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TOYS AS CULTURAL ARTEFACTS
IN ANCIENT GREECE, ETRURIA, AND ROME

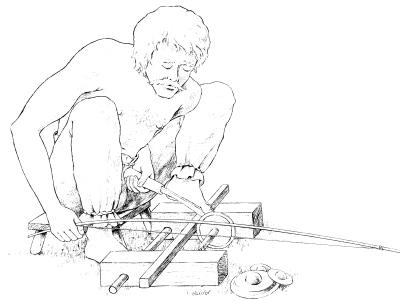
■ edited by Véronique Dasen & Marco Vespa

Toys as Cultural Artefacts in Ancient Greece, Etruria, and Rome

Véronique Dasen & Marco Vespa (eds)

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par Michel Feugère

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Véronique Dasen & Marco Vespa (eds)

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Bronze statuette of a male youth with spinning top (H. 36 cm), from Coll. Loeb,
350-325 BCE, Staatliche Antikensammlungen Munich, inv. SL 25.
Photo Renate Kühling, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek Munich.

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INTRODUCTION



Greek terracotta jointed "doll" (H. 12 cm), Corinthian type (5th century BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art inv. 44.11.8, Rogers Fund, 1944.

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Introduction

In his description of Arcadia's past at the heart of mainland Greece, Pausanias reconstructs the origin of a peculiar epithet, or *epiclesis*, of Artemis in her sanctuary near the city of Caphyae, and recalls local, epicchoric, traditions that were often only transmitted orally:

About a stade distant from Caphyae is a place called Condylea, where there are a grove and a temple of Artemis called of old Condyleatis. They say that the name of the goddess was changed for the following reason. Some children, the number of whom is not recorded, while playing about the sanctuary (*paidia peri hiron paizonta*) found by chance (*epituchein*) a rope (*kalōidion*), and tying it round the neck of a figurine (*agalma*) said that Artemis strangled herself. The Caphyans, detecting what the children had done, stoned them to death. When they had done this, a malady befell their women, whose babies were stillborn, until the Pythian priestess bade them bury the children, and sacrifice to them every year as sacrifice is made to heroes, because they had been wrongly put to death. The Caphyans still obey this oracle, and call the goddess at Condyleae, as they say the oracle also bade them, the Strangled Lady from that day to this.¹

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1. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 8, 23, 6-7 (transl. W.H.S. Jones, Loeb, modified). This etiology is also repeated by Callimachus, *Aitia*, fr. 187; PRIoux 2011. On this Arcadian cult, see in particular PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2008), 192, 232.

This brief and dense tale, in which children are described as being able to spontaneously transform inanimate material into living beings, raises issues among the themes addressed in this volume. Beside earlier interpretations of the strangled Artemis as a fossil of Bronze Age tree cults,² this foundation, or rather re-foundation story provides significant information about ancient Greek views on children's play and playthings.

At first sight, no toy appears in the narrative to modern readers accustomed to a centuries-old toy industry³. However, the terms used by Pausanias indicate that this children's activity is related to play. They form a group, although no age, gender or number is specified, and they move freely in a sacred space around the temple,⁴ looking for material to use and manipulate in a ludic way (*paizonta*). They find a rope "by chance", *epituchein*, which was perhaps attached to a withered offering, and a figurine, not described as a toy, *athurma*⁵, nor as an articulated *paignion*,⁶ but as an *agalma*, that is a votive statuette, most likely made of clay, which could represent Artemis or a dedicant. The children behave on their own volition, free of adult control. They do not just imitate the dedicants, bringing and hanging terracotta dolls in the sanctuary, but invent a new story transforming the *agalma* into an active goddess. Pausanias stresses the children's authorship by using a middle-passive optative verbal form (*apanchoito*)

2. CHIRASSI (1968), 19-20, for the debate on tree cults.

3. On toy trade development in the early modernity (end of 16th cent.), see MANSON 2001, 83-96, and in this volume.

4. On literary and iconographic evidence about children's playful activities in Greek sanctuaries, see DASEN 2020.

5. On *athurma*, see E. Dieu, L. Floridi and C. Nobili in this volume.

6. On *paignia*, see I. Patera in this volume.

that adopts their point of view in the storytelling: “they announced that Artemis hung herself”.⁷

The change in Artemis’s name from *Condyleatis* to *Apanchomēne* preserves the narrative scenario constructed by the children’s activity described as play by Pausanias (*paizonta*). It corresponds to the common anthropological definition of play⁸ as an activity which is free, voluntary, and transformative,⁹ close to a ritual activity – here the offering of a hung terracotta figurine¹⁰ –, taking place in a circumscribed space – here the sanctuary –, where all limits can be exceeded, including enacting the death of a deity.

The event’s tragic conclusion is due to the unfortunate transgressive enunciation of the children who may have otherwise continued to play untroubled. The harsh reaction of the adults mirrors the power of symbolic play, seen as a serious threat to social and religious order. The game has an impact on real life: the “killers” of Artemis are stoned to death. The story showcases two categories of cultural attitudes to children play:¹¹ children play among themselves without adults and make toys by transforming daily life objects, as documented by several papers in this volume.¹² Several pieces of evidence, also presented in this book, show that play was valued for education and associated with a specific production of objects by adults for children, such as terracotta articulated dolls and rattles. In Condylea, adults were not expected to play with children or look after them, but they watched them, and judged them without considering the fictional value of play.

The story showcases some typical archaeological challenges. As Sally Crawford demonstrated,¹³ toys are usually missing in the archaeological record because most of them were made of organic material that have not survived or of transformed ordinary

objects that cannot easily be identified without a specific archaeological context. The *agalma* of the Condylea children may have been found among votive offerings. The term *agalma* designates not just a votive object pleasing to the gods but the potential divine and invisible empowerment of objects, as in offerings, which explains why the children could easily identify the figurine with a goddess.¹⁴ The children may have played with it as a substitute for a votive articulated “doll”, not a toy in the modern sense, but an object made to be manipulated in a specific, ritual, context, and with a transitional identity, between mortal or divine,¹⁵ embodying the girl, *numphē*, on the eve of marriage, as a new Core or Persephone.¹⁶ We understand too that the children were not upset by the absence of movable limbs. They created a new story based on Artemis, perhaps identifying the goddess with the girls under her protection who were believed to be threatened with suicide by hanging when menstruations were delayed and did not threaten to let the goddess die.¹⁷

The material variety and the polysemy of the objects used by children, youths, and adults in contexts associated with pleasure and leisure is reflected by the Greek and Latin vocabulary. Several papers offer nuanced philological answers in the search of specific words used for “toy” in ancient languages. No specific term emerges from written sources, but a wide range of words relate to a similar sphere. Eric Dieu delivers a very meticulous historical and linguistic study of the morphological structure and semantic values of Greek and Latin ludonyms, also based on Indo-European linguistic comparisons. Though it is very difficult to identify a linguistic category that defines semantically the materiality of a playful object used in a game, the Homeric term *athurma* (a sandcastle, but also a shell or a piece of jewellery) appears to be the only one that addresses the materiality of a “toy” as well as its emotional component.

The detailed diachronic analysis by Paola Moretti on the semantics of the ludonym *ludicrum* in ancient Roman culture makes a salient point about what we might call “a space of cultural anonymity” for the Western category of “toy” or “plaything”. The study of a large literary corpus ranging from Catullus to Augustine in the search of the semantic contours of the term *ludicrum*, that designates an object possibly manipulated by children for fun, reveals its ‘relational’ value according to contexts, and the absence of definition of its semantic properties. A prominent example is provided in the Augustan age by a few

7. Some modern translations, as in the Loeb collection (cf. above n. 1), choose to adopt the adults’ view by translating “Artemis was being strangled”. In doing so, the fictional dimension of the new ludic story told by children at play is completely omitted in favour of the adult (distorted) version of the episode.

8. On the historiography of play definitions, see DASEN, VESPA 2021.

9. See INGOLD (2013), 1-15 on the transformational dimension of ‘making’, as opposed to distinguishing thought and action as ontologically different phases, based on the model of Aristotelian view of form and matter.

10. Cf. the suspension holes in the tops of the head of articulated dolls that seem to be made to be hung. THOMPSON 1943, 114-115 is the first to comment on the vitality of these figurines with dangling arms and legs.

11. GASKINS, HAIGHT, LANCY (2007): 1. Play is discouraged, because it is credited with no special value 2. Play is tolerated until reaching the age for ‘serious’ work, children playing amongst themselves, with self-made items 3. Play is encouraged, and regarded as an educational tool, involving child-minders and parents, as well as the production by adults of specialized material for children.

12. See in particular C. Lambrugo, A. d’Onofrio, and J.-P. Rossie in this volume. On children’s material culture, see also LANGDON 2013.

13. CRAWFORD (2009).

14. See DUGAST, JAILLARD, MANFRINI (2021).

15. E.g. HUYSECOM-HAXHI, MÜLLER (2007).

16. On the transitional value of dolls, see DASEN, VERBANCK (2022).

17. See KING (1983) on the dangerous delay of menarche suffocating young girls, symbolised by hanging.

verses of an Horatian *Epistle* (1.6) where the meaning for the author of the expression *maris ludicra*, is ambiguous: it could refer to purple, coral, and shells as luxury objects that amaze and attract the beholder or as mere childish toys, objects of little value to abstain from. The Augustan poet knew how to play with these possible various interpretations due to the lack of a firm semantic anchorage. No statistically relevant correspondence can be traced between the term *ludicrum* and the category of “toy”. In other contexts, *ludicrum* can relate to entertainment in a wide sense and even mean a “spectacle”.

The linguistic enquiries by É. Dieu and P. Moretti are a stark reminder of previous fundamental questions raised over half a century ago by Émile Benveniste on the most important Western intellectual categories derived from the Graeco-Roman tradition and particularly inherited from Aristotle (‘being’, ‘substance’, ‘quality’, ‘quantity’ etc.) in contrast to other language systems such as the African language known as *ewe*.¹⁸ Indeed, what articulation is there between linguistic labels, nouns and other discourse particles on the one hand and categories of thought on the other? Does a culture recognize and think only what it expresses in distinct linguistic terms? In this case, is it possible to speak of a specific category for the notion of “toy” in the ancient Greek or Latin languages?

Claudia Zichi’s article analyses a famous and enigmatic passage from Plato’s *Laws* in which the human being is first described as a “divine marvel” or “puppet”, *thauma theion*, and then as a “plaything”, *paignion*, of the gods.¹⁹ Her reflections show that things are more complex than they might seem, calling again to mind connections between a toy and a divine assemblage. A *thauma* could also refer in ancient Greek polytheism to cult statues carried in procession, sometimes fallen from the sky, or even self-propelled.²⁰

Cecilia Nobili’s paper focuses on the relation of the notion of “toy” with that of an object of marvel, a magical instrument that can deeply fascinate. The observers or listeners may in turn be influenced by a cunning builder or manipulator of wonders. In particular, the author reconstructs a semantic development of the term *athurma*. On the one hand *athurma* means a marvellous object, a work of great ingenuity, but on the other hand, it can also be an instrument of suasive fascination and be associated to the world of song and dance, particularly in Greek

late archaism (6th cent. BCE). The best example of the cultural values associated to *athurma* is the story of the transformation of the tortoise carapace into the first lyre by the young Hermes in his Homeric hymn. The story combines extraordinary technical skill in the construction of a playful object and equally extraordinary technical knowledge in the use of the object.²¹

The philological study conducted by Lucia Floridi is strongly intertwined with the latter article. It pursues the exploration of the meanings of *athurma* in a literary corpus covering the Hellenistic and imperial periods. Looking at the enunciative contexts in which *athurma* is used, the author notes a progressive shift. *Athurma* first designated objects of remarkable manufacture, like precious artefacts, then increasingly referred to living beings, not only humans but also animals. *Athurma* can designate household animals as lifelong companions: the metaphorical representation of the interspecific bond between man and animal as an erotic relationship, recently studied by Cristiana Franco, reflects the cultural relevance of the use of *athurma* for pets²². In specific contexts, such as the symposium, *athurma* also denotes the imbalance of power between those who enjoy a spectacle and those who are objects of desire, *athurmata*, available for the pleasure of others. The similarities between playful and ritual action evidenced in Pausanias’ story about Artemis *Apanchomenē* also grounded in the use of *paignion*. Ioanna Patera explains how the term refers to light amusement as well as to religious festivals. However, once more, the materiality of the object eludes us.

Comparable contiguities appear between objects produced to perform a scientific demonstration and for entertainment purposes. Science and experiments are playful, as were mathematics and geometry. Based on the thorough study of ancient Greek texts on pneumatics and mechanics, especially by Hero of Alexandria (1st cent. CE), Tatiana Bur challenges and invalidates several preconceptions based on the artificial opposition between the serious and the playful. Through the thought-provoking parallel between the self-propelled objects animated by the flow of water or the intake of air and riddles, *problēmata paistika* (litt. “playful challenges”), that were normally enunciated during the festive context of the symposium, the author emphasises how the epistemological status of pneumatics knowledge constitutively envisages a ludic experience embodied in the symposiasts’ gestures, manipulations, and disillusioned expectations.

The playful objects that are presented as offerings

18. BENVENISTE (1958).

19. Plato, *Laws*, 1.644d-645b

20. On self-propelled statues and other phenomena of experiencing the marvellous in the context of Graeco-Roman polytheism, see DUNAND (2018).

21. *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, 52-56; 418-423.

22. FRANCO (2017).

to the deity by young individuals in Greek literary epigrams and in Greek shrine inscriptions are of a very different nature. Sophie Laribi-Glaudel has reconstructed every type of votive offering, highlighting the terminological difficulties that thwart our attempts at identifying the objects with any certainty. She focuses on the social identity of the dedicator and the possible cultural implications of the association between the category of the object (domestic, musical, natural) and the cultural construction of the gender, age and status of the young boy or girl performing rituals in front of a community of fellow citizens.

The peculiarity of Greek and Roman terminology thus deprives us from a generic equivalent to the modern term ‘toy’. This should make us aware of a world of possibilities, the variety of potential playthings, the randomness of materials transformed into playthings through children’s agency. The identification of a ludic object without archaeological context is particularly challenging because any item could become playful in the hands of a child, as in Pausanias’ story.

