rerum uarietate, nec disci audiendo possunt omnia, nec memoria contineri. Grammaticis quoque non parum operae dandum est, ut rectam loquendi rationem scias. Id multos annos auferat necesse est. Nec oratoria quidem ignoranda est, ut ea, quae didiceris, proferre atque eloqui possis. Geometria quoque, ac musica, et astrologia necessaria est, quod hae artes cum philosophia habent aliquam societatem: quae uniuersa perdiscere neque feminae possunt, quibus intra puberes annos officia mox usibus domesticis profutura discenda sunt neque serui, quibus per eos annos uel maxime seruiendum est, quibus possunt discere; neque pauperes, aut opifices, aut rustici, quibus in diem uictus labore est quaerendus.

---

<sup>1</sup> Whittaker (2010) 49. I would like to thank François-Julien Côté-Remy, for his work as my research assistant made this article possible, as well as Jana Schultz, John Finamore and Tomáš Nejeschleba for their warm welcome in Olomouc. My participation to the ISNS conference has been funded by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et Culture.

[...] firstly because many skills are needed for the attainment of philosophy to be possible. There are the standard letters of the alphabet to learn, to enable reading, because the great variety of topics prevents all details being learnt by listening or by rote. Much time has to be spent with the language teachers too, to learn the right patterns of utterance, and that is bound to take up years. Even rhetoric cannot be omitted, for the projection and enunciation of what has been learnt. Geometry, music and astrology are also needed: these are skills associated with philosophy. It is all quite beyond a woman's capacity, because in her adolescent years she must learn the tasks soon to serve her in housekeeping; it is also beyond slaves, because all the years in which they could be learning are entirely devoted to service; and it is also beyond the poor, craftsmen or peasants, as they have to spend each day working for their food. (trans. Bowen and Garnsey)

As women are trained for domestic work rather than letters or rhetoric, how could they develop an aptitude to philosophy, which presupposes skills that take years to learn? Even if Lactantius is an opponent to philosophy who may exaggerate the difficulties of access to philosophy in order to make a contrast between the philosophical wisdom, which is reserved to a happy few, and Christian wisdom, which is accessible to everyone, he still makes a point, as often marriage marks the end of education, and women used to get married at a much younger age than their husbands at the time.

However, some social networks could provide better conditions for the intellectual blooming of women than what Lactantius suggests. Indeed, many of the ancient women philosophers we know are characterized by their familial connection with more widely accepted male philosophers: that is notably the case of the Pythagorean women philosophers<sup>2</sup> and of Amphicleia, who is mentioned in *Vita Plotini* 9, and is Iamblichus' daughter-in-law. The *Ad Marcellam* presents a particular interest when it comes to the relationship between philosophical networks and family networks, as it has been considered an apology for Porphyry's marriage with Marcella.<sup>3</sup> Marcella's belonging to Porphyry's family is then one of the characteristics that would allow her to be identified as a philosopher. The display of her

---

<sup>2</sup> Waithe (1987) 11.

<sup>3</sup> Guillaumont (2017) 302.

social connections with the philosopher through epistolarity also contributes to this construction of her identity as a legitimate member of the Neoplatonic circle.<sup>4</sup>

But although the women's familial connections seem to play a central role in their ability to have access to philosophy, the argumentation that is developed by Porphyry in his apology of the marriage constructs Marcella as a philosopher-to-be herself (*Marc.* 1-3). The exhortations that are found elsewhere in the letter also suggest her to behave in a more virile (ἄρρην) way (*Marc.* 33). Some of the women who practiced philosophy in Antiquity are indeed renowned for their refusal to conform to the gendered expectations of their social role,<sup>5</sup> but it does not seem to be the case with Marcella. In most cases, the women's philosophical activity was still exerted within the familial cell and it covered practical day-to-day life.<sup>6</sup> We see this interest for domestic issues in Porphyry's letter to Marcella, nevertheless this should not lead us to think that Marcella's typically feminine philosophical activity was necessarily considered illegitimate, as the practical dimension of philosophy is well attested in Neoplatonism.<sup>7</sup> In this paper, I would like to suggest that this interest for practical virtue that is put forward in Porphyry's letter is linked to the doctrine of the hierarchy of virtues, and that Porphyry not only makes recommendations for Marcella to behave according to civic virtue, which is the first step of the hierarchy of virtues, but also brings his wife to access purificatory virtues that constitute the second step of the hierarchy of virtues, and a level at which the sex is not relevant anymore because to exert purificatory virtues, detachment from the body is required. The ungendered nature of the higher virtues, according to the doctrine of the hierarchy of virtue that we find in Neoplatonists would explain that women were especially welcome in their philosophical circles.

Focusing on the case study of Marcella, this paper aims to clarify the ability of women to access Neoplatonic circles. First I will address educational issues about women in Antiquity, by examining how their place within social and familial networks make it possible for them to become members of the Neoplatonic group. Second, I will address the

---

<sup>4</sup> Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2015), Williams (2014).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Hipparchia; Blundell (1995) 161.

<sup>6</sup> Waithe (1987).

<sup>7</sup> Hadot (1995) 243-259.

question whether their gender has an impact on one's philosophical ability, by studying the virtues that are discussed in Porphyry's letter and how the philosopher recommends that Marcella should practice them.

- A. Women as legitimate members of the Neoplatonic school
  - a. Women in Plotinus' school

It is important to stress that our best sources, such as Porphyry's *Vita Plotini*, evoke the presence of women within Plotinus' school, or connected to the school. Brisson's prosopography (1982) mentions Amphicleia (*Vit. Plot.* 9.3); Gemina, who hosted the philosopher in her home (*Vit. Plot.* 9.2), as well as her daughter who was also named Gemina (*Vit. Plot.* 9.3); Salonina, the emperor's wife, who praised Plotinus (*Vit. Plot.* 12.2). Four women may seem not that many, but make it clear that there were women within Plotinus' intellectual circle; especially since they are presented with the school's best members, the *zêlôtai* (*Vit. Plot.* 9.1), and the formula Porphyry uses to begin their portrait shows that these women are depicted as philosophers in their own right:

Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 9.1-5

Ἔσχε δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας σφόδρα φιλοσοφία προσκειμένας, Γεμίναν τε, ἧς καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ κατόκει, καὶ τὴν ταύτης θυγατέρα Γεμίναν, ὁμοίως τῇ μητρὶ καλουμένην, Ἀμφικλείαν τε τὴν Ἀρίστωνος τοῦ Ἰαμβλίχου υἱοῦ γεγονυῖαν γυναῖκα, [σφόδρα φιλοσοφία προσκειμένας].

