

*MEA LUX, MEUM DESIDERIUM: CICERO'S LETTERS TO TERENTIA AND
MARITAL IDEALS*

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Abstract

JETTA PETERKIN: *Mea lux, meum desiderium*: Cicero's Letters to Terentia and Marital Ideals
(Under the direction of Werner Riess)

The marriage of the famed Roman orator Cicero to his first wife Terentia is often cited as an example of Roman marital relationships because of the letters that survive from him to her. However, their marriage needs to be compared to other sources that describe marital interactions to determine if we can use it as a model for other Roman unions. The lack of a variety of sources from Roman marriages has limited this investigation to comparing Cicero and Terentia to the ideals that are present in epigraphic and epistolographic records. The results demonstrate that, within certain socio-economic parameters, the marriage of Cicero and Terentia would have been considered normative by other Romans. As such, their relationship is an effective model for how Romans would have viewed a successful marriage.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Though no document written by Terentia survives, her marriage to Cicero is one of the most studied because of the intimate nature of his letters to her. In his correspondence, we have relatively unvarnished communication from a husband to his wife. Cicero himself never edited the letters for publication, and there are few obvious signs that any editor (likely Tiro) made dramatic changes.¹ As a result, these letters are the best extant evidence for intimate spousal interaction in the Roman world. We can see what were perceived as positive traits in a wife or husband, at least from Cicero's perspective and from his expectation of Terentia's reactions.

The unique nature of Cicero's letters, however, prevents a simple generalization of any interpretations to Roman society. Without any similarly frank, private sources, we must carefully evaluate the evidence with other information about Roman values and expectations. Tiro presumably did not include letters that he felt would harm Cicero's reputation because of their embarrassing or untraditional content.² On the one hand, this editing prevents us from developing a complete picture of their marriage, but on the other it demonstrates what Tiro thought would be valued and accepted by a contemporary reader.

Whether Tiro, as a freedman, chose as Cicero would have, is debatable. In order to properly evaluate whether their marriage was as unusual as the letters, it is necessary to

¹ Shackleton Bailey xi.

² Grebe 128.

contextualize the relationship within other sources dealing with Roman marriage. If we do not see similar interactions, then, while Cicero and Terentia still present an interesting example, the aspects of their marriage cannot be generalized to the Roman population at large. Here we will focus on Terentia's role in public life to determine whether her activities fit into a relatively normal pattern for an elite wife.

Sources of Comparison

Before evaluating Cicero's letters in the context of other evidence, I will first discuss the importance of audience and expectation. Because there is so little evidence about the private lives of the Romans, we must rely heavily on how they perceived marriage rather than on the actual realities of everyday life. For the sources that we will be comparing, the composition of the audience will be largely the same, and the cultural expectations will be informed by the characteristics of that audience. Those expectations are relatively clearly defined, and so we have a firm cultural delineation of normative values for wives of elite families.

Of the many sources available for examination, this paper will first look at funerary inscriptions and the terms of praise that are applied to wives and husbands. Attention will be paid to the *Laudatio Turiae* and *Laudatio Murdiae* because of the comparable levels of wealth and social status. Typical adjectives for wives include: *dulcissima* ("sweetest"), *pia* ("faithful"), *carissima* ("dearest"), *optima* ("best"), and *sanctissima* ("most pious" or "just").³ Generally, they are meant to indicate the wife's faithful support of husband and family. Men are also described by the masculine *pius* and *optimus*, and further terms such as *virtus* ("manly excellence") and *fortitudo* ("courage or strength") are ascribed to them. Husbands

³ Riess, section 3.

are devoted to family as well, but they are also implicated in a public sphere by virtues that are displayed only in military or political settings. Grebe summarizes, "...the ordinary field of female activity in Rome was restricted to the home, whereas the external public world was associated with the man..."⁴ This is a widely held view of gender division in ancient Rome,⁵ though it evolves somewhat over the course of Roman history. In particular, we will see that the late Republic was a period of change in the role of women in the public sphere.