Funerary contexts are especially precious as they provide information on the age, sex and status of the deceased as well as specific assemblages in the best documented examples. They provide evidence that modest daily life objects could entertain or have an educational purpose. Anna Maria D’Onofrio convincingly argues that the series of fourteen clay discs and five small cups from a Late Geometric child’s grave in Eretria formed a stacker toy whereas five cups of different sizes could have been teaching aides, training students to learn how to measure. Stone pebbles and flat stones similarly belong to long neglected find objects. In Greek Sicily, Claudia Lambrugo showcases how pebbles could be used as game tools, potentially with a pre monetary value, as are knucklebones.²³ Some special stones, engraved with signs, suggest that they may have been used in ritual contexts too.

A range of items, however, was potentially multifunctional, like limestone or metal spheres, also found by Daniela Costanzo in different sites of Magna Graecia. According to the context, they have been variously interpreted as marbles, tools for cleromancy rituals when inscribed with the name of a divinity, or for drawing lots in a *klerotērion*. Iconography can also contribute to understanding the metaphoric dimension of play and games, often associated with nuptial contexts. Depictions of balls’ offerings on the Locrian *pinakes* thus clearly refer to the seduction of the girl, carried in a chariot that are

23. On the symbolic link of knucklebones to weights, measures, and coins, see DOYEN (2021a) and (2021b).

found as bronze miniatures in tombs. The musical performances associated with ball games also took place in religious festivals, often anticipating marriage as Angela Bellia subtly explains.

The Greek custom of depositing miniatures and simulacra of daily life objects in tombs and sanctuaries can also blur modern interpretations. Comparative approaches can be useful and sometimes provide surprising results. Victoria Sabetai reveals the differences between the range of items from Boeotian tombs and the Theban Kabirion sanctuary, highlighting that specific selections were operated according to contexts, spinning tops being reserved for the sanctuary, miniature shields and dolls for the tombs, whereas rattling objects appear in both. This observation is corroborated by a votive Etrusco-Campanian bronze statuette of a young man analysed by Astrid Fendt who holds in his hands a spinning top and a whip, a symbol of his sub adult age as well as of his skill.

One of the most insightful texts concerning the study of the play culture in Graeco-Roman Antiquity is undoubtedly a short paragraph by Aelian in his *Varia Historia*: Aelian collects a series of anecdotes dealing with the special relationship between personalities of the past, divine or human, and the world of play, in particular children’s play, sometimes practised with the help of everyday objects or natural playthings.²⁴ A particularly striking story concerns the king of Sparta, Agesilaus II, who was said to play with his son when the latter was still a child, by taking a stick or a cane, *kalamos*, and riding it.²⁵ As modern readers and commentators, we would like to know how the horse that Agesilaus rode to play with his son actually looked like, or whether it had been defined as an actual horse. But neither Aelian’s text or earlier versions of the same anecdote,²⁶ provide any further explanations. The playful object is not described as a *paignion*, *athurma*, not even as a *mimēma*, or an *eikōn*, a ‘copy’ or a ‘representation’ of a horse.

The enigmatic nature of this playful object, for many generations *the* toy par excellence, has never ceased to intrigue and challenge scholars throughout history. Ernst Gombrich, semiologist and art historian, introduced two fundamental concepts, namely that of the ‘minimum image’ and of the ‘conceptual image’ in his *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*. At the origins of the artistic object, and we might say of the playful experience in choosing an object as a plaything, what are the relations between the two dimensions of

24. Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, 12.15.

25. “Agesilaus mounted on a cane rode with his son who was still a child” (trans. N.G. Wilson, Loeb) (Ἀγησίλαος δὲ κάλαμον περιβάς ἵππευε μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ παιδὸς ὄντος).

26. Plutarch, *Life of Agesilaus*, 25.5.

functionality and shape? Must we confront these two notions or should we not distinguish different playful experiences according to the prevalence of one or the other in the manipulation and activation of the toy? One might see in Agesilaus' *kalamos*, something very similar to the ball of wool chased by a kitten, where what is central to the playful experience is not the resemblance or verisimilitude of the ludic-object, but the ability such a plaything has to respond to certain demands of action.²⁷

Michel Manson's research is carried out in this perspective. His cultural history of the hobby horse was achieved thanks to a careful reading of literary texts and images, from antiquity to the Medieval and Renaissance periods. The dissemination of specific models of chivalrous society, conveyed through stories and iconography, offers children a space to perform playful fiction that do not seem to have been activated in other historical and cultural circumstances.

The contributions collected in this volume investigate different periods and cultural areas of the Greek, Etruscan, and Roman world characterised as traditional, non-industrial societies in which most children's play experiences were conducted outdoors in rural and pastoral settings. Ethnographic comparisons are very precious, such as with the agricultural communities in Moroccan Anti-Atlas studied by Jean-Pierre Rossie, because they share habits and an ecology similar to those of ancient Mediterranean societies. The construction of the tools which Amazigh children use to stage mimetic-fictional play, such as the bride's game or the shepherd's game, is at the core of their play experience. The making of a plaything cannot be separated as a preliminary or different operation from the actual game. Toys there too have no special name. It is striking that the doll, as in the Graeco-Roman world, is a special case because of its close relation to life passages and rituals. It is simply called the 'bride', *taslit*, because girls mainly play at mimicking the ceremony of marriage, the major event that marks their lives.

Cleo Gougoulis responds to Jean-Pierre Rossie's investigation with an erudite social and anthropological study of the complex cultural and political usage of the term 'toy' in modern Greece, between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, with the massive development of the toy industry. The public administration, the trade authorities, as well as the school and education system of the Greek state, a few decades after the

27. GOMBRICH (1963), 1-11.

Greek Revolution and political independence, were aware of the need to use a hyperonym, a generic term for the playthings that until then would hardly or only in rare cases called toys. Four different terms appear to designate commercial toys, *athyrma*, *paignio[n]*, and *paignidi/paichinidi*, leading to the contemporary use of *paignidia* in Modern Greek.

These reflections on the emergence of a new terminology in the particular socio-cultural context of industrial societies once again emphasise how play and its tools are social phenomena of communication. In this perspective, Mattia Thibault offers an effective key to reading toys as signs ('texts'), and games as semiotic practices involving the game producers or the players in a continuous process of negotiation, re-semantisation, and innovation.²⁸ The semiotic perspective offers a rich harvest of heuristic tools that can incite the reader to read other essays through the lens of a discipline that emphasises the socio-relational dimension of play.

In the postface, Brigitte Röder highlights the bias imposed by Western modern views on ancient artefacts and their interpretation. The massive development of toy industry has biased the contemporary perceptions of the ecology of ancient playthings and their interpretation, especially for prehistory.

This volume thus intends to make scholars and a wider audience aware of the variety of artefacts that were part of the play experience of ancient childhood and youth, some very modest but culturally significant, such as the clay discs and little cups of the child's grave from Eretria. In depth philological and semantic approaches also open avenues for new ways of thinking about past categories and contribute to deconstructing a too narrow vision of toys and play.

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28. For a semiotic approach to play as a form of signifying, see also recently HELJIAKKA 2013 and THIBAUT 2020.

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Ludicrum, a Word for “Toy, Plaything”. Some Remarks on its Origin and Use

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the substantive *ludicrum* as a “*ludonimo generale*”, i.e. a hyperonym denoting ‘an object to play with’.¹ After some remarks on its origin and relationship to the adjective *ludicer/ludicrus*, the history of *ludicrum*, ‘toy’, is illustrated, within the general framework of the development of Latin ludonyms referring to ‘play’ and ‘games’ since the archaic times to late Antiquity: *ludo*, *-ere/ludus/lusus*, and *iocor*, *-ari/iocus*.²

Ludicrum, ‘toy’, features most of the times in comparisons and similes, that is, literary devices by means of which daily life and its activities find their way into linguistically ‘artificial’ and culturally adult-oriented literary texts: this would suggest that the word itself pertains to informal, everyday language. Moreover, *ludicrum* never specializes as a word in the sense of meaning ‘plaything’; hence, some contextual element is always needed to single

out passages where *ludicrum* unambiguously means ‘toy’, e.g., mentioning the ‘plaything(s)’ to which *ludicrum* refers. Remarkably, the Romans do not adopt a specialized hyperonym for ‘toy’, whereas two words for ‘toy’ exist in Greek:³ ἄθυρμα (more poetic: cf. ἀθύρω, perhaps from an Indo-European root meaning ‘to deceive’)⁴ and παίγνιον (more prosaic: cf. παίζω, related to παῖς, ‘child’).⁵ In this respect, it is worth noting that, in two passages where *ludicrum*, ‘toy’, features, a Greek parallel can be either strongly suggested (Catullus) or positively singled out (Arnobius).

1. *LUDICRUM*: ITS ORIGIN AND A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ITS OCCURRENCES

The substantive *ludicrum* should derive from *ludo*, *-ere*, plus the instrumental suffix *-crum* (= *-crom*, a dissimilated form of *-clom*, from IE **-tlo*): *-crum* belongs to a group of noun suffixes usually featuring in deverbal neutral nouns, that denote either an instrument for doing something or a place where something is done.⁶ The suffix *-crum* is not very

* This article is the revised version of the paper I presented at the ERC conference “Toys as Cultural Artefacts in Ancient Greece, Etruria, and Rome” (Fribourg, June 2021). I thank the attendees that took part in the discussion on that occasion. Furthermore, my heartfelt thanks to Véronique Dasen and Marco Vespa for inviting me to take part in the conference, and for reading the final version of the paper, providing me with illuminating suggestions and very useful bibliographical additions.

1 On the distinction between “*ludonimi generali*” and “*ludonimi particolari*”, see SCALA (2013), 163-7, esp. 164.

2 A topic dealt with in detail by NUTI (1998). See also É. DIEU in this volume.

3 On Greek verbs ‘to play’, see at least CASEVITZ (2018). On subst. ἄθυρμα, see C. NOBILI in this volume.

4 NUTI (2013), 61-2.

5 This is the only example of a ‘ludonym’ evoking childhood in IE languages; NUTI (2013), 60.

6 *-tro/-culo* and *-cro/-bulo/-bro*, stemming from IE **-tro/-tlo/-dhlo/-dhro* respectively: these suffixes are typical of “*meist von Verben abgeleitete Werkzeug- und Ortsbezeichnungen (Neutra, wenige Fem. und Mask.)*”;

productive in Latin. Besides some problematic items,⁷ there are a few ‘-*crum*-suffixed’ substantives, most of them presumably pertaining *also* to an informal linguistic register: *simulacrum* (from *simulare*);⁸ *sepulcrum* (from *sepelire*);⁹ *involutrum* (from *involvere*);¹⁰ *lavacrum* (from *lavare*).¹¹ *Ludicrum* should be added, from which a first declension adjective possibly resulted, based on the reanalysis of the substantive within ambiguous expressions:¹² a peculiar adjective, yet, whose masculine nominative (supposedly, *ludicer* or *ludicrus*)¹³ and comparative/superlative forms never occur. Except for a doubtful ‘adverbial’ *ludicre* in the *Annals* of Ennius (fr. 69 Sk.),¹⁴ the adjective features from Plautus on,¹⁵ whereas the substantive is found from the age of Cicero and Catullus.¹⁶ Obviously, the fact that the adjective is found earlier than the substantive might depend on accidental evidence, and *per se* does not rule out the pre-existence of the substantive.

Ludicrum, at least from the time of Livy, takes on the meaning of ‘public show’ and tends to be used – as a (not specialized) singular – corresponding to the (highly specialized) plural *ludi*, ‘public shows’. However, *ludicrum* occurs *also* in contexts different from those of ‘public games’, and apparently preserves its polysemy until late Antiquity.¹⁷ The Latin corpus of

Brepols ‘Library of Latin Texts’ shows that occurrences amount to 114 (out of which 53 substantives) and 245 (out of which 74 substantives), in the sections ‘Antiquitas’ and ‘Aetas patrum’ respectively.¹⁸ *Ludicrum* seems to be increasingly common, and its meaning does not seem to undergo dramatic changes: most often it refers to a *ludus publicus* (38 out of 53 occurrences in ‘Antiquitas’; 31 out of 74 occurrences in ‘Aetas Patrum’), and only a few times to ‘toys’ or ‘games’ (in ‘Antiquitas’, 4 occurrences as ‘toy’, 1 as ‘game’; in ‘Aetas Patrum’, 9 occurrences as ‘toy’, 3 as ‘game’).

2. The Context: *ludere* as the Most Common Verb for Children ‘at Play’

Ludicrum seems to be almost the only substantive denoting ‘material toys’ in texts dating from republican to late Latin. This stability should be accounted for in light of the fact that, as shown by Latin (literary) texts,¹⁹ *ludere* from Plautus on regularly expresses the generic ‘play’ of children;²⁰ moreover, even if other substantives are used to refer to play and games (*ludus/lusus*, and later *iocus*),²¹ the verb *ludere* does not seem to be threatened by its potential competitor *iocor*, -*ari*, ‘to play’,²² a verb that surfaces in literary texts only by Ausonius’ time.²³

LEUMANN (1977), 312-4.

7 Such as the hapax *eluacrus*, an adjective deriving from *elavare*, as far as we can judge from its only occurrence: cf. Cato, *On agriculture*, 10.4, who mentions an *eluacrum labrum* (‘a washtub’, i.e. a *lavacrum*).

8 Occurring only once in archaic Latin (Plautus, *Mostellaria*, 84-6), it has been common since the 1st cent. CE.

9 “*Neben sepul-tus*”; see LEUMANN (1977), 314.

10 Occurring three times in the letters by Terentianus (early 2nd cent. CE, from Roman Egypt), in the phonetically ‘vulgar’ form *imboluclum* (*PMich VIII*, 467 and 468).

11 A popular word in Christian texts, where Baptism is defined as *lavacrum* (i.e., *lavacrum regenerationis*). An investigation of the texts of the Brepols data-base ‘Library of Latin texts’ (Brepols: <http://clt.brepols.net/pros2.lib.unimi.it/cds/pages/Search.aspx>) shows that 20 occurrences are found in the section ‘Antiquitas’ (until the 2nd cent. CE: 19 in Apuleius and 1 in Gellius), whereas in the section ‘Aetas patrum’ (since late 2nd cent. to about 735 CE) 1291 occurrences are found, in a corpus including mostly – although not exclusively – Christian authors: a true explosion!