Among his fervent devotees there were also women: Gemina, who owned the house he lived in, her daughter Gemina, who shared her mother's name, Amphicleia who had married Ariston the son of Iamblichus, all fervently devoted to philosophy. (trans. Edwards)

This gives us a clue that women were considered legitimate members of the Plotinian circle.<sup>8</sup> The case of Gemina and her daughter are particularly interesting, as there are parallel cases in which a teacher and his pupil live together in the Neoplatonist school in Athens,

---

<sup>8</sup> Goulet-Cazé (1982) 239. About women in Neoplatonic circles, one could also think of Asklepiogeneia, the daughter of Plutarch (Marinus, *Vita Procli* 28), or of Hypatia in Alexandria. However, the focus here is on Plotinus' school.

although usually it is rather the pupil who lives at the teacher's home.<sup>9</sup> In that perspective, it is worth noting that Porphyry's biography of his professor insists that Plotinus did welcome both boys and girls in his home:

Porphyry, *Vit. Plot.* 9.5-16

Πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες ἀποθνήσκουν μέλλοντες τῶν εὐγενεστάτων φέροντες τὰ ἑαυτῶν τέκνα, ἄρρενάς τε ὁμοῦ καὶ θηλείας, ἐκείνῳ παρεδίδοσαν μετὰ τῆς ἄλλης οὐσίας ὡς ἱερῷ τινι καὶ θεῷ φύλακι. Διὸ καὶ ἐπεπλήρωτο αὐτῷ ἡ οἰκία παίδων καὶ παρθένων. Ἐν τούτοις δὲ ἦν καὶ Ποτάμων, οὗ τῆς παιδεύσεως φροντίζων πολλάκις ἔν καὶ μεταποιοῦντος ἠκροάσατο. Ἠνείχετο δὲ καὶ τοὺς λογισμούς, ἀναφερόντων τῶν [ἐν] ἐκείνοις παραμενόντων, καὶ τῆς ἀκριβείας ἐπεμελεῖτο λέγων, ἕως ἂν μὴ φιλοσοφῶσιν, ἔχειν αὐτοὺς δεῖν τὰς κτήσεις καὶ τὰς προσόδους ἀνεπάφους τε καὶ σωζομένας.

Moreover, many men and women on the point of death, people of the highest rank, brought their own children, male as well as female, and entrusted them to him with the rest of their goods, as though to a holy and divinely-endowed custodian. As a result, his home was full of boys and unwed girls. These included Potamon, whose education was Plotinus' concern: he would listen to him often even when he was merely repeating a lesson. He consented to see the accounts when they were submitted by those in charge of them, and took pains to be accurate, saying that, while they were not engaged in philosophy, they needed to have their possessions and revenues preserved intact. (trans. Edwards)

So, as this passage shows, Plotinus was entrusted with the task of raising orphans, both *paides* and *parthenoi*, and considered it possible that those kids could become philosophers.<sup>10</sup> So it is quite clear, from there, that women could very well become part of Plotinus' school.

b. Is Marcella a legitimate philosopher?

So women could for sure become philosophers in Plotinus' school, but that does not make Marcella a philosopher. As Goulet-Cazé points

<sup>9</sup> Marinus tells us that Proclus was housed at Syrianus' (12.32-36) and at Leonas' (8.5-10). About students who lived with their teachers and attended classes in their homes, see Watts (2011) 231.

<sup>10</sup> Goulet-Cazé (1982) 237; Michalewski (2017) 549.

out, the women that are mentioned as *zêlôtai* were participants in high education,<sup>11</sup> which is not necessarily the case of Marcella. However, Porphyry insists that Marcella has a nature suited for philosophy:

Porphyry, *Marc.* 3

ἐτέρας δὲ θειότερας καὶ οὐδὲν τῆ δημῶδει ταύτη εὐκυίας, καθ' ἣν ἀγασθεῖς σου τὴν πρὸς τὴν ὀρθὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιτηδειότητα τῆς φύσεως, οὐκ ᾤηθην προσήκειν ἀνδρὸς φίλου μοι στερηθεῖσαν συλλήπτορος ἔρημόν σε καταλιπεῖν καὶ προστάτου σώφρονος καὶ τῷ σῶ τρόπῳ ἐπιτηδείου.

The second reason [*scil.* why I married you] was more divinely inspired and not at all like this common one: in my admiration of your natural aptitude for the right philosophy, I did not think it fitting, after you were bereft of your husband, who was a friend of mine, to leave you abandoned without a partner and protector wise and suited to your character. (trans. O'Brien-Wicker)

Nevertheless, a gifted nature is not sufficient to say that Marcella is a philosopher.

c. Education issues: Marcella's literacy and access to the Neoplatonic doctrines

One issue is to determine her level of education. What are the odds that Marcella was an educated person? We could suppose from the letter that she was at least literate enough to be able to read it, but if the letter was intended for publication this assumption needs a bit more investigation. She probably could have benefitted from some instruction if she came from a rather wealthy family, as wealth and social status is a significant factor of access to education for the women in Antiquity, more that it is for men.<sup>12</sup> In particular, the evidence from epistolary papyri shows that the women who were able to write letters came from wealthy families.<sup>13</sup> But, Porphyry tells us that Marcella is not so wealthy, or at least, that it is not her wealth that lead him to marry her, and insists that their marriage will bring financial difficulties:

---

<sup>11</sup> Goulet-Cazé (1982) 241.

<sup>12</sup> Criatore (2001) 4 and 75.

<sup>13</sup> Criatore (2001) 75.

Porphyry, *Marc.* 2

οὕτωςι γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπομειλιπτόμενος τοὺς ἐν τῇ κωμωδοτραγωδίᾳ προστάτας δαίμονας τὸν γαμικὸν ὕμνον ἀγωνίσασθαι οὐκ ὄκνησα ἀσμενέστατα καὶ τῷ πλήθει τῶν σῶν τέκνων συντυχῶν καὶ τῇ προσούσῃ περισκελείᾳ τῶν ἀναγκαίων τῇ τε πονηρίᾳ τῶν ἐνυβρισάντων.

