Theseus erected by Kimon (475), the Stoa Poikile (470), the temple of Athena and Hephaistos on the agora (450), the shield of Athena in the Parthenon itself (440): on all these public monuments Amazons are shown to fight a losing battle. The danger represented by the Amazons is also mentioned in tragedy: A. *Eum.* 685-693 (see Sommerstein *ad locum*) and in comedy: *Ar. Lys.* 672-681. The defeat of the Amazons is a standard item in the Athenian *logoi epitaphioi*: *Lys.* ii 3-6, Isocr. *Paneg.* 66-71, coll. Hdt ix 27,3. Athenian men were too intelligent not to realize the polarity between their own manifest power and the latent power of women. The mythical narrative on their cups, on their temples and in their speeches carried the comforting message that the power of the Amazons had been crushed, once and for all. But somehow they will have felt that the Amazons are always besieging the Akropolis. Aristophanes is there to prove the reality of this *adunaton*.

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1) This is unfortunately not the case with the majority of our colleagues from Eastern Europe: before 1989 they were not free to travel, and even now they often have not (yet) the finances for doing so.


4) Apart from two passing mentions in *Iliad* 3, 189 and 6, 186.

5) *LIMC* s.v. Herakles: Nemean lion 163 times, Amazonomachy 110.


The material in Saller’s latest book will already be familiar to most readers, since the nucleus of the work is based in a series of stimulating articles published over the last decade. There is cohesion in subject matter and argument. Saller has selected the themes of patriarchy, property and death, because they represent general aspects that differentiate the Roman family from family life in contemporary western society. The main feature of the book is the
claim that the dynamics of demography determine to a large extent the functioning of the Roman family. Coale/Demeney Level 3 West is an acceptable choice as the Model Life Table best suited for representing demographic conditions in the Roman world. Moreover, it can be applied to a society for which no or little data are available (23). This Table gives an average life expectancy at birth of twenty-five years, a supposition which does not conflict with the main trends of the ancient evidence.

The implications which can be drawn from Level 3 West for the demographic structure of the Roman world and the evidence transmitted by the ancient sources do not neatly correlate. Throughout the book Saller explores the wider problems involved in the use of ancient evidence. His arguments are instructive and cogently demonstrate the limitations of the literary material, making explicit difficulties that others have glossed over. As a social historian Saller is concerned with what the majority of people within a social group (in this case, with only a few exceptions, the senatorial and equestrian aristocracy) did under the constraint of biological and cultural demands. In other words, his interest is with normative behaviour and individual choices, not with ideological viewpoints. However, there are occasional misconceptions about what can and what cannot be construed as non-ideological evidence. Some material is heavily slanted towards a set of behavioural patterns that are meant to be prescriptive. Writers such as Valerius Maximus and Plutarch placed a high value on desired behaviour, illustrated by means of historical examples, that might or might not accord with practised behaviour. It is striking to see how Saller shifts positions on the value of the writings of Valerius Maximus. The latter's reworking of stories illustrating paternal severity are dismissed, correctly I hasten to add, as mere legend, but Valerius' conception of pietas between family-members is eagerly embraced, despite the equally unusual circumstances in which it is highlighted.1

The relationship between the concept of the family and the vocabulary used to describe it has been an important field of research for other historical periods, as well as for Roman history. As Saller makes clear (74), there is no easy one-to-one correspondence between vocabulary and social entities. Terms are used in different contexts and may denote different mental concepts depending on whether the framework is legal, social, ideological or affectionate. Saller's discussion has been left basically unaltered since its publication in 19842, but it is worth repeating the more salient conclu-