12 Cf. SELDESLACHTS (1993), 211-4: as a matter of fact, in expressions like *hoc ludicrum est* the distinction between substantive and adjective is not clear cut, and reanalysis would be possible (‘this is a plaything’ > ‘this is entertaining’). However, the issue is not uncontroversial: *ludicrum* is usually assumed to be the substantivized form of the adjective *ludicer/ludicrus* (LEW, I, 829, s.v.; DELL, 369, s.v.; LEUMANN (1977), 314; NUTI (1998), 86-7).

13 Cf. *ThLL* 7/2, 1761.38-1765.62, s.v.; on *ludicer/ludicrus*, see 1761.45-8.

14 This is not to be read as an adverb ending in -*ē*, which would not fit into the hexameter; rather, it is to be viewed as a neutral accusative (and hence adverbial) form of *ludicer* (*ludicrē*) inflected as a third declension adjective, a form admitted by the grammarian Priscianus (SKUTSCH (1985), *ad loc.*).

15 NUTI (1998), 60.

16 NUTI (1998), 86, 89.

17 Cf. *ThLL* 7/2.1763.26-1765.51, section II (about substantive *ludicrum*). It includes: A (“*vi originaria de delectamento*”), encompassing: A1, “*actio ludendi vel generaliter quaecumque homines se delectandi, re-*

creandi sim. causa invenerunt”, that is: A1a, “*in rebus privatis*” (A1aa, “*generatim*”; A1aβ, “*poesis vel ipsa carmina ludendo condita*”; A1ay, “*ludi puerorum*”); A1b, “*publice, sc. sive de ludis sive de singulis ad eos pertinentibus spectaculis scaenicis vel circensibus*”; A2, “*metonymice respiciuntur ipsae res quibuscum luditur*”; B (“*vi deflexa*”), encompassing: B1, “*per similitudinem transfertur ad res vel actiones vanas, minoris momenti sim*”; B2, “*fere abusive de rebus turpibus*”. The most relevant parts are A2 and perhaps A1ay, as the difference between *ludicrum* ‘toy’ and ‘act of playing’ is not always clear cut.

18 See above, n. 11.

19 The only ones we can rely on. As a matter of fact, in the surviving corpus of Latin non-literary texts, including inscriptions, no verbal reference to children’s play, games, or playthings is found, although children at play and/or toys are sometimes portrayed on tombs.

20 NUTI (1998), 39-41. Cf. Plautus, *The little Carthaginian*, 1074: “the mark which a monkey made by biting you when you were playing as a child (*ludenti puero*)”; Cicero, *On Duties*, 1.103: “as we do not grant our children unlimited licence to play (*ut enim pueris non omnem ludendi licentiam damus*), but only such freedom as is not incompatible with good conduct...”. Translations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the Loeb Classical Library (with slight changes).

21 The substantive *ludus* usually means ‘children’s play/game’ and is sometimes replaced by *lusus* since the Augustan age; NUTI (1998), 134-8 (see *ThLL* 7/2.1790.36-66 on *ludus*, 1889.74-1890.16 on *lusus*). E.g., we know from Servius (*Aeneid*, 5.602) that Suetonius wrote a (now lost) book *De puerorum lusibus*. On the other hand, *iocus*, that had entered the semantic area of adults’ ‘playing’ since the Augustan age (first example in Ovid discussed by NUTI [1998, 149-52]), seems never to have been adopted to refer to children’s playing, possibly because it basically denotes a verbal jest, pertaining to adults only (*ibid.*, 70: cf. also *ThLL* 7/2.286.54-290.20).

22 NUTI (1998), 152.

23 Cf. Ausonius, *Epistles*, 10.92-3, who wishes that the young son of Probus, his addressee, “may become versed in fables, growing used to play and learn at the same time (*suescat [...] simul et iocari et discere*)”; cf. NUTI (1998), 166. Yet, I wonder whether the metrical structure of the two verbs (*iocari* vs. *ludere*) might have influenced the poet’s choice. See, on the other hand, the late ancient *Dicta Catonis* (ll. 36-38), where *ludere* denotes playing as opposed to learning: “Play (*lude*)

Its copious occurrences suggest that *ludere*, ‘to play’, pertains also to everyday language. As a matter of fact, throughout antiquity the verb is associated with the act of children’s playing with a specific toy (such as a *speculum*,²⁴ a *turbo*,²⁵ *crepundia*,²⁶ etc.). Sometimes it features in somewhat derogatory comparisons describing play as a typically ‘childish’ activity, unsuitable for adults. This is the case for a well-known passage by Horace, in the *Satire* illustrating the Stoic paradox that only the wise man is sane.²⁷ In this context, the folly of lovers is compared to that of adults enjoying children’s games, that are listed in detail: “Building toy-houses, harnessing mice to a wee cart, playing odds and evens (*ludere par impar*), riding a long stick [...]”, playing “at building with sand (*in pulvere... ludas opus*)”.²⁸ Interestingly, the same verb is used later by pseudo-Acro when commenting on this text and describing the game of *par impar* in a passage which no doubt resonates with the allure of informal language, that I quote in full:

Ludere par impar] De illo dicit, cum quo pueri soliti sunt ludere inter se, quando premunt copiam nucum vel castanearum manibus, tunc, quando simul veniunt ad ludendum, laxo sinu veniunt et girum inter se faciunt et proponunt sibi problema. Tunc cooperta manu quisque ostendit suo compari et inquit: ‘Quot insunt?’. Si alius augurari potuerit, aufert illi. Sic tam diu hoc certant, ut uter deoneret alium.

To play odds and evens] The poet speaks of the game of ‘odds and evens’, that the children use to play: they hold some nuts or chestnuts in their fists, then, when they gather to play, they come in a loose robe and take turns asking each other a riddle. With closed fists held out toward each of their playmates, they then ask: ‘How many are there?’. If a playmate is able to guess, he takes his competitor’s nuts. And they continue playing until one of them has gained all his playmate’s nuts.²⁹

with the hoop. Eschew dice. Study (*disce*) literature”.

24 Phaedrus, *Fables*, 3.8.4-5: “These two, while at their childish play, happened to look into a mirror (*speculum* [...] / *pueriliter ludentes forte inspexerunt*) which had been placed on their mother’s boudoir chair”.

25 Charisius, *The Art of Grammar*, 81: “both the whirlwind and the game that child play (*quo ludunt pueri*) is called *turbo* (= spinning top), not – as some wrongly call it – ‘children’s *turben*’ (*turben* [...] *puerorum*)” (transl. mine). There follows a quotation of Virgil’s simile of the spinning top (*Aeneid*, 7.378-383), to which I shall return. *Turben* as ‘spinning-top’ occurs in Tibullus (*Elegies*, 1.5.3-4), in a simile referring to the poet’s love folly.

26 Prudentius, *Crown of Martyrdom*, 3.19-20, about the child Eulalia’s reject of playing: “as a little girl (*pusiolo*) she had put toys (*crepundia*) from her and was a stranger to play (*ludere nescia*)”.

27 Horace, *Satires*, 2.3.

28 Horace, *Satires*, 2.3.247-273. A similar comparison is found in Jerome’s preface to the translation of Origen’s homilies on the Gospel of Luke (*Origen’s Homilies on the Gospel of Luke*, praef.): Jerome says that “Origen in these homilies is like a child playing knucklebones (*quasi puerum talis ludere*)” and contrasts these homilies with Origen’s more mature works.

29 Pseudo-Acro, commenting on Horace, *Satires*, 2.3.248 (transl. mine).

Furthermore, there are many other ludonyms deriving from *ludere* that occur – scantily, and yet consistently – up until late Antiquity. For instance, a ‘player’ or ‘playmate’ is always referred to as *lusor*/*conlusor* (and never – say – as *iocator*!).³⁰ Besides the famous passages by Seneca, where Chrysippus’ simile *de pilae lusu* (in this case, ball-game as practiced by adults) is taken advantage of to illustrate teachings on giving and returning *beneficia*,³¹ there are three interesting occurrences of *conlusor* as denoting a child playmate. Two of them are found in the *Historia Augusta*: Septimius Severus (*Septimius Severus*, 1.6) reproaches his eldest son for being too generous when sharing some fruits with young playmates (*conlusoribus puerulis*), and seven-year-old Caracalla (*Caracalla*, 1.1) flares up in seeing a playmate of his (*conlusorem suum*) being beaten because he is a Jew.³² Another relevant example is met with in the first book of Augustine’s *Confessions*:

We loved to play (*delectabat ludere*) and punishments were imposed on us by those who were engaged in adult games. For ‘the amusement of adults (*nugae*) is called business (*negotia*)’.³³ [...] As a boy I played ball-games, and that play slowed down the speed at which I learnt letters with which, as an adult, I might play a less creditable game (*quia ludebam pila puer et eo ludo impediabar, quominus celeriter discerem litteras, quibus maior deformius luderem*).³⁴ The schoolmaster who caned me was behaving no better than I when, after being refuted by a fellow-teacher in some pedantic question, he was more tormented by jealousy and envy than I when my opponent overcame me in ball-game (*cum in certamine pilae a conlusore meo superabar*).³⁵

In what follows, Augustine blames himself for his fondness of playing (*amore ludendi*), and for his curiosity, that “mountingly increased ... appetite for public shows; public shows are the games of adults (*in spectacula, ludos maiorum*)”.³⁶

In sum, within the framework of *ludere* being a most common hyperonym for ‘playing’,³⁷ the word

30 See also *ThLL* 7/2, 1867.33-1868.1, s.v. *lusor* (since Plautus); *ibid.* 3, 1664.44-73, s.v. *collusor*; *ibid.* 7/2, 282.45-6, s.v. *iocator*.

31 Seneca, *On Benefits*, 2.17.2-5, 32.

32 On children and adults at play in the *Historia Augusta*, see GAILLARD-SEUX 2020.

33 Cf. Seneca as quoted by Lactantius, *Divine Institutions*, 2.4.14.

34 Once again, we find the children’s dilemma – learning vs. playing – described in terms of *discere* vs. *ludere*.

35 Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.9.15 (transl. H. Chadwick, OUP).

36 Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.10.16. Here we are met with a skillful word-play, as *ludi* means not only ‘public shows’, but also ‘the playing activities of adults’, as corresponding to ‘the play of children’. On this passage, see also HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2021), 290. On the topos of adults being blamed for living their lives ‘playing like children’, see DASEN (2020), 104-5 (and n. 36).

37 To this also the presence of *ludere* in the inscriptions found on (adults!) *tabulae lusoriae* might bear witness (see FERRUA, BUSIA (2001)): even if these texts are formulaic and stereotyped (three rows, each one built up with two six-letters words), the presence of *ludere* as

ludicrum, coined after a straightforward way of word formation (*ludi-crum*, ‘thing to play with’, just like *involu-crum*, ‘thing to wrap with’), is easily understandable as denoting ‘toy’ (mostly children’s toys, not different from It. ‘giocattolo’, Fr. ‘jouet’, Sp. ‘juguete’, Germ. ‘Spielzeug’...).

3. LUDICRUM, ‘TOY’: 1ST CENTURY BCE TO 3RD CENTURY CE

Here follow some examples of *ludicrum* referring to a ‘toy’, ‘plaything’, especially – if not exclusively – intended for children.

3.1. The Nymphs’ Playthings

The earliest (surviving) occurrence of *ludicrum* as plaything is found as early as Catullus, in the *epithalamium* for the wedding of Manlius Torquatus and Vinia Aurunculeia (*Poems*, 61). In the lines 16-25, two similes are referred to the bride, who is compared first to Venus appearing in front of Paris, the Phrygian judge, and then with myrtle, sacred to Venus:³⁸

For now shall Junia wed with Manlius, Junia as fair as Venus who dwells in Idalium, when she came to the Phrygian judge; a good maiden with a good omen, like the Asian myrtle shining with flowering sprays, which the Hamadryad goddesses with dewy moisture nourish as a plaything for themselves (*floridis velut enitens / myrtus Asia ramulis / quos Hamadryades deae / ludicrum sibi roscido / nutriunt umore*).³⁹

Commentators point out correspondence between Lat. *ludicrum* and Gr. ἄθυρμα and παίγνιον,⁴⁰ and suggest possible parallels in the Greek poetic tradition, where both words feature as denoting a plaything for (children) gods: for Hermes, who comes across the turtle shell and handles it as a “fine plaything”, καλὸν ἄθυρμα;⁴¹ for Persephone, reaching out with her hands to take the narcissus flower, a “pretty plaything” (καλὸν ἄθυρμα), which is also deceitful, as, right after she picks it, she is abducted by Hades;⁴² for Apollo, as Callimachus, speaking of the rites performed by sailors around Apollo’s altar in Delos, says: “these things did the nymph of Delos devise for play (παίγνια) and laughter to young Apollo”.⁴³ To these, a further text should be added:

well as the absence of *iocari* are remarkable.

38 On the form and function of mythological and natural similes in this *carmen* and in the tradition of *epithalamia*, see FEENEY (2013).

39 Catullus, *Poems*, 61.16-25.

40 FORDYCE (1978), 241.

41 *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, 32. On this occurrence, see NOBILI (2013), 157-9.

42 *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 15-6. As remarked by C. NOBILI in this volume, the narcissus is as deceitful as the toys offered to the child Dionysos by the Titans; see also below § 3.4.

43 Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos*, 323-4. Reference to Callimachus is found in KROLL (1989), 109.