For in the same way also I myself, in an attempt to appease the daimons in charge of comitragedy, did not hesitate to contend for the prize in the marriage hymn, cheerfully taking on your large family, the attendant hardship over the necessities, and the wickedness of those who insulted me. (trans. O'Brien-Wicker)

However, Porphyry notes that Marcella has servants, when he exhorts her not to punish them while she's mad and to avoid acquiring arrogant servants (35). Having limited means but hiring servants fits with something we know from epigraphic evidence: in Rome the pedagogues, who were responsible for the education of the little boys and girls as well, were also employed in lower classes,<sup>14</sup> and women from upper classes probably had a wider access to education than in other spatio-temporal areas.<sup>15</sup> Cribiore remarks that their role has been underestimated and that they continued to educate adolescents as well, which is particularly evident from Julian's *Misopogon* in which the emperor portrays his pedagogue Mardonius and shows that he played an important role in his literary and philosophical education.<sup>16</sup> These informations suggest Lactantius' testimony should be taken with a grain of salt: if women did not usually access to the rhetorical level<sup>17</sup> and most of them were illiterate,<sup>18</sup> in urban areas, the girls of the low-middle to upper classes were trained in primary education<sup>19</sup> and, rarely, grammatical instruction,<sup>20</sup> so that wealthy women in Rome

---

<sup>14</sup> Cribiore (2001) 47.

<sup>15</sup> See the testimony of Plutarch, *Pompeius* LV, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Cribiore (2001) 49.

<sup>17</sup> Cribiore (2001) 56.

<sup>18</sup> Cribiore (2001) 76.

<sup>19</sup> Cribiore (2001) 75.

<sup>20</sup> Cribiore (2001) 74.



probably had a better access to philosophical circles.<sup>21</sup> For slightly earlier dates, one could think of Julia Domna, for example.<sup>22</sup>

Even if access to philosophy was not defined in terms of literacy in Antiquity,<sup>23</sup> the question of Marcella's literacy is still interesting because she is the recipient of a written text. Cribiore notes that literacy was more important for women, because it allowed them to be part of society,<sup>24</sup> and as Deslauriers notes, acquaintances were by far the more decisive issues in a woman's admittance to a philosophical circle.<sup>25</sup> In that respect, receiving Porphyry's letter frames Marcella as an educated woman and as a legitimate member of the group: first off, the letter is a material testimony of her relationship with Porphyry<sup>26</sup> that can be publicly displayed to reap social benefits.<sup>27</sup> The display of the relationship through a letter is efficient because letters, even private ones, had a public life in Antiquity: they could be dictated to secretaries;<sup>28</sup> they had to be delivered by bearers who usually also transmitted part of the message orally;<sup>29</sup> besides they were not always sealed<sup>30</sup> and often read aloud.<sup>31</sup> That last remark implies that Marcella's degree of literacy should not have an impact on the perception that she belonged to the Neoplatonic group, which derives from the letter. Even if she had to ask someone to read her the letter, the letter still suggests that she is able to understand the doctrines that the letter refers to, regarding the intelligible world and the One. Would she fail to understand them, the *Vita Plotini* presents many members of the Neoplatonic school who have difficulties in understanding

---

<sup>21</sup> Helleman (1995) suggest that women could take part in philosophical circles, and notes that Penelope was often used as a personification of philosophy in the Roman world.

<sup>22</sup> Waithe (1987) 117-138.

<sup>23</sup> Deslauriers (2012) 344.

<sup>24</sup> Cribiore (2001) 76.

<sup>25</sup> Deslauriers (2012) 345.

<sup>26</sup> Gibson et Morello (2012) 143.

<sup>27</sup> Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2015), Williams (2014).

<sup>28</sup> Cribiore (1996) 156; Freisenbruch (2007) 248-252; Guillaumont (2004) 128; Poignault (2008) 200. The hire of professional writers and secretaries was common: Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 6-7; 42-43.

<sup>29</sup> Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 34; 38-39.

<sup>30</sup> Bagnall and Cribiore (2006) 38.

<sup>31</sup> Hodkinson (2007) 264.

Plotinus,<sup>32</sup> including Porphyry himself,<sup>33</sup> and who, although they are criticized by Porphyry who wishes to appear as the legitimate heir of Plotinus, still belong to the community.<sup>34</sup> And so while Marcella's literacy is not the main criterion to her legitimacy as a member of the Neoplatonic community, the display of her philosophical acquaintances through a literary device reinforces her links with it.

d. Familial and social connections of Marcella

Marcella's belonging to the Neoplatonic group is indeed important to determine whether she is or not a legitimate philosophy student. Besides her capacity to understand the doctrine, it is mostly through her marriage with Porphyry that Marcella is defined as a member of the group, as it is during the ten months that they spent together that she received her philosophical education:

Porphyry, *Marc.* 4

μένειν δὲ ἐνταυθοῖ βιαζόμενος τήν τε τοῦ αὐθις ἐντυχεῖν ἐλπίδα  
προισχόμενος εἰκότως σοι παραινέσαιμ' ἂν ἀντεχομένη τῶν  
δοθέντων ἐν τοῖς δέκα μηνσὶν οἷς μοι συνώκησας μὴ πόθῳ καὶ  
ἐπιθυμίᾳ τοῦ πλείονος καὶ τὸ ὄν ἤδη ἐκβαλεῖν.

But since I am compelled to remain here, holding on to the hope of our reunion, the best I can do is to urge you to adhere to the precepts imparted in the ten months you have been wed to me and not to throw away, out of a yearning and a desire for more, what you already have as well. (trans. O'Brien-Wicker)

Porphyry begins his letter with an apology for his marriage with Marcella, which he tries to connect with the philosophical arguments of the letter.<sup>35</sup> In the Roman Empire, marriage is an institution in which familial constraint plays an important role, although the consent of the groom and bride are required.<sup>36</sup> Widowed women such as Marcella probably had a bit more latitude so, particularly if they already had children, a remarriage would not be as necessary,<sup>37</sup> which

---

<sup>32</sup> E. g. *Vit. Plot.* 26.29-32.

<sup>33</sup> *Vit. Plot.* 18.10-19.

<sup>34</sup> Finamore (2005); Bodéüs (2001).

<sup>35</sup> Whittaker (2010).

<sup>36</sup> Badel (2013) 34-35.