Athenaeus⁴⁴ quotes an epigram by the poetess Hedyle where the sea-god Glaucus, in love with the nymph Scylla, is said to bring her “as gifts either shells from the Erythraean rock or halcyon chicks, yet unfledged, as little playthings for the girl (τῆ νύμφῃ [...] ἄθύρματα)”.⁴⁵

The image of the Hamadryades playing with myrtle sprays undoubtedly evokes some Greek model, perhaps Alexandrian. However, this fact does not rule out that the word *ludicrum*, used as ‘plaything’ for children, however divine, belongs to an informal linguistic register, just as children’s playing belongs to daily life. Moreover, Catullus’ poetic language admittedly contains elements pertaining both to the literary and to the informal registers: and this is true also for our *epithalamium*, which, even if it should be ranked among Catullus’ most ‘literary’ poems, is rich in forms that sound “colloquial” (e.g., diminutives like *ramulis*).⁴⁶

3.2. The Sea’s ‘Playthings’

In the opening of epistle 1.6, Horace illustrates a philosophical motto that would lead his addressee Numicius to happiness: “marvel at nothing”. This should be applied both to natural phenomena (ll. 3-5) and to objects of desire (ll. 2. 6-8) and fear (ll. 2. 9-11). The term *ludicra* appears where the ‘objects of desire’ are described:

*Nil admirari prope res est una, Numici,
solaque quae possit facere et servare beatum.
Hunc solem et stellas et decedentia certis
tempora momentis sunt qui formidine nulla 5
imbuti spectent: quid censes munera terrae,
quid maris extremos Arabas ditantis et Indos
ludicra, quid plausus et amici dona Quiritis,
quo spectanda modo, quo sensu credis et ore?
qui timet his adversa, fere miratur eodem
quo cupiens pacto; pavor est utrobique molestus, 10
improvisa simul species exsternat utrumque.*

‘Marvel at nothing’ – that is perhaps the one and only thing, Numicius, that can make a man happy and keep him so. Yon sun, the stars and seasons that pass in fixed courses [5] – some can gaze upon these with no strain of fear: what think you of the gifts of earth [*munera terrae*], or what of the sea’s playthings [*maris... ludicra*], which make rich far distant Arabs and Indians – what of the plaudits and the favours of the friendly Roman – in what wise, with what feelings and eyes think you they should be viewed? And he who fears their opposites ‘marvels’ [10] in much the same way as the man who desires: in either case ’tis the

44 Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 7.297bc.

45 Hedyle, *SH*, 456. See FLORIDI 2018-2019, esp. 161-2 (on Glaucus’ ἄθύρματα).

46 CHAHOUD (2021), esp. 131-3 (quotation at 141).

excitement that annoys, the moment some unexpected appearance startles either.⁴⁷

Maris might be thought of as governed by *munera* (l. 5), a choice resulting in an ‘independent’ *ludicra*, which is variously explained.⁴⁸ However, I’d prefer to link *maris* to *ludicra*. The *sapiens* should not marvel at those gifts given by the sea, i.e. pearls and purple fish dye (perhaps, also sea turtles),⁴⁹ that make the Arabs and the Indians rich, *maris ludicra* being the sea’s playthings, the playthings offered by the sea. As a matter of fact, those who are enchanted by these objects shall be compared with naïve children, who are mistakenly lead to believe that trifling little objects that are found and used as playthings, such as small pebbles picked up on the seashore, are valuable.⁵⁰

A passage by Seneca sheds light on Horace’s epistle (Seneca might be even dependent on him).⁵¹ The most beautiful vision is that of *virtus*: only the *sapiens* ‘sees’ virtue, whereas unwise people are attracted by the deceiving appearance of things, just like children are attracted and misled by trifling playthings:

Then it will be in our power to understand how contemptible are the things we admire – like children who regard every toy as a thing of value (*simillimi pueris, quibus omne ludicrum in pretio est*), who cherish necklaces bought at the price of a mere penny as more dear than their parents or than their brothers. And what, then, as Aristo (*SVF* 1.372) says, is the difference between ourselves and these children, except that we elders go crazy over paintings and sculpture, and that our folly costs us dearer? Children are pleased by the smooth and variegated pebbles which they pick up on the beach (*Illos reperti in litore calculi leves et aliquid habentes varietatis delectant*), while we take delight in tall columns of veined marble brought either from Egyptian sands or from African deserts to hold up a colonnade or a dining-hall large enough to contain a city crowd [...].⁵²

In Seneca, we find some elements that are often associated in almost all occurrences of *ludicra*, ‘toys’. Toys are linked to children and childhood, and they

47 Horace, *Epistles*, 1.6, 1-11.

48 A thorough survey on earlier interpretations is found in CITRONI MARCHETTI (1997), 204-7; see also FEDELI (1997), 1086-7. For instance, the Loeb translation, that I have slightly modified, reads: “what think you of the gifts of earth [*terrae munera*], or what of the sea’s [*maris*, scil. *maris munera*], which makes rich far distant Arabs and Indians – what of the shows [*ludicra*], the plaudits and the favours of the friendly Roman etc.”

49 As Marco Vespa suggested me, turtle shells were an emblem of luxury since the early imperial age (cf. TRINQUIER [2018]), besides being interestingly linked to Hermes’ most characteristic plaything, the lyre. On pearls and turtle shells as luxury objects, see at least SCHNEIDER 2018.

50 Cf. CITRONI MARCHETTI (1997), 211; before her, HEINZE (1914), 57-8, translates *maris ludicra* as “*das Spielzeug des Meeres*”.

51 As remarked by HEINZE (1914), 57-8.

52 Seneca, *Epistles*, 115.8.

are often deceitful for children: even when they are not deadly traps (like Persephone’s narcissus), toys deceive children owing to their gleaming appearance, or, less dangerously, merely distract them. In any case, toys are considered absolutely unsuitable for (male) adults.

3.3. “Don’t Entrust a Serious Thing (*Negotium*) to a Child, as if it were a Plaything!”

A further example of *ludicrum* is found in Apuleius’ *Apologia*. Among other charges, Apuleius is accused of setting up a magic rite, during which he would have caused an epileptic *puer*, named Thallus, to ‘fall’, i.e. to undergo an ‘epileptic seizure’. Apuleius rebukes the accuser, Sicinius Aemilianus, for summoning two *pueri* as witnesses to support his charge: Thallus, who does not remember what happened, and Sicinius Pudens, Pudentilla’s younger son, who is himself a *puerulus*.⁵³ It would have been better if Aemilianus himself had taken on the task of supporting the charges, rather than entrusting them to children, as if they were an inexpensive toy:

You name none at all except that boy Sicinius Pudens, in whose name you are accusing me, since he claims to have been there. Even if his youth did not diminish the sanctity of his oath, still his being an accuser weakens his credit. It would have been easier, Aemilianus, and much more damning if you claimed to have been there yourself and had begun to lose your mind after that ceremony, rather than entrusting the whole business to young boys like a toy (*potius quam totum negotium quasi ludicrum pueris donares*).⁵⁴ A boy collapsed, a boy looked on: was it some boy who cast the spell too?⁵⁵

Playing with toys, again, is emphasised as a child’s activity, as opposed to the seriousness of the trial, which is referred to as a *negotium*, a loaded word, suggesting an activity that barely befits adults.

3.4. The Deceitful Toys of Dionysos

In the following century, the African Arnobius, in a passage where he polemicizes against the Bacchic mysteries, dwells on the episode of the child Dionysos (Lat. *Liber*) being first circumvented and then killed by the Titans. The instrument of circumvention are some toys,⁵⁶ that allegedly distracted the divine child and that – as we can argue clearly from Arnobius’ source, Clement of Alexandria – must be interpreted as symbols of mysteric rites:

And we also refrain from speaking of other Bacchanalia in which a sacred secret which must not even be uttered is revealed and communicated to the initiated:

53 A denigrating term, within this context: cf. HUNINK (1997), 135-6.

54 MARCHESI (1914), 121 *ad loc.* renders “*come fosse un giocattolo*”.

55 Apuleius, *Apologia*, 45.7-8.

56 Cf. TORTORELLI GHIDINI (2000); LEVANIUK (2007), esp. 167-8; HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2021), 283-7; NOBILI, in this volume.

how Liber when busy with boyish toys (*occupatus puerilibus ludicris*) was torn asunder by the Titans [...] As evidence and proof of this [*scil.* Dionysos' fate], the Thracian [*scil.* Orpheus] in his poems handed down the knucklebones, mirror, spinning tops, wheels, and smooth golden apples taken from the virgin Hesperides (*talos speculum turbines, volubiles rotulas et teretis pilas et virginibus aurea sumpta ab Hesperidibus mala*).⁵⁷

Arnobius most possibly draws on Clement,⁵⁸ who tells of the Titans deceiving the child “with childish toys” (παιδαριώδεσιν ἄθύρμασιν), and quotes two lines by Orpheus, that list the toys: “Top, wheel and jointed dolls, with beauteous fruit of gold from the clear-voiced Hesperides (κῶνος καὶ ρόμβος καὶ παίγνια καμπεσίγνια,⁵⁹ / μῆλά τε χρύσεια καλὰ παρ’ Ἑσπερίδων λιγυφῶνων = *OF* 34 K.)”; he concludes by again mentioning the toys, that allegedly are the blameworthy symbols of Dionysos’ cult: “the knucklebone, the ball, the spinning-top, apples, wheel, mirror, fleece (ἄστράγαλος, σφαῖρα, στρόβιλος, μήλα, ρόμβος, ἔσοπτρον, πόκος)”. Spinning toys, like κῶνος, ρόμβος and στρόβιλος, are admittedly connected to the mysteries of Dionysos, as is shown also by Virgil’s famous simile, comparing a spinning top urged to whirl by children to queen Amata, excited by the Fury Allecto and frantically rushing around like a *Baccha*.⁶⁰ Most importantly, Lat. *ludicra* in Arnobius undoubtedly refers to the childish toys that are explicitly listed and corresponds to Greek ἄθύρμα, that is endowed with a negative overtone of deceitfulness.⁶¹ Again, the *ludicra* are meant as an instrument for distracting naïve children.

4. 4TH-5TH CENTURY CE: AUGUSTINE AND JEROME

The Christians’ view of children’s playing is marked by a conspicuous “ambivalence”.⁶² I will dwell only on a few passages by Augustine and Jerome. The image of children’s *ludicra* appears in Augustine’s dialogues and in his homilies; moreover, Jerome bears witness to its presence in the Latin Scriptures. An informal linguistic register is likely to surface in both.⁶³

57 Arnobius, *The Case against the Pagans*, 5.19 (transl. G. McCracken, Newman Press, with slight changes).

58 Clement, *Protrepticus*, 2.17-18: on this passage, see also HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2010), 147-53; MASSA (2020), 41-4. On the relationship between Clement and Arnobius, see HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2010), 153-5.

59 For παίγνια καμπεσίγνια interpreted as referring to knucklebones, see CARÈ, in press, and C. NOBILI in this volume.

60 Virgil, *Aeneid*, 7.378-383. Cf. BOCCIOLINI PALAGI (2007), 73-82.

61 On the etymology of ἄθύρμα, see above n. 4.

62 On this topic, see at least HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2021).

63 Among the sources of ‘everyday language’, the Fathers of the Church are to be recorded, see at least ADAMS (2013), 12-22.

4.1. Augustine

The image of children playing with toys finds its way into Augustine’s earliest dialogues (384-387 CE): while being closely connected with “la visée pédagogique et éthique” of the dialogues,⁶⁴ it seemingly works as a stock simile.

Ludicra (pl.) appears twice in the *Against the Academicians*. The dialogue focuses on the refutation of a substantial point of the Academicians’ teachings: if only *verisimile/probabile* can be attained, both truth and happiness are beyond human reach. The metaphor of preparatory exercise, undoubtedly reminiscent of stock imagery referring to dialectical and rhetorical training, is hinted at in the beginning of the discussion: “we have engaged in this discussion of ours to train you (*exercendi tui causa*) and to incite you to cultivate your mind”.⁶⁵ Later, when it is time to shift to the core question, Augustine highlights the change by means of a ludic metaphor, where *iocari* (= ‘to play’) seems to replace the most common *ludere*:

Let’s end the preliminary exercises we engaged in (*prolusimus*) with these young men, where philosophy itself freely played along with us, so to speak (*ubi libenter nobiscum philosophia quasi iocata est*). Accordingly, let childish tales (*fabellae pueriles*) be put beyond our reach!⁶⁶

The choice of *iocari* might be due to the involvement of *philosophia*, who is not a child and whose ‘playing’ obviously entails words;⁶⁷ however, the use of *iocari* seems all the more remarkable, as in the same context also ‘childish tales’ are referred to.

The ludic metaphor is interestingly recalled below, when Augustine, by quoting Cicero, warns that things and not words are at issue in the discussion:

The Academician says: ‘All the things I think ought to be called “plausible” or “truthlike” seem to me to be like this. I make no objection if you want to call them by another name. It’s enough for me that you grasp what I mean, that is to say, the realities to which I’m giving these names. The wise man should not be a craftsman of words but an investigator of realities’⁶⁸. Now do you understand full well how those playthings I was stirring you up with have been dashed from my hands (*ludicra illa, quibus vos agitabam, de manibus excussa sint*)?⁶⁹

Ludicra obviously refers to the speakers’ *pro-ludere*, debating the difference between *probabile* and *verisimile*. Again, just before defining the issue of the debate that will follow, Augustine admonishes:

64 As demonstrated by BOUTON-TOUBOULIC (2020).

65 Augustine, *Against the Academicians*, 2.7.17 (transl. P. King, OUP).

66 Augustine, *Against the Academicians*, 2.9.22 (transl. P. King, OUP).

67 On *iocus/iocari*, basically ‘playing with words’, see above, n. 21.

68 This text corresponds to Cicero, *Academics*, fr. 19.

69 Augustine, *Against the Academicians*, 2.11.26 (transl. P. King, OUP).

Now the sun reminds me to put away in their boxes the playthings I was showing to you as if you were children – especially since I was showing them as display ornaments rather as items for sale (*quae ludicra pueris proposui redigam in cistas, praesertim cum ea ornandi iam potius quam vendendi gratia proponam*).⁷⁰

The discussion was a preliminary exercise, like a game for children: in this context, translating *ludicra* as “playthings” would preserve the lively image of ‘putting away’ childish playthings, i.e., giving up playing.⁷¹

Moreover, the metaphor of playing is applied to (seemingly!) useless discussion of *signa* in the first part of the *De magistro*. In fact, dwelling on *signa* is not children’s play but exercises for the mind:

Maybe you think we’re playing around and are diverting the mind from serious matters by some little puzzles that seem childish (*Tu enim fortasse aut ludere nos et a seriis rebus avocare animum quasi quibusdam puerilibus quaestiunculis arbitraris*), or that we’re pursuing some result that is only small or modest – or, if you suspect that this discussion might issue in some important result, you want to know straightaway what it is (or at least to hear me say what it is!). Well, I’d like you to believe that I haven’t set to work on worthless playthings (*vilia ludicra*) in this conversation. Though we do perhaps play around, this should itself not be regarded as childish (*quamvis fortasse ludamus, idque ipsum tamen non puerili sensu aestimandum sit*). Nor are we thinking about small or modest goods. Yet if I were to say that there is a happy and everlasting life, and I want us to be led there under the guidance of God (namely Truth himself) by stages that are suitable for having set out on such a long journey by considering signs rather than the things themselves that are signified. So then, you’ll pardon me if I play around with you at first – not for the sake of playing (*Dabis igitur veniam, si praeludo tecum non ludendi gratia*) to exercise the mind’s strength and sharpness, with which we’re able not only to withstand but also to love the heat and light of that region where happy life is.⁷²

The rendering of *ludicra* as ‘playthings’, which is not without controversy,⁷³ is suggested by the reference to childhood: discussion is likened to a ‘preparatory exercise’ (“playing around”, transl. King), as opposed to playing with playthings *puerili sensu*, which is unworthy of adults.