<sup>37</sup> Bodin (2013) 68-71.

would mean that the marriage between Marcella and Porphyry did not respond to social conventions, and also explain the need for an apology of the marriage at the beginning of the letter (1-3). Besides, not all philosophical circles are favorable towards marriage<sup>38</sup> and Porphyry's defence of sexual abstinence (28) suggests that he was probably not fond of marriage — which explains the necessity of the apology and also suggests that, as Guillaumont and O'Brien Wicker have noted, the marriage between Porphyry and Marcella may well have been a *mariage blanc*.<sup>39</sup>

Porphyry's attitude towards Marcella's children contributes to the philosophical defence of the marriage. The children are not all of very young age: as Porphyry points out, some of them have reached puberty and are near the age of marriage themselves (1). Porphyry considers Marcella's children as his children insofar as they choose a philosophical way of life:

Porphyry, *Marc.* 1

ἔχειν κεκρικῶς παῖδας τοὺς τῆς ἀληθινῆς σοφίας ἐραστάς, τὰ τε σὰ τέκνα, εἰ φιλοσοφίας τῆς ὀρθῆς ἀντιλάβοιτό ποτε ὑφ' ἡμῖν ἀνατρεφόμενα·

for I have decided to have as children those who are lovers of the true wisdom, along with your own children, should they someday embrace the correct philosophy as they are brought up under our guidance. (trans. O'Brien Wicker)

For Marcella's children, the marriage of their mother with Porphyry is an occasion to join the Neoplatonic circle, just like it is for Marcella herself, the occasion of a philosophical education.<sup>40</sup> The topic of the education of the young wife by her husband is not new either,<sup>41</sup> although with her seven children, including adult children, Marcella probably does not qualify for a "young wife".

---

<sup>38</sup> O'Brien Wicker (1989) 419-420.

<sup>39</sup> Guillaumont (2017) 311; O'Brien Wicker (1989) 421-422; O'Brien Wicker (1987) 8.

<sup>40</sup> Whittaker (2010) 48.

<sup>41</sup> E. g. Crates and Hipparchia in the *Letters of Crates* 30, 32 and 33; Ischomachus and his wife in Xenophon's *Economic*, 7-10; Plutarch and his wife in his *Advice to the bride and groom*, etc. See Whittaker (2010) 50.

B. Gender construction and practice of virtue in Porphyry  
 a. Soul and body

However, that would also depend on one's definition of education: Porphyry defines education as the capacity of the soul to command the body:

Porphyry, *Marc.* 34

μεγάλη οὖν παιδεία ἄρχειν τοῦ σώματος. πολλάκις κόπτουσι  
 τινα μέρη ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ· τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς ἕνεκα ἔτοιμος ἔσο τὸ ὅλον  
 σῶμα ἀποκόπτειν.

“So then, a great education means to be in control of the body.”  
 Often people amputate some limb to save their lives; you should  
 be prepared to amputate the whole body to save your soul.  
 (trans. O’Brien Wicker modified)

His conception of education is founded on the exercise of purificatory virtues that leads one to a detachment from their body, and it is worth noting that Marcella's ability to detach herself from her body is a central theme of the letter, which suggests that for Porphyry, it is possible for Marcella to access a great education (μεγάλη παιδεία). Porphyry insists that as a philosopher, even merely as an educated person, one should not be preoccupied with the body but only with the soul — as far as the body's natural needs are fulfilled, which means no hunger, no thirst, and no cold (30).<sup>42</sup> And Porphyry notes that the sexual parts (τὰ μόρια) are attached to the body (33). This is why, for philosophical purposes, it does not matter whether Marcella is a man or a woman:

Porphyry, *Marc.* 33

μήτε οὖν εἰ ἄρρην εἶ μήτε εἰ θήλεια τὸ σῶμα πολυπραγμόνει,  
 μηδὲ γυναικα ἴδης σαυτήν, ὅτι μηδ' ἐγὼ σοι ὡς τοιαύτη  
 προσέσχον. φεῦγε τῆς ψυχῆς πᾶν τὸ θηλυνόμενον, ὡς εἰ καὶ  
 ἄρρενος εἶχες τὸ σῶμα περικείμενον.

Therefore, do not be overly concerned about whether your body is male or female; do not regard yourself as a woman, Marcella, for I did not devote myself to you as such. Flee from every

---

<sup>42</sup> This is also the case in Pythagorean thought: philosophy delivers the soul from the body. See Lambropoulou (1995) 133.

effeminate element of the soul as if you are clothed in a male body. (trans. O'Brien Wicker)

In other words, Porphyry distinguishes sex and gender: for him, one can be a woman and still have a virile soul, although he does not show any particular benevolence towards women.<sup>43</sup> Another hint in that direction is Porphyry's use of the word *parthenos* to describe the "virile" (ἄρρην) soul.

Porphyry, *Marc.* 33

ἐκ παρθένου γὰρ ψυχῆς καὶ ἡθέου νοῦ τὰ τικτόμενα  
μακαριώτατα·

For the most blessed offspring come from virginal soul and unmated intelligence. (trans. O'Brien Wicker)

A *parthenos*, it must be said, does not correspond to a virgin defined physiologically: rather, it refers to a state of being, and to an attitude towards sexuality akin to *enkrateia*.<sup>44</sup> Placing on equal grounds a *parthenos* soul and an *arrên* soul would mean that there is no such thing as a man's soul or a woman's soul and that none has pre-eminence over the other, because the sex is attached to the body, an analysis that is consistent with the opinion that women's virtues and men's virtues are identical and that appears in the *Meno* (71a-73d).<sup>45</sup> The refusal to identify the virile soul to the male body and the effeminate soul to the female body is also suggested through the use that Porphyry makes of *parthenos* and *arrên* in opposition to "effeminate" (θηλυνόμενον): the femininity of the soul, in Porphyry, is identified with proneness to passions.<sup>46</sup> Philosophy, in turn, consists precisely in acknowledging the link between soul and body, but still trying to turn away from the body's passions to aim towards the divinity of the soul, as the body is not an integral part of the soul:<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Festugière (1998 [1944]) 31.

<sup>44</sup> Sissa (1984) 1119-1122. It must however be said that as Sissa put it, the *parthenos* can keep her status after she gave birth, but loses her *parthenia* with the manifest penetration of the penis.

<sup>45</sup> Deslauriers (2012) 351.

<sup>46</sup> See *Sententiae ad Intelligibilia ducentes* 29, 24-31 and *Abst.* 4.20, 3. See Brisson (2005) 600-601.

<sup>47</sup> O'Brien Wicker (1987) 17 and (1989) 418.

Porphyry, *Marc.* 32

εἰ μὴ τὸ σῶμα οὕτω σοι συνηρτῆσθαι φυλάξεις ὡς τοῖς ἐμβρύοις κυοφορούμενοις τὸ χόριον καὶ τῷ σίτῳ βλαστάνοντι τὴν καλάμην, οὐ γνώση σεαυτήν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄλλος ὅστις μὴ οὕτω δοξάζει ἔγνω ἑαυτόν. ὥσπερ οὖν τὸ χόριον συγγεγόμενον καὶ ἡ καλάμη τοῦ σίτου, τελεωθέντα δὲ ρίπτεται ἐκάτερα, οὕτω καὶ τὸ συναρτώμενον τῇ ψυχῇ σπαρείση σῶμα οὐ μέρος ἀνθρώπου. ἀλλ' ἵνα μὲν ἐν γαστρὶ γένηται, προσυφάνθη τὸ χόριον, ἵνα δὲ ἐπὶ γῆς γένηται, συνεζύγη τὸ σῶμα. ὅσῳ τις τέτραπται πρὸς τὸ θνητόν, τοσοῦτω τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γνώμην ἀσύμμετρον παρασκευάζει πρὸς τὸ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας μέγεθος· καὶ ὅσῳ τῆς τοῦ σώματος προσπαθείας ἀφίσταται, τοσοῦτω μέτρῳ τῷ θεῷ πελάζει.

Unless you maintain that the body is joined to you in the same way as the membrane is joined to embryos growing in the womb, and as the stalk is joined to the growing grain, you will not know yourself. Nor, indeed, does anyone else who does not think like this know himself. So then, just as the membrane and the stalk of the grain grow concurrently, and once they mature each is shucked off, likewise also the body, which has been joined to the sown soul, is not part of a man but exists in order for him to be born in the womb, just as the entwined membrane is yoked to the body in order for him to be born on earth. The more an individual has turned toward the mortal element, the more he makes his heart unsuitable for the sublimity of immortality. But the more he holds aloof from passionate attachment to the body, the more he draws near to the divine. (trans. O'Brien Wicker)

In Plotinus, the nature of the soul stands halfway between intelligible and sensible, as the soul has descended into the body.<sup>48</sup> The insistence on the necessity for Marcella to detach herself from her corporeality points to Porphyry's conception of a nature of the soul that is unrelated to sex and that fits in Plotinus' doctrine of the descent of the soul. Besides, we should stress that this importance given to the detachment from the body is in no way specific to Marcella's philosophical training, but is also well attested in the Neoplatonic schools, beginning with Plotinus himself who advocates for vegetarianism,<sup>49</sup> frugality,<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Plotinus IV 8 (6). O'Brien (1977), Kanyororo (2003) 237.

<sup>49</sup> *Vit. Plot.* 2.3-5; see Porphyry's arguments for philosophers to adopt vegetarianism in *Abst.* 1.27 and 2.34.

reduction of the time past asleep<sup>51</sup> and so on.<sup>52</sup> So as Porphyry insists that Marcella turns away from her body, he shows that just like every other philosophy student she has to adopt an ascetic way of life. The task that Porphyry recommends to Marcella — vigilance regarding the true identity and origin of the soul, the intelligible — truly is the task of philosophy.<sup>53</sup>

b. The hierarchy of virtues

However, to accede to the divinity of the soul, Marcella must make her way up the four levels of the hierarchy of virtues. This doctrine supposes that before considering detachment from the body, one must first acquire practical virtues, which are often also described as civic virtues and correspond to the first level of virtue. The capacity of women to exert proper civic virtues is more problematic because they cannot participate in the political life of the city, which is the place where such virtue is exercised, but civic virtues are, in Porphyry's view, related to one's duties (καθήκοντα)<sup>54</sup> regarding community or one's gregariousness,<sup>55</sup> and are related to the requirements of the world,<sup>56</sup> as is clearly stated in the *Sententiae*:

Porphyry, *Sententiae ad Intelligibilia ducentes* 32, 6-14 Lamberz

Αἱ μὲν τοῦ πολιτικοῦ ἐν μετριοπαθείᾳ κείμεναι τῷ ἔπεσθαι καὶ ἀκολουθεῖν τῷ λογισμῷ τοῦ καθήκοντος κατὰ τὰς πράξεις· διὸ πρὸς κοινωνίαν βλέπousαι τὴν ἀβλαβὴ τῶν πλησίον ἐκ τοῦ συναγελασμοῦ καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας πολιτικάι λέγονται. καὶ ἔστι φρόνησις μὲν περὶ τὸ λογιζόμενον, ἀνδρία δὲ περὶ τὸ θυμούμενον, σωφροσύνη δὲ ἐν ὁμολογίᾳ καὶ συμφωνίᾳ ἐπιθυμητικοῦ πρὸς λογισμόν, δικαιοσύνη δὲ ἡ ἐκάστου τούτων ὁμοῦ οἰκαιοπραγία ἀρχῆς πέρι καὶ τοῦ ἄρχεσθαι.

---

<sup>50</sup> 8.21-22; see also Porphyry, *Abst.* 1.38 and 45.

<sup>51</sup> 8.21-22.

<sup>52</sup> Goulet-Cazé (1982) 255; O'Brien Wicker (1987) 7. Vegetarianism, frugality and reduction of sleep are parts of the purificatory virtues. See Michalewski (2017) 547.

<sup>53</sup> Michalewski (2017) 539.

<sup>54</sup> Brisson (2006) 51.

<sup>55</sup> Brisson (2004) 277.

<sup>56</sup> Michalewski (2017) 552.

The "civic" virtues, based as they are on moderation of the passions, consist in following and going along with the process of reasoning relative to our duty in the field of practical action ; hence, since they have regard to a community of action which avoids doing harm to one's neighbours, they are called "civic" by reason of their concern with gregariousness and community. They are as follows: (practical) wisdom, relative to the reasoning element (in the soul), courage, relative to the spirited element, moderation, which consists in the agreement and harmony of the affective element with the reason, and justice, consisting, for each of the elements in the soul, in its performance of its proper role with respect to ruling and being ruled. (trans. Dillon)

This explains that the letter includes more specific advice that Porphyry destines to Marcella and that revolves around everyday life and concerns that are rather traditionally feminine: Marcella's execution of her duties include coping with her husband's absence (which means with courage and moderation), hiring servants (with prudence), taking care of her children, respecting traditional piety which involves participation to domestic cult and may also involve participation to civic cult (18), etc. All of those duties, correctly done, correspond to the traditional virtues of the Roman woman<sup>57</sup> as well as to the concerns expressed in other women philosophers, such as the Pythagoricians.<sup>58</sup> They are also the sign that Porphyry's letter is first destined to Marcella, which is why it takes into account Marcella's

---

<sup>57</sup> Whittaker (2010) 50.