70 Augustine, *Against the Academicians*, 2.13.29 (transl. P. King, OUP).

71 BOUTON-TOUBOLIC (2020), 72 translates “amusements” (French), i.e. ‘entertainments’, and views this sentence as being a hint at Augustine giving up his teaching career as a rhetor. However, on children selling and buying playthings, see also Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.18.30 (below, § 5).

72 Augustine, *De magistro*, 8.21 (transl. P. King, OUP).

73 King translates “trivialities”; for a less detailed translation of *ludicra*, cf. above n. 71.

Augustine profits from the ‘play’ comparison/metaphor also in his preachings, where toys are usually referred to as basically childish means of entertainment. On the one hand, toys are given to children by indulgent parents; on the other hand, their toys are to be relinquished, once they have grown up. God features in these similes as behaving like a good – sometimes even indulgent – father.⁷⁴

In some cases, the antinomy Old vs. New Testament is concerned. In Augustine’s *Commentary on Psalm 73*, God is compared to a father, who gives his child playthings (“childish toys are given to a child to entertain his childish mind [*puero dantur quaedam puerilia ludicra quibus puerilis animus avocetur*]”): later, when he is grown up, they are to be relinquished, “so that he might handle more useful things, fit for adults”; this example is easily understood by Augustine’s public, as any father does the same with his own children: “You too gave to your child nuts when he was young, a book when he grew up”. Likewise, God grants his children the Old Testament (“those – so to say – childish toys [*illa quasi ludicra puerorum*]”), when they are young, and the New Testament, when they grow up.⁷⁵

Elsewhere, *ludicra* are the symbol of faith’s ‘childhood’, i.e., immaturity, that must be superseded, to turn to the spiritual vision of God:

If you please, not to delay it longer, let us run over the passage, and see how carnal hearts are troubled by the words of the Lord; to this end troubled, that they may not continue in that which they hold. Let this be wrested from them, as some toy is wrested from children, with which they amuse themselves to their hurt (*Extorqueatur tamquam pueris ludicrum nescio quid, quo se male avocant*), that, as persons of larger growth, they may have more profitable things planted in them, and may be able to make progress, instead of crawling on the earth.⁷⁶

Now (*scil.* when we see God *facie ad faciem*) let trifles be far removed from the soul’s sight. The little child should throw away his toys, and learn to deal with greater things (*abiciat puer parvulus ludicra, discat tractare maiora*).⁷⁷

Moreover, God gives his children earthly and unimportant gifts, to invite them to ask Him for greater ones. Like a good father, he sometimes gives ‘toys’ to whimsical children, to prevent them from crying: “The father gives some little and playful things [= playthings] to little children, because they cry,

74 Further texts bearing witness to both the good (i.e., pedagogic) and evil role of children’s play in early Christian literature are found in HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2021), 287–95.

75 Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 73*, 2 (transl. mine).

76 Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 18.7 (transl. J. Gibb, J. Innes, NPNF)

77 Augustine, *Sermon*, 53.15.16 (transl. mine).

if they do not get them (*Quaedam enim plerumque parva et ludicra* [here, an adj.] *concedit pater parvulis filiis, quae maxime, nisi acceperint, plorant*); the father's *pietas* ("affection") yields "to children who play and take delight in playthings (*ludentibus et de quibusdam ludicris se oblectantibus*): but this behavior – Augustine remarks – pertains to indulgence, rather than to education.⁷⁸

4.2. Jerome and the Scriptures

Besides some examples drawn from daily life,⁷⁹ a passage from Jerome's *Commentary on Habakkuk* deserves closer scrutiny. Jerome comments upon a verse of prophet Habakkuk (1.10), bearing in mind and quoting also the Greek text of the LXX. In the Greek text a ludic metaphor is explicitly referred to, as describing the fierce Chaldaeans: "And at kings will he scoff, and tyrants will be his toys (παίγνια). He will jest at every fortress (εἰς πᾶν ὀχύρωμα ἐμπαιξεται) and heap up earth and take it." Jerome first presents his reader with a literal-historical interpretation of the Hebrew text (that is, of his Latin *Vulgata*)⁸⁰, according to which the Chaldaeans are the Babylonian conquerors; then, he displays an allegorical interpretation, based on the text of the Latin translation of the LXX: the Chaldaeans are *daemonia*, who may take possession of human souls, but God, when souls are delivered from them, "will take delight in kings, and tyrants will be his playthings (*tyranni ludicra eius erunt*), as he sees the devil... and his reign being destroyed" (transl. mine). Possibly the words *ludicra* = παίγνια ('toys') remind him of a passage of the book of Job,⁸¹ which is evoked in the following description of God who treats the devil as his toy, as his laughing stock:

Neque enim solus draco formatus est ut lusui haberetur a domino, qui est principium plasmationis eius, factus angelis ludicrum,⁸² *neque illum solum dabit deus quasi passerem parvulo*,⁸³ *sed si quis etiam alius crudelis,*

78 Augustine, *Sermon*, 302 (transl. mine).

79 Jerome criticizes his adversary, John bishop of Jerusalem, for distracting him from the target of his polemic, like a nursemaid deceiving a child with toys: "You say none of these things; you bring forward Manichaeus, and keep Origen out of sight, and, just as when children ask for something to eat their nursemaids put them off with some little plaything (*parvulis cibum poscentibus ludicra quaedam offerunt... ut avocent mentes eorum*), so you direct the thoughts of us poor rustics to other matters, so that we may be taken up with the fresh character on the stage, and may not ask for what we want" (Jerome, *Against John of Jerusalem*, 21, transl. W.H. Fremantle, NPNF).

80 In the *Vulgata* the ludic metaphor is somewhat weakened, and rendered as mockery: "And he will triumph over kings and tyrants and they will be his laughing stock (*ridiculi eius*): and he will laugh at every fortress (*super omnem munitionem ridebit*) and will heap up earth and take it" (transl. mine).

81 *Job*, 40.19 and 29.

82 Cf. *Job*, 40.19 LXX: "This is the chief of what the Lord created, made to be mocked at by his angels (τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀρχὴ πλάσματος Κυρίου, πεποιημένον ἐγκαταπαίξασθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ)."

83 *Job*, 40.29 LXX: "Will you play with it as with a bird, or tie it up like a sparrow for a child (παίξῃ δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ ὡς περὶ ὄρνέω ἢ δήσεις αὐτὸν

et mentis tyrannicae fuerit, tradetur sermoni Dei in derisum. Et ipse ait: 'in omnem munitionem inludet'.

The drake (*scil.* the devil) is not the only one to be created to be a plaything for the Lord, the devils who is 'the chief of what the Lord created', 'made a plaything for angels', and he is not the only one that God will give 'as a sparrow to a child'; but, if anybody else is cruel and of tyrannic temperament, he will be given to God's word as a laughing stock. And he [*scil.* prophet Habakkuk] says: 'with all the fortresses he will play'.⁸⁴

The image of playing with little birds or sparrows features also in the apocryphal *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, 2, where Jesus as a child is said to play with sparrows;⁸⁵ moreover, in Arnobius⁸⁶ pagan gods are compared to whimsical "children" (*parvuli pusiones*), willing to be reconciled to those who offend them if they "get little sparrows, dolls, ponies, puppets, with which they may be able to divert themselves (*passerculos pupulos eculeos Panes*⁸⁷ *accipiunt, quibus avocare se possint*)".

A few further occurrences of *ludicra*, 'toys' that are found also in Christian poets, reinforce the impression that we are dealing with a widespread lexical item. E.g., in Prudentius the virtue of *Spes* gives a speech, after she has helped *Humilitas* kill *Superbia*: *Spes* recalls the victory of David over Goliath, who is said to have experienced "how powerful might be a little child's toy (*pueri quid possent ludicra parvi*)", that is David's sling.⁸⁸

5. OTHER LATIN WORDS FOR 'PLAYTHING'?

A search for other words that might be used to refer to 'toys' is quite a difficult task, in that it would require a thorough and in-depth examination of a huge number of texts, pertaining to different registers and dates. Therefore, I limit myself here to offer a few texts where other words *might be assumed* as referring to 'toys'. The scant results show that perhaps also *ludus* and *lusus* (not *iocus*!) might be used, but usually they were not.

Lusus is found in Livy, when he describes the "inconsistent generosity" of Antiochus Epiphanes, who enjoys "to make himself and others laughing stocks (*munificentia inaequali sese aliosque ludificari*)":

to some, men of distinction who held themselves in high esteem, he would give childish presents, as of food

ὡς περὶ στρουθίον παιδίω)? The *Vulgata* (*Job*, 40.24) reads: "Will you be able to play with him as with a sparrow, or to tie him like a sparrow to a child (*numquid inludet ei quasi avi aut ligabis illum ancillis tuis*)?."

84 Jerome, *Commentary on Habakkuk*, 1.6-11.

85 See HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2021), 297-9.

86 Arnobius, *The Case against the Pagans*, 7.8 (transl. G. McCracken, Newman Press).

87 The plural of *Pan*, i.e. 'small images of Pan, puppets', meant as toys for boys and girls.

88 Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, 295.

or toys (*puerilia, ut escae aut lusus, munera*), others, who expected nothing, he would make rich. And so he seemed to some not to know what he wanted; some said that he was playing childish tricks (*ludere*), some that he was unquestionably insane.⁸⁹

The gifts he gives to important people are described as *puerilia munera*, consisting of *escae* (“food”) or *lusus* (“toys”), both to be interpreted as genitive.

Ludus features in Ausonius and Augustine. In a passage of the *Mosella*, the sailors enjoying gazing at their own image as reflected by the crystal-clear surface of the waters are compared to a young girl who handles a mirror for the first time, and who is deceived by her own image that she sees reflected in the new toy:

But when Hyperion pours down the sun’s full heat, the crystal flood reflects sailor-shapes and throws back crooked pictures of their downward forms. [225] And as they ply their nimble strokes with the right hand and the left, and throwing their weight in turn now upon this oar, now upon that, the wave reflects a watery semblance of sailors to match them (*unda refert alios simulacra umentia nautas*). The boys themselves delight in their own counterfeits, wondering at the illusive forms which the river gives back (*ipsa suo gaudet simulamine nautica pubes, fallaces fluvio mirata redire figuras*). [230] Thus, when hoping soon to display her braided tresses – ‘tis’ when the nurse has first placed near her dear charge the wide-gleaming glory of the searching mirror (*candentem late speculi explorantis honorem*) –, delighted, the little maid enjoys the uncomprehended game, deeming she gazes on the shape of a real girl (*laeta ignorato fruitur virguncula ludo / germanaeque putat formam spectare puellae*): [235] she showers on the shining metal kisses not to be returned, or essays those firm-fixed hairpins, or puts her fingers to that brow, trying to draw out those curled locks; even so, at sight of the reflections which mock them, the lads afloat amuse themselves with shapes which waver between false and true (*talis ad umbrarum ludibria nautica pubes / ambiguus fruitur veri falsique figuris*).⁹⁰

Ignorato... ludo (l. 233) is usually rendered as ‘game’,⁹¹ whereas, most significantly, Roger Green, in his seminal commentary to Ausonius’ works, translates: “the girl delightedly plays with this unfamiliar toy”.⁹² Ancient sources bear witness to mirrors being used as toys,⁹³ and mirrors as playthings feature in Clement’s, Arnobius’ and Firmicus Maternus’ retelling of the story of Dionysos being deceived by the Titans.⁹⁴

89 Livy, 41.20.1.

90 Ausonius, *Mosella*, 222-239.

91 Besides the just quoted Loeb translation (by H.G. Evelyn-White), cf. e.g. PASTORINO (1971), 133: “un gioco ancora sconosciuto”; GRUBER (2013), 71: “das bisher unbekannte Spiel”. See also *ThlL* 7/2, 1790.51.

92 GREEN (2015).

93 See the fable by Phaedrus hinted at above, n. 24.

94 On Clement and Arnobius, see above § 3.4.

In particular, Firmicus presents a “euhemeristic” version of the story,⁹⁵ and emphasises the role of the Titans’ playthings in enticing the young god: Juno, the evil stepmother of young *Liber*, “with a rattle and a mirror of ingenious workmanship... so beguiled the fancy of the boy (*crepundiis ac speculo adfabre facto animos... pueriles adlexit*), that he left his royal seat and let his childish desires lead him to the place of ambush”.⁹⁶ All in all, *ludus* in the *Mosella*-simile labels a mirror as being used as a toy; besides metrical aspects, Ausonius might have chosen this term owing to its ambiguity, as *ludus* is also closely connected to the semantic field of ‘deceitfulness’, which fits well with the overall theme of the passage: the deceitfulness of the images reflected by the waters of the Mosella and by the little girl’s mirror (cf. *simulacra*, l. 227; *simulamine*, l. 228; *talis ad umbrarum ludibria nautica pubes / ambiguus fruitur veri falsique figuris*, ll. 238-239).

Another possible occurrence of *ludus*, ‘toy’, is met with in Augustine, when he dwells on some blameworthy effects of his “love for games” (*amore ludendi*):

I also used to steal from my parents’ cellar and to pocket food from their table either to satisfy the demands of gluttony or to have something to give to boys who, of course loved playing a game as much as I, and he would sell me their playthings in return (*ut haberem quod darem pueris, ludum suum mihi, quo pariter utique delectabantur, tamen vendentibus*).⁹⁷

The rendering of *ludum suum* as “their playthings”⁹⁸ can be supported by the fact that Augustine mentions further below some of the toys the children have to abandon, in order to replace them with adults’ activities, that are censurable too: they move away from “nuts and balls and sparrows (*a nucibus et pilulis et passeribus*)” in order to pursue “kings, gold, estates, and slaves”.

Last, a periphrasis for ‘toy’ is found in the grammatical tradition, in two passages where the inflection of *turbo* (‘spinning top’) is concerned. Martianus Capella suggests that it be inflected like *cupido*, “if it means either ‘whirlwind’ or ‘children’s toy’ (*puerilis ludi instrumentum*)”,⁹⁹ whereas Probus remarks that *turbo*, “when it means ‘children’s toy’ (*puerilis lusus instrumentum*)”,¹⁰⁰ is inflected as a masculine noun, and then quotes the Virgilian simile of the spinning top.

95 On Firmicus, see at least HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2010), 156-9.

96 Firmicus Maternus, *The Errors of Pagan Religions*, 6.2 (transl. C. Forbes).

97 Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.18.30 (transl. H. Chadwick, OUP).

98 A question arises here: is the plural *ludi* being avoided by Augustine owing to its connection with ‘public games’? why does he not use *ludicra* in this context instead?

99 Martianus Capella, *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, 3.292 (transl. mine).

100 Probus, *Excerpta de nomine*, 210 (transl. mine).

CONCLUSION

After this bird's-eye view, some general point can be made. The semantic field covered by *ludo*, *-ere* (and its derivatives) in Latin is quite wide, both in synchrony and in diachrony: accordingly, *ludicrum* never specializes as meaning 'toy', and only co-textual elements shed light on the meaning of its occurrences. However, there seems to be no other Latin word that specializes as meaning 'toy'. *Ludicrum*, 'toy', appears for the first time in Catullus, but in all probability, it was common even before him, as *ludere* has been the verb of choice for children's play since Plautus and continues until late Antiquity. *Ludicrum* is usually associated with both human and divine children; when adults are said to be children playing with *ludicra*, a negative overtone is always implied, as they are allegedly engaging in an activity which does not become them. We can definitely say that the paucity of occurrences of this general ludonym is easily accounted for when we think that our sources are mainly literary texts, produced within a culture which shows little or no interest in daily life (household, women, children), as it is prominently adult-oriented.

In sum, when ancient play is concerned, ludonyms, just like material toys,¹⁰¹ are often hard to interpret, and most of the time contextual evidence proves to be crucial.

ABBREVIATIONS

DELL = ERNOUT, Alfred, MEILLET, Antoine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, Paris (2001).

LEW = WALDE, Alois, HOFMANN, Johann B., *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg (1938).

OF = KERN, Otto, *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, Berolini (1922).

SH = LLOYD-JONES, Hugh, PARSONS, Peter, *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, Berolini/Novi Eboraci (1983).

SVF = VON ARNIM, Hans, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Berlin/New York (2010 = 1903-1905).

ThL = *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Lipsiae, Berlin/Boston (1900-).

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¹⁰¹ On toys, see HARLOW (2013).

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TOYS AS CULTURAL ARTEFACTS IN ANCIENT GREECE, ETRURIA, AND ROME

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RÉSUMÉS / ABSTRACTS

VÉRONIQUE DASEN & MARCO VESPA

Toys and Play Experience in Ancient Greece, Etruria, and Rome. An Introduction

This paper examines the cultural variety and polysemy of the artefacts involved in the play experience in Classical Antiquity. No generic equivalent to the modern term 'toy' emerges from Greek and Latin written sources, but a wide range of words (*athurma*, *paignion*, *ludicrum*...) relate to a similar sphere of pleasure and entertainment. Philological and semantic analyses open avenues for new ways of thinking about past categories and contribute to deconstructing a too narrow vision of toys and play. The identification of a ludic object without archaeological context is particularly challenging because any item could become playful in the hands of a child. Some were very modest but culturally significant, such as clay discs or pebbles. This nuanced approach of past life experiences, based on emic definitions, should make us aware of a world of possibilities through children's (and adults') agency.

Keywords: Artemis Apanchomene, childhood, doll, Gombrich, fictional play, hobby horse, potential objects, toy

Jouets et expérience du jeu en Grèce, Étrurie et Rome dans l'Antiquité. Une introduction

Cet article examine la variété culturelle et la polysémie des artefacts impliqués dans l'expérience du jeu dans l'Antiquité classique. Aucun équivalent générique du terme moderne 'jouet' n'émerge des sources écrites grecques et latines, mais un large éventail de mots (*athurma*, *paignion*, *ludicrum*...) se rapporte à une sphère similaire du plaisir et du divertissement. Les analyses philologiques et sémantiques ouvrent de nouvelles façons de penser les catégories du passé et contribuent à déconstruire une vision trop étroite des jouets et du jeu. L'identification d'un objet ludique sans contexte archéologique est particulièrement difficile car n'importe quel objet pouvait devenir ludique entre les mains d'un enfant. Certains objets étaient très modestes mais culturellement importants, comme les rondelles d'argile ou les cailloux.

Cette approche nuancée de l'antiquité, basée sur des définitions émiques, nous faire prendre conscience d'un monde de possibilités à travers l'agencement des enfants (et des adultes).

Mots-clés : Artemis Apanchomene, cheval bâton, enfance, Gombrich, jeu fictif, jouet, objet potentiel, poupée

DIEU, ÉRIC

Les désignations du « jouet » en grec ancien et en latin

Cet article s'interroge sur la terminologie servant à désigner d'une manière générale le « jouet » dans l'Antiquité grecque et romaine. Si le vocabulaire du jeu est abondant en grec ancien comme en latin, avec des familles de mots riches en faits de dérivation comme de composition (comme celles, en latin, de *lūdus* et de *iocus*, qui s'appliquent respectivement au jeu en actes et au jeu en paroles), les termes susceptibles de désigner le « jouet » sont, en revanche, particulièrement peu nombreux, et leur polysémie peut donner l'impression que les traductions modernes par « jouet » ne font guère qu'essayer maladroitement d'adapter au monde moderne des réalités qui n'existaient pas de la même manière dans ces deux sociétés anciennes. Ainsi, *lūdicrum* en latin et παίγνιον en grec sont surtout des noms de l'« amusement », ou, le cas échéant, du « jeu », qui, employés à propos de réalités concrètes (constructions de sable, cailloux, colliers, poupées, etc.), peuvent se laisser traduire par « jouet » (« amusement » ou « jeu » concrétisé, matérialisé en un objet, etc.).

Mots-clefs : grec, jouet, latin, lexicologie, philologie, vocabulaire

The Terminology of 'Toy' in Ancient Greek and Latin

This paper investigates the terminology used to refer to the general notion of 'toy' in Greek and Roman antiquity. While the vocabulary for 'play' is abundant in ancient Greek as well as in Latin, with word families rich in derivation as well as in composition (such as, in Latin, *lūdus* and *iocus* which apply respectively

to the play in acts and to the play in words), the terms referring to 'toys' are, by contrast, particularly few, and their polysemy gives the impression that modern translations as 'toy' are merely clumsy attempts to adapt to the modern world realities that did not exist in the same way in these two ancient societies. Thus, *ludicrum* in Latin and *παίγνιον* in Greek are mostly terms for 'amusement' or 'play', which, when used for concrete realities (sand constructions, pebbles, necklaces, dolls, etc.), may be translated as 'toy' ("amusement" or 'play' concretised, materialised in an object, etc.).

Keywords: Greek, toy, Latin, lexicology, philology, vocabulary

MORETTI, PAOLA

Ludicrum, a Word for 'Toy, Plaything'. Some Remarks on its Origin and Use

This paper focuses on *ludicrum* as a hyperonym denoting 'an object to play with'. After some remarks on its origin, the history of the word is analysed within the general frame of the development of Latin ludonyms referring to 'play' and 'games'. *Ludicrum* never specializes as 'toy', and only co-textual elements shed light on the meaning of its occurrences. However, there seems to be no other Latin word that specializes in the sense meaning 'toy'. *Ludicrum* appears for the first time in Catullus, yet in all probability it was common even before him, as *ludere* is the most common verb for children's playing since Plautus and continued as such until late Antiquity. *Ludicrum* is usually associated with both human and divine children (or youth); when adults are said to be like children playing with *ludicra*, a negative overtone is always implied. The paucity of the occurrences of this ludonym is easily explained when we think that our sources are mainly literary texts produced in a culture which is prominently adult-oriented.

Keywords: games, Latin language, Latin ludonyms, *ludicrum*, play, Rome, toy

Ludicrum, un mot pour dire le « jouet ». Quelques remarques sur son origine et ses usages

Cet article concerne le mot *ludicrum*, un hyperonyme dénotant « un objet avec lequel jouer ». L'histoire du *ludicrum* est analysée dans le contexte du développement des ludonymes latins faisant référence au « jeu » et aux « jeux ». *Ludicrum* ne désigne jamais le « jouet » de manière spécifique et seul le contexte littéraire éclaire le sens de ses occurrences. Cependant, aucun autre mot latin ne semble se spécialiser avec le sens de « jouet ». *Ludicrum* apparaît pour la première fois chez Catulle, mais il était probablement commun avant lui, car *ludere* est le verbe désignant le jeu des enfants depuis Plaute et jusqu'à la fin de l'Antiquité. *Ludicrum* est généralement associé à des

enfants et des jeunes, humains et divins ; quand les adultes sont comparés à des enfants jouant avec des *ludicra*, une connotation négative est toujours implicite. La rareté des occurrences de ce ludonyme s'explique quand on pense que nos sources sont principalement des textes littéraires produits au sein d'une culture fortement orientée vers les adultes.

Mots-clefs: jeux, jouer, jouet, langue latine, ludonyme latin, *ludicrum*, Rome

ZICHI, CLAUDIA

Toying with Philosophy: The Wonderous Puppet in Plato's Laws

The paper looks at the metaphorical meaning of the puppet in the first book of Plato's *Laws*. It aims to investigate the operating force behind the marionette as well as the role played by musical education in the prevailing of the string of calculation. It does so firstly by retracing the technical qualities of the puppet in literary works – from Herodotus to Plato –, and secondly by pinpointing the psychological and philosophical consequences of the image of the marionette in relation to a 'morally correct' education in music and dance.

Keywords: education, marionette, musical education, puppet, Plato's *Laws*

Jouer avec la philosophie : la marionnette merveilleuse dans les Lois de Platon

L'article examine la signification métaphorique de la marionnette dans le premier livre des *Lois* de Platon. Il cherche à saisir la force opératoire de la marionnette ainsi que le rôle joué par l'éducation musicale pour faire prévaloir le « cordon du calcul ». Il s'agit d'abord de retracer les qualités techniques de la marionnette dans les œuvres littéraires – d'Hérodote à Platon – puis de mettre en évidence les conséquences psychologiques et philosophiques de l'image de la marionnette par rapport à une éducation « moralement correcte » de la musique et de la danse.

Mots-clefs: éducation, éducation musicale, *Lois* de Platon, marionnette, poupée

NOBILI, CECILIA

Persephones' kalon athyrma. Toys, Ornaments, and the Marvel of Music

This paper investigates the evolution of the terms *athyrma/athyro* in archaic epic and lyric poetry, where the original meanings of 'toy'/'playing' gradually evolves into their musical counterparts. The semantic shift is implied and possibly encouraged by the connection with the realm of marvel and fascination that the terms assume since their earliest occurrences.

Keywords: Hermes, marvel, music, play, toy

Le kalon athurma de Perséphone. Jouets, ornements et l'émerveillement de la musique

Cet article examine l'évolution des termes *athurma/athuro* dans la poésie archaïque épique et lyrique où les significations originales jouet/jeu ont graduellement évolué vers leurs équivalents musicaux. Le glissement sémantique est sous-entendu et peut-être encouragé par le rapport avec le domaine du merveilleux et la fascination que les termes impliquent depuis leurs plus anciennes occurrences.

Mots-clefs : Hermès, merveille, musique, jeu, jouet

FLORIDI LUCIA

Ἐράσμιον αἰὲν ἄθυρμα. Toys, Slaves, and Erotic Objects

This paper aims to investigate the use of the term ἄθυρμα in erotic contexts. Particular attention is paid to its application to human beings, and especially to young slaves, to better understand the relationship between the meaning of 'toy' and that of 'erotic object'.

Keywords : ἄθυρμα, erotic object, toys, young slave

Ἐράσμιον αἰὲν ἄθυρμα. Jouets, esclaves et objets érotiques

Cet article analyse l'utilisation du terme ἄθυρμα dans des contextes érotiques. Une attention particulière est portée à son application aux êtres humains, et notamment aux jeunes esclaves, pour mieux comprendre la relation entre le sens de « jouet » et celui d'« objet érotique ».

Mots-clefs : ἄθυρμα, jeune esclave, objet érotique, jouets

PATERA, IOANNA

Paignia : jeux et jouets d'enfants, d'adultes et fêtes religieuses

Le terme *paignion* signifie au sens propre « jouet ». Il s'agit souvent de l'objet préféré d'un enfant ou d'une divinité, comme dans le sens métaphorique de l'être humain en tant que jouet des dieux ou du destin. Les nombreuses occurrences du terme ainsi que celles de ses dérivés montrent des utilisations plus variées. *Paignion* peut en effet, de façon attendue, désigner un jeu, quelque chose de peu sérieux, qui amuse, et s'applique notamment aux représentations comiques et aux poèmes légers. D'autres contextes dans lesquels *paignion* apparaît montrent cependant des sens plus surprenants, comme sa signification de « fête religieuse ». L'examen du lien sémantique entre ses différentes acceptions dans les sources grecques peut nous donner une idée plus claire de ce que constituent le jouet et le jeu proprement dits.