<sup>58</sup> Jufresa (1995); Lambropoulou (1995); Wider (1986) 33. Although women must develop some specific virtues, many virtues that are put forward by the Pythagorean women are common to both men and women: Lambropoulou (1995) 129. Deslauriers notes that although the theme of the virtues that are common to men and women can be traced back to Plato and Xenophon, "only in the text by Phintys is that claim connected to the suggestion that women might engage in philosophical activity", an analysis that I have to disagree with precisely because the *Letter to Marcella* does connect a woman's exercise of virtue and her philosophical ability. See Deslauriers (2012) 348. Deslauriers however, also remarks that if the Pythagorean women's works defend traditional duties with philosophical claims, most of them do not involve the critical analysis that is required for a work to be considered "philosophical", an analysis which I think is correct and which, in my view, is important to acknowledge to see the extent of the philosophical engagement that Porphyry expected from his wife. See Deslauriers (2012) 346.



character and situation as a beginner in philosophy.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, this concern for everyday life behavior shows that for Porphyry, Marcella is already in a position that allows her to achieve the first level of the Neoplatonic hierarchy of virtues: practical virtues are defined as virtues that allow men to live together through the limitation of the desires and passions, because they behave in accordance with their nature,<sup>60</sup> and this can easily be transposed to women. The transposition of the practical virtues around a woman's tasks shows that for Porphyry, it is possible for to achieve practical virtues in the execution of various duties — this also appears in the *Vita Plotini* in which Plotinus' virtue is also attested by his ability to take care of the children of which he is the guardian (*Vit. Plot.* 9,12-16) and to solve domestic problems (*Vit. Plot.* 11.1-8).<sup>61</sup> But the few lines about Marcella's conduct as a mother or house holder, although it is far from being the main issue addressed in the letter, also shows that in Porphyry's view, it is relevant to take Marcella's specific occupations as a woman into consideration to determine which are the duties of a soul when directed towards the body and the city<sup>62</sup> — hence turned away from the soul's true divine being<sup>63</sup> — to give her specific advice. In other words, Marcella's domestic concerns do count as philosophical matters<sup>64</sup> as far as they are framed as the duties of a soul that practices civic virtues,<sup>65</sup> and some of them, such as her husband's

---

<sup>59</sup> Guillaumont (2017).

<sup>60</sup> Brisson (2004) 277; (2006) 51.

<sup>61</sup> Brisson (2006) 56.

<sup>62</sup> As Michalewski notes, the soul can at the same time be present to the intelligible and to the sensible: turning to the sensible according to the circumstances is the fact of a soul that is truly turned towards the intelligible, as the soul both thinks the intelligible and gives life to the body. See Michalewski (2017) 558-560.

<sup>63</sup> Brisson (2006) 52.

<sup>64</sup> O'Brien Wicker (1989) 417.

<sup>65</sup> As Deslauriers notes, "philosophical content" that is attributed or destined to women is often barely philosophical, but I would like to stress that it is not the case here, first because the moral platitudes regarding Marcella's conduct occupy very little of the letter, and second because the accent is put on the relationship between the body and the soul, which is an issue that most ancient philosophers would have considered philosophical. See Deslauriers (2012) 344. It is important to stress that the absence of an elaborate depiction of important Neoplatonic doctrines only show that the letter truly belongs to the epistolary genre, that is characterized by exhortations to memory (8, 10, 20) and by simplified and contextualized explanations: the absence of deeper doctrinal content is not a proof

absence, even play a role as metaphorical illustrations of the philosophical doctrines discussed in the letter.<sup>66</sup> Also, in Neoplatonic thought, the civic virtues are inspired by the divine and in that respect they are the first level in a process of divinization:<sup>67</sup> they are not an end in themselves but are subordinated to the greater good — contemplation of the intelligible.<sup>68</sup>

From that point, to reach the second level of virtues, Marcella should detach her soul from her body, which correspond to the purificatory virtues.<sup>69</sup> In addition to the passages from *Ad Marc.* 32 and 34 that are quoted above, we find at the beginning of the letter another passage in which Marcella is exhorted to purificatory virtues:

Porphyry, *Ad Marc.* 10

Τῆς μὲν οὖν ἐμῆς σκιᾶς καὶ τοῦ φαινομένου εἰδώλου οὔτε παρόντων ὠνήσω τι οὔτ' ἀπόντων ἐπώδυνος ἢ ἀπουσία τῆ μελετώσῃ φεύγειν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος. ἐμοῦ δὲ καθαρῶς τύχοις ἂν μάλιστα καὶ παρόντος καὶ συνόντος νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν σὺν καθαρῷ τε καὶ τῷ καλλίστῳ τῆς συνουσίας καὶ μηδὲ χωρισθῆναι οἴου τε ὄντος, εἰ μελετῶης εἰς σεαυτὴν ἀναβαίνειν συλλέγουσα ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος πάντα τὰ διασκεδασθέντα σου μέλη καὶ εἰς πλῆθος κατακερματισθέντα ἀπὸ τῆς τέως ἐν μεγέθει δυνάμεως ἰσχυρούσης ἐνώσεως.

So then, you have not benefitted at all from the presence of my shadow and visible form nor from its absence. The absence is painful to you as you train yourself to flee from the body. But you could encounter me in complete purity as one both present and united to you night and day in a pure and most beautiful form of union and not as one likely to be separated from you, if you would train yourself to ascend into yourself, gathering from the body all the parts of your soul which have been scattered and

---

that “the letter to Marcella was not written for philosophers”. See Whittaker (2010). About the formal characteristic of philosophical letters, see Cambron-Goulet (2014) and (2017); about the simplification of the Neoplatonic doctrines in the *Ad Marcellam* through the use of *sententiae*, *exempla* and material from traditional piety, see O’Brien Wicker, who also insists on “cryptic references to advanced Neoplatonic concepts”: O’Brien Wicker (1987) 20-21.