Mots-clefs : fête religieuse, jeu, jouet, *paidia*, *paignion*

Paignia: Games and Toys of Children and Adults, and Religious Festivals

The term *paignion* properly means 'toy'. It is often the favorite object of a child or of a deity, as in the metaphorical sense of the human being as a toy of the gods or of fate. The various occurrences of the term as well as those of its derivatives show more varied uses. It can indeed, as expected, designate a 'playful action', something unimportant, amusing, and applies in particular to comic representations and light poems. Other contexts in which *paignion* appears, however, has more unexpected meanings, such as 'religious festival'. The semantic links between these different meanings in Greek sources provide a clearer picture of what properly constitutes toys and play.

Keywords: game, *paidia*, *paignion*, play, religious festival, toy

BUR, TATIANA

Airing the Ludic: on the Playful and Embodied Qualities of Ancient Pneumatics

This chapter explores how elements of play and the playful intersected with the ancient science of pneumatics, focusing explicitly on how this manifested materially. Ancient pneumatic epistemology is best understood as 'embodied' and this embodied quality contributed both to the ludic value of many pneumatic objects, as well as to the 'serious' work that consisted of demonstrating and distributing pneumatic knowledge. Refiguring the modern scholarly discourse on ancient pneumatics from *either* frivolous gadgetry or abstract theorems, I pair ancient pneumatic texts with objects from material culture to illuminate how two categories of objects functioned as cultural objects of play: trick vessels and pneumatically animated scenes. The exploration of the dynamic interactions between the culture of the playful and the culture of the scientific in Graeco-Roman antiquity offers new reflections on categories of objects – scientific instruments and/as toys – as well as on categories of epistemology – the scientific informing, and being informed by, the make-believe.

Keywords : animation, Hero of Alexandria, klepsydra, make-believe, mechanics, Philo of Byzantium, play, pneumatics, trick vessels

Jeu de souffles : sur les qualités ludiques et matérielles de la pneumatique antique

Ce chapitre explore la façon dont les éléments du jeu et du ludique s'entrecroisent avec la pneumatique antique en se concentrant sur ses aspects matériels. L'épistémologie de la pneumatique antique est mieux comprise lorsqu'elle est « incarnée », une nature

incarnée qui contribuait à la fois à la valeur ludique de beaucoup d'objets pneumatiques et à l'objectif plus « sérieux » qui consistait à démontrer et diffuser un savoir. Afin de remettre en cause la dualité du discours académique actuel qui n'étudie la pneumatique antique qu'en tant que gadget frivole ou théorèmes abstraits, j'associe textes antiques et objets pour mettre en lumière la façon dont deux catégories d'objets fonctionnaient de manière ludique : les vases à astuce et les scènes animées pneumatiquement. L'exploration des interactions dynamiques entre culture ludique et culture scientifique dans le monde gréco-romain apporte de nouvelles réflexions sur la catégorisation d'objets qualifiés tantôt d'instruments scientifiques ou de jouets, ainsi que sur une catégorisation épistémologique – la connaissance scientifique et l'apprentissage du savoir par des simulacres.

Mots-clefs : animation, clepsydre, faire-semblant, Héron d'Alexandrie, jeu mécanique, Philon de Byzance, pneumatiques, trucage

LARIBI-GLAUDEL, SOPHIE

Les consécration de jouets dans les sanctuaires du monde grec entre littérature et épigraphie aux époques classique et hellénistique

Les enfants grecs fréquentaient, aux côtés des adultes, les sanctuaires du monde grec. Ils pouvaient y consacrer des jouets, une pratique attestée par plusieurs épigrammes votives tirées de l'*Anthologie Palatine*. La confrontation des sources littéraires, épigraphiques et archéologiques met en lumière la matérialité de ces pratiques rituelles de l'enfance, mais invite également à interroger la catégorie même des jouets. Les jeunes fidèles consacraient ainsi divers instruments de musique, des balles ou des astragales, ou encore des objets qu'ils se plaisaient à collectionner, comme des coquillages. Les consécration de jouets dans les sanctuaires témoignent donc des rites qui marquaient les différentes étapes de la vie des petits Grecs et des petites Grecques, de la prime enfance au seuil de la puberté puis à l'entrée dans l'âge adulte.

Mots-clefs : consécration, épigrammes votives, jouets, rites de l'enfance, rites de passage

The Consecrations of Toys in Greek Sanctuaries between Literature and Epigraphy in the Classical and Hellenistic periods

Greek children used to frequent, alongside adults, the sanctuaries of the Greek world. There, they could dedicate toys, a practice attested by several votive epigrams from the *Greek Anthology*. The comparison of literary, epigraphical, and archaeological sources highlights the materiality of the childhood ritual practices. It also invites us to question the very category of 'toys'. The young worshippers consecrated indeed various musical instruments, balls, or

astragals, as well as objects that they enjoyed collecting, such as shells. The consecrations of toys in the sanctuaries were part of the coming of age rituals that marked the different life stages of the Greek boys and girls, from early childhood to the threshold of puberty and of adulthood.

Key Words: childhood rituals, offerings, rites of passage, toys, votive epigrams

D'ONOFRIO, ANNA MARIA

A Stacker Toy from Eretria (and a Collection of Little Cups). A New Look at Old Finds

The article concerns the Late Geometric child's grave of the Heroon burial plot near the Western Gate of Eretria, with a series of fourteen discs cut from vases, and a collection of five small cups. The re-examination of the discs, regarded as pawns of a game, has made it possible to verify that their vertical assembly, according to the decreasing size of the discs themselves, makes what we now call a stacker toy. As for the cups, also characterised by the variety of sizes, they make up a set of five that includes a specimen corresponding to the Greek measure of the kyathos. Rather than playing at preparing dinner one can think of them as a game of dosing grains and other substances. The Platonic text of the *Laws*, dedicated to the education of children, evidences the custom of providing children with the skills necessary to perform various trades as adults, including that of the merchant. Through the educational use of simple everyday objects, Greek children were introduced to the knowledge of numbers and measurements. Among the funerary gifts, a small Attic lekythos related to the preservation of pharmaceutical substances – sedatives and drugs, alludes to the care, in vain, of a little deceased of rank.

Keywords: Eretria, West Gate cemetery by the "Heroon", pottery discs, small cups, educational toys, "Argive Monochrome" ware

Un jouet à empiler à Érétrie (et une collection de coupelles). Un regard neuf sur d'anciennes trouvailles

Cet article analyse le mobilier funéraire d'une tombe d'enfant de l'époque géométrique tardive dans la nécropole de l'Héron à la porte ouest d'Érétrie, avec une série de quatorze disques découpés dans des vases et une collection de cinq coupelles. Le réexamen des disques, jusqu'ici interprétés comme les palets d'un jeu, a permis de vérifier que leur assemblage vertical, selon leur taille décroissante, constitue ce que nous appelons aujourd'hui un jouet à empiler. Quant aux coupelles, également caractérisées par la variété des tailles, elles constituent un ensemble qui comprend un spécimen correspondant à la mesure grecque du kyathos. Plutôt que jouer à la dinette, elles ont pu servir à mesurer les céréales et d'autres

substances. Le texte platonicien des *Lois*, consacré à l'éducation des enfants, témoigne de la coutume de donner aux enfants les moyens d'exercer les compétences nécessaires à différents métiers, dont celui de marchand. Grâce à l'utilisation pédagogique d'objets simples du quotidien, les enfants grecs ont été initiés à la connaissance des nombres et des mesures. Parmi les offrandes funéraires, un petit lécythe attique associé au stockage de substances médicinales – sédatifs et drogues – fait allusion aux vains soins portés à un petit défunt de haut rang.

Mots-clés : cimetièrre, coupelles, disque en terre cuite, Érétirie, Herôon, jouets éducatifs, Porte de l'Ouest, vaisselle argienne monochrome

LAMBRUGO, CLAUDIA

'Playing' with Stones. Stone Pebbles in the Greek World: Game Pieces, Tools, or Ritual Objects?

As Sally Crawford convincingly argued ("The Archaeology of Play Things: Theorising a Toy Stage in the 'Biography' of Objects", *Childhood in the Past*, 2, 2009, 55-70), any object may become a toy in the hands of a child, so it is challenging to identify it without archaeological context. This is particularly true for stone pebbles and flat stones, which have been long regarded as meaningless objects. However, they occur either as a single object or in sets in tombs and sanctuary deposits in the Greek world. The frequent association with sub-adult burials seems to suggest that at least some of these pebbles and spheres were game tools (marbles perhaps?), but they might have also been considered valuable (also due to the intrinsic properties and colours of the stones?), and therefore used as ritual objects. This paper aims to draw attention to an issue that has been neglected for a long time, to present some intriguing archaeological contexts containing pebbles, and to focus on different interpretations.

Keywords: cleromancy, game pieces, *lithobolia*, marbles, pebbles, *pentelitha*

« Jouer » avec des cailloux. Galets en pierre dans le monde grec : instruments de jeu, outils ou objets rituels ?

Comme Sally Crawford l'a démontré de manière convaincante ("The Archaeology of Play Things: Theorising a Toy Stage in the 'Biography' of Objects", *Childhood in the Past*, 2, 2009, 55-70), n'importe quel objet peut devenir un jouet dans les mains d'un enfant. Il est donc difficile de les identifier sans contexte archéologique. C'est particulièrement vrai pour les galets en pierre et les pierres plates, qui ont longtemps été considérés comme des objets insignifiants. Cependant, ils se rencontrent soit de manière isolée, soit dans des ensembles dans des tombes et dépôts de sanctuaire dans le monde grec. La fréquente association avec les tombes de pré-adultes semble suggérer qu'au moins certains galets et

certaines sphères étaient des instruments de jeu (des billes ?), mais ils ont aussi pu être jugés précieux (pour leurs propriétés intrinsèques ou les couleurs des pierres ?), et donc utilisés comme des objets rituels. Cet article vise à attirer l'attention sur une problématique longtemps négligée et présente des contextes archéologiques intrigants avec des cailloux en proposant différentes interprétations.

Mots clés : billes, cailloux, cléromancie, *lithobolia*, galets, *pentelitha*, pièces de jeu

COSTANZO, DANIELA

Games and Toys in Context: Problems and Methods of Interpretation. Some Case Studies from Magna Graecia and Sicily

What is the symbolic significance of playthings and images of toys and games in relation to the archaeological and cultural context they belong to? Are there typologies specific to certain age or status groups recognizable from associations of objects and images in context? What is the most reliable method for a correct interpretation of this kind of archaeological data? Based on a series of case studies from the Greek colonies of Magna Graecia (Lokri, Croton, Metauros) and Sicily (Syracuse, Megara Hyblaea), this paper offers an analysis of ancient games and toys (ball games; pebbles, spheres and marbles; wheeled miniature carts), trying a contextual reading of the material and a critical discussion of the theories and methods to interpret these objects.

Key words: ball games, Lokri, Kroton, marbles, Megara Hyblaea, Metauros, pebbles, spheres, Syracuse, wheeled miniature carts

Jeux et jouets en contexte : problèmes et méthodes d'interprétation. Quelques études de cas de Grande Grèce et de Sicile

Quelle est la portée symbolique des objets et des images ludiques selon le contexte de découverte et le milieu culturel auquel ils appartiennent ? Existe-t-il des typologies propres à certains groupes d'âge ou de statut à identifier à partir des assemblages en contexte ? Quelle est la méthode la plus fiable d'interprétation de ces données archéologiques ? À partir d'une série d'études de cas issus des colonies de Grande Grèce (Locres, Croton, Metauros) et Sicile (Syracuse, Megara Hyblaea), cet article propose une analyse de jeux et de jouets anciens (jeux de balle ; pions, billes, sphères ; chariots à roulettes), en tentant une lecture contextuelle du matériel et une discussion critique des théories et des méthodes d'interprétation de ces objets.

Mots-clés : balle, billes, chariots miniatures, Croton, galets, Locres, Mégara Hyblaea, Metauros, sphères, Syracuse

SABETAI, VICTORIA

The Archaeology of Play in Boeotia. A Contribution to the Ludic Culture of a Greek Region

The article presents toys from Boeotia by examining finds from the region's sanctuaries and graves. An important corpus of material associated with play was unearthed in the Theban Kabirion sanctuary, such as spinning tops, a yoyo, knucklebones, and rattling objects which date from the late 5th century BCE onwards. These playthings present notable variety of medium and form as they were manufactured in stone, metal, and clay, which suggests votive function. The top's links with adolescence and its appearance with a specific coroplastic repertoire in the Kabirion points to links with male maturation. The grotesque imagery of deformed bodies, comic versions of heroic myths and figures of fear on the Kabiric pottery provides the wider context for associating the sanctuary's toys or their effigies with coming of age. The funerary record, on the other hand, provides a slightly different repertoire of playthings, for example rare metal rattles, miniature shields, small flat baskets (*kanastra*) and doll sets from tombs of children and subadults.

Keywords: Boeotia, coroplast, dolls, knucklebones, miniature shields, rattling objects, spintops, "yo-yo"

L'archéologie du jeu en Béotie. Une contribution à la culture ludique d'une région grecque

Cet article présente les jouets de Béotie en analysant les trouvailles des sanctuaires et tombes de la région. Un important ensemble de matériel lié au jeu provient du sanctuaire thébain du Kabirion, notamment des toupies, yoyo, osselets et hochets qui datent de la fin du V^e siècle av. J.-C. Ces jouets présentent une variété de matériau et de forme, pierre, métal, argile qui suggère une fonction votive. Le lien entre la toupie et l'adolescence, tout comme son apparition dans un répertoire coroplastique spécifique au Kabirion, indiquent des rapports étroits avec le processus de maturation sexuelle masculine. L'imagerie grotesque de corps déformés, les réélaborations comiques de mythes héroïques et les figures d'épouvante sur les vases du Kabirion fournissent un contexte plus large dans lequel les jouets ou leurs substituts sont associés au passage à l'âge adulte. Le registre funéraire, en revanche, propose un répertoire légèrement différent de jouets, avec par exemple de rares hochets en métal, des boucliers miniatures, des paniers (*kanastra*) et des poupées provenant de tombes d'enfants et d'individus subadultes.

Mots-clefs : Béotie, bouclier miniature, coroplastie, poupées, osselets, hochets, toupies, "yo-yo"

FENDT, ASTRID

'Rite de passage' or Special Ability? The Bronze Statuette of a Boy Holding a Whipping Top in the Munich Collections of Antiquities

A 36-centimeter-high bronze statuette in the Munich Antikensammlungen represents a naked young man holding a conical spinning top in his raised right hand, and formerly probably holding a whip in his left hand. The statuette was made around 350-325 BCE, probably in the Etrusco-Campanian environment. It formerly came from the James Loeb collection. Its place of discovery is unknown. It is assumed that it served as a votive offering or a grave good. It probably depicts a youth on the threshold of adulthood presenting his toy as part of the 'rite de passage' and consecrating it to a deity such as Hermes. With the dedicated presentation of the spinning top, the young man certainly also refers to his special ability and skill in playing whipping tops. It cannot be conclusively clarified whether the statuette can be further interpreted to the effect that the young man is not consecrating the object per se, but – in a more abstract sense – his ability, and can thus perhaps be interpreted in a professional context with acrobats and magicians.

Keywords : ability, bronze statuette, Etrusco-Campanian art, grave good, rite de passage, spinning top, votive offering

« Rite de passage » ou compétence particulière ? La statuette en bronze d'un jeune homme tenant une toupie dans la collection d'antiquités de Munich

Une statuette en bronze de 36 centimètres de haut, conservée à l'Antikensammlungen de Munich, représente un jeune homme nu tenant une toupie dans sa main droite levée et probablement un fouet non conservé dans sa main gauche. La statuette a été réalisée vers 350-325 av. J.-C., probablement en milieu étrusco-campanien. Elle provient de la collection James Loeb. Le lieu de sa découverte est inconnu. On suppose qu'elle fut dédiée dans un sanctuaire ou déposée en offrande dans une tombe. Elle représente probablement un jeune homme au seuil de l'âge adulte, présentant son jouet dans le cadre d'un rite de passage pour le consacrer ensuite à une divinité comme Hermès. En présentant une toupie, le jeune homme fait certainement aussi référence à son habileté particulière pour manipuler une toupie-sabot. Il n'est pas possible de déterminer de manière définitive si la statuette peut être interprétée comme la consécration non de l'objet en soi, mais – dans un sens plus abstrait – de sa compétence, peut-être dans un contexte professionnel associé aux acrobates et magiciens.

Mots-clefs : art étrusco-campanien, compétence, offrande funéraire, offrande votive, statuette en bronze, rite de passage, toupie

BELLIA, ANGELA

Dancing with a Ball

As the activities of Nausicaa and her brothers suggest, dance, music, and ball play had a salient function in bringing together groups within the community, given that ball-playing dance seemed to be linked not only to play, but also to festivals and rituals. Ball games were not just playful activities, but also graceful and rhythmic performances which were offered to the gods in order to please them. Ball games related to female dance activities in particular were performed as a type of ritual act in honour of the divinities and in anticipation and celebration of marriage. Through exploring written sources on ball-playing and material evidence related to female ball-dancing, various aspects of ball dance performances and their related ritual contexts will be considered.

Keywords : ball, ball dance, ball game, ball offering, cicada, Lokri, Lokrian *pinakes*

Danser avec une balle

Comme les activités de Nausicaa et de ses frères le suggèrent, danse, musique et jeu de balle ont l'importante fonction de fédérer des groupes au sein de la communauté, car danser au jeu de balle semble avoir été lié non seulement au jeu mais aussi à des festivals et des rituels. Loin d'être de simples activités ludiques, les jeux de balles étaient aussi des performances gracieuses et rythmées qui étaient offertes aux dieux afin de leur plaire. Les jeux de balle liés aux activités de danse féminine en particulier étaient réalisés comme un type d'acte rituel en l'honneur des divinités dans le cadre de la préparation et célébration du mariage. L'étude des sources écrites sur les jeux de balle et des traces matérielles liées à la danse de balle féminine permettra d'examiner divers aspects des performances de danse de balle et leurs contextes rituels associés.

Mots-clefs : balle cigale, danse avec une balle, jeu de balle, Locres, offrande de balle, *pinakes* locriens

MANSON, MICHEL

Le cheval bâton de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance. Mutations du regard sur l'enfance et ses jouets

Deux jouets sont souvent considérés comme « pérennes », la poupée et le cheval bâton, attestés depuis l'Antiquité, tous deux au cœur de l'animisme ludique enfantin. Pour interroger cette « évidence », on retrace l'histoire d'un jouet « genré » masculin, le cheval bâton. Signe de la sagesse ou de la folie des hommes dans l'Antiquité, ce jouet semble apparaître à l'époque romaine lorsque surgit le modèle des enfants à cheval pour la *Pompa circensis* ou le

lusus troiae. Au Moyen Âge, on ne s'étonnera pas de voir dans les miniatures des manuscrits des enfants imitant les chevaliers dans un tournoi à cheval bâton. Mais ces images utilisent aussi ce jouet comme un symbole de la petite enfance. Au XVI^e siècle, c'est la folie et la mort qu'il évoque parfois, tout en devenant par ailleurs un jouet bien présent dans la vie des enfants, vendu par les merciers, dans les pèlerinages et dans les foires flamandes. Jouet de pauvres et jouet de riches, très présent dans l'iconographie, le cheval bâton ne cesse d'enrichir ses significations et ses transformations.

Mots-clefs : cheval bâton, histoire du jouet, histoire de l'enfant, Horace, poupée, Rabelais

The Hobby Horse from Antiquity to the Renaissance. Changing Views of Childhood and Toys

Two toys are often regarded as 'perennial', the doll and the hobby horse, both in the heart of children's playful animism since Antiquity. To question this 'evidence', we trace the history of a 'male-gendered' toy, the hobby horse. A sign of the wisdom or folly in Antiquity, this toy seems to have emerged in Roman times when the model of children on horseback for the *Pompa circensis* or the *lusus troiae* appeared. In the Middle Ages, it is not surprising to see in the miniatures of manuscripts children imitating knights in a tournament on horseback. But these images also use this toy as a symbol of early childhood. In the 16th century, it sometimes evokes madness and death, while becoming a very present toy in the lives of children, sold by haberdashers, in pilgrimages and at Flemish fairs. A toy for the poor and for the rich, very present in iconography, the hobby horse never ceases to enrich its meanings and transformations.

Keywords: doll, history of toy, history of children, hobby horse, Horace, Rabelais

ROSSIE, JEAN-PIERRE

Vegetal Material in Moroccan Children's Toy and Play Culture

This study is part of an extensive research on North African and Saharan children's play, games, and toys published on Academia.edu, Zenodo.org, and Scribd under the author's name and whereby he strives to promote the recognition of these children's cultures in their countries and as part of the heritage of humanity. This paper analyses the use of vegetal material for doll play, animal world play and domestic life play, play related to sound and music, feasts and rituals, technical activities, and games of skill. The information is based on fieldwork between 1992 and 2021 and comes from Moroccan Amazigh (Berber) and Arabic-speaking children. These children aged between two and fifteen years mostly live in multi-cultural and media-influenced rural environments.

Keywords : animal, child, doll, ethnography, Morocco, play, toys, vegetal material

Le matériel végétal des jeux et jouets des enfants du Maroc

Cette étude fait partie d'une analyse approfondie des jeux et jouets d'enfants nord-africains et sahariens publiée sur Academia.edu, Zenodo.org et Scribd sous le nom de l'auteur dans l'intention de promouvoir la reconnaissance des cultures enfantines dans ces pays et comme patrimoine de l'humanité. L'article analyse l'usage de matériel végétal pour des jeux de poupées, lié au monde animal ou à la vie domestique, des jeux en relation avec les fêtes et rituels, le son et la musique, les activités techniques, et les jeux d'adresse. Les informations sont basées sur des recherches sur le terrain entre 1992 et 2021 et proviennent d'enfants amazighs (berbères) et arabophones marocains. Ces enfants âgés de deux à quinze ans vivent souvent dans des environnements ruraux multiculturels et influencés par les médias.

Mots-clés : animal, enfant, ethnographie, jeux, jouets, Maroc, poupée, matériel végétal

GOUGOULIS, CLEO

From άθuρμα and παίγνιον to παίχνιδι. Defining Toys in Modern Greece

The paper discusses the ideological, political, and socio-economic processes involved in the selection and use of four terms (*athurma*, *paignio[n]*, *paignidi/paichinidi*), employed in modern Greek for toys by the state bureaucracy, scholars and members of the Greek literate elite. Drawing on examples from different contexts (statistical tables, directories and guides dealing with the Greek toy market, articles in the daily and specialized press, children's literature, and modern Greek lexicography), the study analyses the use of ancient and modern Greek terms and the emergence of new terms linked to toy production and distribution from the foundation of the Greek state to the dawn of the 21st century. The variety of terms employed in different contexts is examined in relation to ideas of nationhood involved in the debate over the selection of national language (the "language question"), conceptions of childhood and play, and the rise of the Greek toy market, in the context of the emergence of Greek capitalism in the 19th century.

Keywords: *Athurma*, Greek demoticism, history of childhood, language question, modern Greek toy terminology, *paignion*, *paignidi*, *paichnidi*, play, toys, toy definition, toy market.

De άθuρμα et παίγνιον à παίχνιδι. Définir les jouets en Grèce moderne

Cet article concerne les processus idéologiques, politiques et socio-économique impliqués dans la sélection et l'usage de quatre termes (*athurma*,

paignio[n], *paignidi/paichinidi*) employés pour désigner des jouets en grec moderne par la bureaucratie, les chercheurs et l'élite cultivée grecque. Tirant ses exemples de différents contextes (tableaux statistiques, répertoires et guides du marché grec du jouet, articles de la presse quotidienne et spécialisée, littérature pour enfants et lexicographie grecque moderne), cette étude analyse l'usage de termes issus du grec ancien et moderne et l'émergence de nouveaux termes liés à la production et la distribution de jouet depuis la fondation de l'État grec jusqu'à l'aube du XXI^e siècle. La variété des termes employés dans différents contextes est examinée en relation avec les concepts de nation contenues dans le débat sur le choix de la langue nationale (« la question linguistique »), avec les conceptions de l'enfance et du jeu et l'essor du marché du jouet en Grèce, dans le contexte de l'émergence du capitalisme grec au XIX^e siècle.

Mots-clés : *Athurma*, définition du jouet, grec demotique, jouet, linguistique, marché du jouet, histoire de l'enfance, jeu, jouet, terminologie grecque moderne, *paignion*, *paignidi*, *paichnidi*

THIBAUT, MATTIA

Toys, Toying, Toyish: the Semiotics of Objectual Play

This paper offers a theoretical and methodological overview on the semiotic features of toys and toy-related practices. Eugen Fink describes toys as "magical" objects, whose meaning depends on the context from which we look at them. Toys are indeed unique objects from a semiotic standpoint. We propose some reflections on the differences between toys and other playthings, and on the interpretative nature of toying. We focus on the objects that are *made* to be toys – and hence on the different forms of authorship that take place and collide in toy-play. From the idea of designed toys, we briefly investigate what kind of material characteristics and aesthetic qualities facilitate toy-play outlining a quality of *toyishness*. Finally, we engage with the idea of *toyification*, and of the possible uses of the semiotic realm of toys outside their proper context.

Keywords: gamification, ludification, magic, plaything, semiosphere

Jouets, jouer, jouable: la sémiotique du jeu

Cet article propose un aperçu théorique et méthodologique des caractéristiques sémiotiques des jouets et des pratiques liées aux jouets. Eugen Fink décrit les jouets comme des objets « magiques », dont le sens dépend du contexte à partir duquel on les observe. Les jouets sont en effet des objets uniques d'un point de vue sémiotique. Nous proposons quelques réflexions sur les différences entre jouets et autres objets ludiques, ainsi que sur la nature interprétative

du « jouer ». Nous nous concentrons sur les objets qui sont *faits* pour être des jouets – et donc sur les différents desseins d’auteur qui prennent place dans le jeu. Le concept de « *designed toys* » nous amène à examiner quel genre de caractéristiques matérielles et esthétiques facilite le jeu et la qualité de jouet. Enfin, nous abordons l’idée de *jouetification* et des potentiels de l’usage du domaine de la sémiotique des jouets en dehors de leur contexte propre.

Mots-clefs : *gamification*, ludification, magie, objet ludique, sémiosphère

RÖDER, BRIGITTE

Do Finds Tell Stories? Yes: our Own! The Example of Prehistoric Toys

For 99.9% of its history humankind got by without writing. The sources available to prehistoric archaeology are material in nature and must be filled with meaning and interpreted from today’s perspective. But the artefacts are silent and ambiguous. It is therefore all the more baffling that the archaeological practice paints a completely different picture. And it is striking that the interpretation of objects is generally limited to one particular interpretation that appears to arise directly from the finds – indeed, the finds themselves seem to be telling the story they were part and parcel of. The history of mankind apparently discloses itself automatically from the stories they tell. But these stories are ours, as the example of the prehistoric toys shows. The childhood stories told are intertwined with those of gender and family. On closer inspection, it turns out that these stories reflect modern perceptions of an ideal of human co-existence which we deem to be “primordial”.

Keywords: emotions, material culture, modern concepts, Prehistory, primordial state, stories, toys

Les trouvailles ont-elles une histoire? Oui : la nôtre ! L'exemple des jouets préhistoriques

Pendant 99,9% de son histoire, l’humanité s’est passée de l’écriture. Les sources dont dispose l’archéologie préhistorique sont toutes de nature matérielle et il faut leur attribuer un sens et les interpréter de notre point de vue actuel. Mais les artefacts demeurent muets et ambigus. Il est donc d’autant plus étonnant que dans la pratique archéologique, l’interprétation des objets se limite généralement à une interprétation spécifique qui semble découler directement des trouvailles – qui semblent raconter d’elles-mêmes l’histoire dans laquelle elles s’insèrent. À partir de ces histoires, l’histoire de l’humanité se révélerait comme par elle-même. Mais ces histoires sont les nôtres, comme le montre l’exemple des jouets préhistoriques. Les histoires d’enfance racontées s’entremêlent avec celles des genres et des familles. Un examen critique montre

que les histoires racontées reflètent une perception moderne d’un idéal de cohabitation sociale que nous jugeons « originelle ».

Mots-clés : concepts modernes, culture matérielle, émotions, état originel, jouets, narrations, préhistoire