<sup>66</sup> Whittaker (2001) 156-158; 163-164.

<sup>67</sup> O’Meara (1994) 156-157. See Plotinus, *Enneads* 19 (I, 2), 7, 20-28.

<sup>68</sup> Michalewski (2017) 553.

<sup>69</sup> See Plotinus, *Enneads* 19 (I, 2), 3, 19-23. Michalewski (2017) 547.

cut into many pieces from their former unity which had strength due to its size. (trans. O'Brien Wicker)

The purificatory virtues are the second step of Porphyry's four levels of virtue and they revolve around detachment from the body, although they imply that, as a prerequisite, one exerts the civic virtues and applies the precepts of philosophy in his actions.<sup>70</sup> The soul, in Porphyry's view, is not in the body, although it has a relationship with the body that allows it to enliven the body; in other words, the soul is transcendent intellect that, as part of the intelligible, is immortal and separable from the living body,<sup>71</sup> because it has an existence outside of the body, in other words the intellect remains intact if detached from the body.<sup>72</sup> From that second level of virtue, as the soul is emancipated from the body, the refusal to consider the sex of a person to determine her ability to practice philosophy makes sense: a transcendent intellect does not have a sex like it is the case for living bodies. This distinction that we find between sex and gender in Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam* would then imply that the only level of virtue that is exerted according to one's sex is the first level, that of practical virtues. Any soul that gets beyond that point will be considered virile as it goes up towards divinity and effeminate as it goes down. As she goes up the hierarchy of virtues, the sex that is attached to her body of course ceases to have an impact on her practice of virtue and the moral questions that Porphyry discusses become more readily "philosophical".

### C. Conclusions

So as Marcella's gendered identity matters when it comes to the practice of civic virtues, that revolves around traditionally feminine concerns, it is not an issue anymore as she develops purificatory virtues that allow Marcella to detach herself from her body: the identity of sex is attached to the body, not to the soul. The emphasis put on the first two steps of the hierarchy of virtues in Porphyry's letter to Marcella is also an argument in favor of Whittaker's interpretation of the letter as a protreptic,<sup>73</sup> a genre that features an invitation to

---

<sup>70</sup> O'Brien Wicker (1987) 20. As we can see from Plotinus' treatise 19 (I, 2), 7, 20-28, the possessor of virtues will act according to the circumstances, which may mean according to civic virtues if that is required, even though this kind of life will be left behind as he goes up the hierarchy of virtues.

<sup>71</sup> Karamanolis (2007) 95.

<sup>72</sup> Sorabji (2007) 62.

<sup>73</sup> Whittaker (2010); Festugière (1998 [1944]) expresses similar views.

adhere to a way of life<sup>74</sup> and which, as such, has an interest for practical matters—whether or not the letter was intended for publication to convert women to philosophy.<sup>75</sup> Thus, becoming a philosopher does not change Marcella's duties (e.g. as mother) in her everyday life,<sup>76</sup> but it means that her practice of virtue has to go beyond them. For sure, to start making her way towards philosophy, Marcella needs to be put in the right conditions, which are linked to her social status and her social connections. But from that point, Porphyry's argumentation in the letter shows that he is confident that she is able to engage in legitimate philosophical activity and to show penetration of philosophical issues as well as commitment to lead an ascetic life. In other words, Porphyry shares his knowledge of the divine with his wife<sup>77</sup> and this effort to educate her, to get the best out of her and to help her practice philosophy is also a way for him to practice wisdom.<sup>78</sup> Marcella's case shows that women were welcome among Neoplatonic philosophers, and that while their sex meant that they had to exercise practical virtues that were traditionally feminine, as far as they did develop those practical virtues and complied with the same asceticism as any other philosopher, being women did not refrain them from reaching the higher realms of virtue.

---

<sup>74</sup> See Van der Meeren (2002) 597; 604: the practical dimension of the personal ethics that is recommended to Marcella points in that direction. It must however be noted that formally, the *Ad Marcellam* does not feature one of the main characteristics of the protreptic genre, which is the refutation of the adversaries: see Van der Meeren (2002) 600-601. Also, Van der Meeren points out that protreptics were the very first steps of the philosophical teaching and hence that protreptic works often address the conditions of a good life in very general terms, which is not exactly the case here since 1) Marcella is exhorted to remember the philosophical training that Porphyry has already given to her (*Ad Marcellam* 4), although the letter does not address the highest (and hardest) doctrines, and 2) although it does not make for most part of the letter Porphyry includes practical recommendations that are very specific (e.g. *Ad Marcella* 35 about hiring and supervising servants). Thus, it may be more adequate to think of the letter to Marcella in terms of a spiritual direction, as Guillaumont (2017) suggests.

<sup>75</sup> Whittaker (2010) suggests that the letter was destined to women who were attracted to Christianity.

<sup>76</sup> Wilson (1997) 110.

<sup>77</sup> In a similar way, we know of women who were initiated to mysteries by their husbands, who shared their religious knowledge with their wives; see Festugière (1963).

<sup>78</sup> Michalewski (2017) 560-561.

## Bibliography

### Editions and translations

- Brisson, L. *et al.* 1992. *Porphyre, La vie de Plotin, études d'introduction, texte grec et traduction française, commentaire, notes complémentaires, bibliographie.* Paris: Vrin.
- Brisson, L. (ed.) 2005. *Porphyre. Sentences.* Paris: Vrin.
- O'Brien Wicker, K. 1987. *Porphyry the Philosopher: to Marcella.* Atlanta: Scholars Press.

### Secondary Sources

- Badel, C. 2013. "Le rôle de la contrainte dans les stratégies familiales (IVe-VIe siècles)", *Revue des études tardo-antiques* 3, sup. 1, 31-44.
- Bagnall, R., and Cribiore, R. 2006. *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC—AD 800.* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Bodéüs, R. 2001. "Plotin a-t-il empêché Porphyre de mourir de mélancolie?", *Hermes* 129, 567-571.
- Bodin, A. 2013. "Certains membres des familles de clercs ont-ils été contraints d'emprunter la voie de l'ascétisme en Afrique et en Italie ? (IVe-VIe siècles)", *Revue des études tardo-antiques* 3, sup. 1, 45-81.
- Blundell, S. 1995. *Women in Ancient Greece.* Cambridge.
- Brisson, L. *et al.* 1982. *Porphyre, La vie de Plotin, travaux préliminaires et index grec complet.* Paris: Vrin.
- Brisson, L. 2004. "La doctrine des degrés de vertu chez les néo-platoniciens. Une analyse de la *Sentence* 32 de Porphyre, de ses antécédents et de ses conséquences", *Études Platoniciennes* 1, 271-286.
- 2006. "Le maître, exemple des vertus dans la tradition platonicienne: Plotin et Proclus", in T. Ricklin (ed.), *Exempla docent. Les exemples des philosophes de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, 49-60. Paris: Vrin.
- Cambron-Goulet, M. 2017. "Les lettres d'Épicure, entre exhortation et didactique", in E. Gavaille and F. Guillaumont (eds.), *Conseiller, diriger par lettre*, 203-220. Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais.
- 2014. "Orality in Philosophical Epistles", in R. Scodel (ed.), *Between Orality and Literacy: Communication and Adaptation. Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World, vol. 10*, 148-174. Leiden: Brill.

- Criboire, R. 1996. *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- 2001. *Gymnastics of the mind: Greek education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 2009. *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Deslauriers, M. 2012. "Women, Education, and Philosophy", in S. L. James and S. Dillon, *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, 343-353. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Festugière, A. J. 1998 [1944]. *Trois dévots païens*. Paris: Arfuyen.
- 1963. "Initiée par l'époux", *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot*, 53, 135-146.
- Finamore J. 2005. "Biography as Self-Promotion: Porphyry's 'Vita Plotini'", *Dionysus* 23, 49-61.
- Freisenbruch, A. 2007. "Back to Fronto: Doctor and Patient in his Correspondence with an Emperor", in R. Morello and A. D. Morrison, *Ancient Letters. Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*, 235-255. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gibson, R., and Morello, R. 2012. *Reading the Letters of Pliny the Younger: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Guillaumont, F. 2004. "Charta et codicilli: aspects matériels de la correspondance dans les *Lettres* de Cicéron", in L. Nadjo and E. Gavoille (eds.), *Epistulae antiquae III. Actes du III<sup>e</sup> Colloque international « L'épistolaire antique et ses prolongements européens »*, 127-137. Louvain/Paris/Dudley MA: Peeters.
- 2017. "Conseils et direction spirituelle dans la lettre de Porphyre à Marcella", in E. Gavoille and F. Guillaumont (eds.), *Conseiller, diriger par lettre*, 301-315. Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais.
- Goulet-Cazé, M.-O. 1982. "L'arrière-plan scolaire de la *Vie de Plotin*", in L. Brisson et al., *Porphyre. La Vie de Plotin, travaux préliminaires et index grec complet*, 231-327. Paris: Vrin.
- Hadot, P. 1995. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* Paris: Gallimard.
- Helleman, W. E. 1995. "Penelope as Lady Philosophy", *Phoenix* 49(4): 283-302.
- Hodkinson, O. 2007. "'Novels in the Greek Letter': Inversions of the Written-Oral Hierarchy in the Briefroman 'Themistocles.'" In V. Rimmel (ed.), *Seeing Tongues, Hearing Scripts: Orality and Representation in the Ancient Novel*, 257-278. Groningen: Barkhuis and Groningen University Library.

- Jufresa, M. 1995. "Savoir féminin et sectes pythagoriciennes", *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés* 2, 17-40.
- Kanyororo, J. 2003. "Les richesses intérieures de l'âme selon Plotin", *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 59(2), 235-256.
- Karamanolis, G. 2007. "Porphyry's notion of empsychia", in G. Karamanolis and A. Sheppard (eds.), *Studies on Porphyry, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement* 98. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 91-109.
- Lambropoulou, V. 1995. "Some Pythagorean Female Virtues", in R. Hawley and B. Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, 122-134. London: Routledge.
- Michalewski, A. 2017. "Vivre en philosophe. Signification de la *philosophia* dans la *Vie de Plotin*", in P. Vesperini (ed.), *Philosophari. Usages romains des savoirs grecs sous la République et sous l'Empire*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 535-562.
- Poignault, R. 2008. "La lettre dans la lettre. Aspects concrets de la correspondance de Fronton", in P. Laurence and F. Guillaumont (eds.) *Epistulae Antiquae V, Actes du Ve colloque international « L'épistolaire antique et ses prolongements européens »*, 197-211. Louvain/Paris: Peeters.
- O'Brien Wicker, K. 1989. "Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam*: Marriage and the practice of philosophy", in R. F. Sutton Jr. (ed.), *Daidalikon*, 415-424. Wauconda: Bolchazy Carducci Publishers.
- O'Meara, D. J. 1994. "Political Life and Divinization in Neoplatonic Philosophy", *Hermathena* 157, 155-64.
- Sebillotte Cuchet, V., and Ernoult N. (eds.) 2007. *Problèmes Du Genre En Grèce Ancienne*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne.
- Sissa, G. 1984. "Une virginité sans hymen : le corps féminin en Grèce ancienne", *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 39(6), 1119-1139.
- Sorabji, R. 2007. "Porphyry on Self-Awareness, True Self, and Individual", in G. Karamanolis and A. Sheppard (eds.), *Studies on Porphyry, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement* 98. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 61-69.
- Van der Meeren, S. 2002. "Le protreptique en philosophie: essai de définition d'un genre", *Revue des études grecques* 115, 591-621.
- Van Hoof, L. and Van Nuffelen, P. 2015. "The social role and place of literature", in L. Van Hoof and P. Van Nuffelen (dir.), *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD*, 1-15. Leiden: Brill.

- Waithe, M. E. 1987. *Ancient Women Philosophers, 600 B.C. - 500 A.D. A History of women philosophers*. Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff.
- Wider, K. 2006. "Women Philosophers in the Ancient Greek World: Donning the Mantle", *Hypathia* 1, 21-62.
- Williams, J. 2014. "Letter Writing, Materiality, and Gifts in Late Antiquity: Some Perspectives on Material Culture", *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7(2), 351-359.
- Wilson, W. T. 1997. *The Hope of Glory. Education and exhortation in the Epistle to the Colossians*. Leiden: Brill.
- Whittaker, H. 2001. "The Purpose of Porphyry's Letter to Marcella", *Symbolae Osloenses* 76(1), 150-168.
- 2010. "A Philosophical Marriage: Porphyry's Letter to Marcella", in L. Larsson Lovén and A. Strömberg (eds.), *Ancient Marriage in Myth and Reality*, 43-54. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.