Comparison between the terms Cicero applies to Terentia and those found in inscriptions will show that Terentia, while occupying the traditionally feminine realm, also acts in capacities that are associated with the masculine. That is, she works publicly to secure his interests, as opposed to acting solely in a domestic capacity. However, such actions are found to be acceptable only under certain circumstances.⁶ Thus, even though Terentia appears to violate gender norms, she is in fact fulfilling the permissible, and indeed even expected,⁷ duties of a wife during the exile and absence of a husband.

Nevertheless, Cicero also makes it clear that Terentia, even during periods of social normalcy, acts as an intermediary between him and his *clientes*.⁸ Her actions during her husband's exile may have been extraordinary, but it seems that she fulfilled a semi-public role before and after that. Terentia, then, can be seen participating in the increasing appearance of elite women in public life.⁹ Even in this respect she is exemplary of a general

⁴ Grebe 128.

⁵ See also, Hemelrijk (2004) 188.

⁶ Hemelrijk (2004) 197.

⁷ Grebe 127.

⁸ *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.2.

⁹ Hemelrijk (2004) 197.

movement, rather than a singular instance. That is not to say that she wasn't an extraordinary woman, but that, in her capacity as Cicero's wife, Terentia closely conformed to both traditional and developing expectations of an elite wife. She worked for her husband and family within the bounds proscribed by her society, though within that range she acted zealously. During periods of crisis, she expanded her typical role to fit new boundaries, but when the trouble had passed, Terentia returned to her usual duties as Cicero's wife. Her gender sphere fluctuates with necessity and the demands of a frequently mutable political environment.

Secondly, I will compare Cicero's letters to his wife with those of Pliny the Younger. The situations are not exactly parallel, in part because, over the intervening period, there would have been changes in society and therefore any expectations.¹⁰ However, the differences are not so great as to render any comparison unhelpful. The consistency in relative class, wealth, and education as well as the letter-writing genre make Pliny's letters a fruitful point of comparison.

Scope

The outcome of a comparison of Cicero's marriage with other sources on Roman matrimony will necessarily be limited in application. Social expectations, while possibly consistent, will not be exactly analogous across class, financial, and geographical boundaries. Some of these factors can be adjusted for, but the circumstances of Cicero and Terentia's separation in the early 50s BCE cannot be paralleled in the lower classes because exile was a punishment reserved for the elite. There are intractable differences between classes in the conditions of daily life and therefore social expectations.

¹⁰ Dixon (1991) 102.

For instance, the relative visibility of lower class women was much greater than that of elite women in everyday life. These women were more likely, because of financial considerations or less political participation,¹¹ to hold a job that involved interaction with non-family members. A list of occupations that women engaged in include:¹² prostitution, gladiatorial games, dancer, musician, acrobat, weaver, dress maker, waitress, midwife, hairdresser, and others.¹³ Some of these professions, such as hairdresser or weaver, could be executed without coming into contact with more than a few extra-familial individuals.¹⁴ However, any of the performance jobs, such as dancer or gladiator, would necessitate, if not direct interaction, then at least the presentation of oneself to an audience. Waitresses would have experienced more direct contact, and a midwife would certainly have had physical and professional dealings with at least the women of other households.

For an elite woman, the very fact of employment would violate the basic values of a marriage: a wife's support of her family usually comes through maintenance of a virtuous household. It was the duty of the husband to provide material resources for his wife and family.¹⁵ Thus, what is tolerated or even valuable among lower-class women does not necessarily reflect the same considerations for upper-class wives. Any conclusions

¹¹ That is, their husbands do not hold high political positions on which their wives' behavior could reflect positively or negatively.

¹² The extent to which these were acceptable as opposed to necessary to alleviate poverty is difficult to ascertain. However, it seems likely, because of the consistency of inscriptions that praise private virtues over public, that necessity breeds acceptance, up to a point.

¹³ Lefkowitz and Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, Chapter VIII.

¹⁴ Weaving done for one's own household is the canonical virtue ascribed to women.

¹⁵ Grebe 130.

developed from comparing Terentia, Turia,¹⁶ and Murdia will inform us most directly about women of a similarly high level of birth, wealth, and education.

Conclusions

The evidence will show that Terentia and Cicero's marriage falls within the expectations for a typical Roman elite couple. Aspects that seem striking are actually a reflection of general trends in the increase of married women's everyday independence: the growing popularity of *sine manu* marriages, and the spread of Greek-based education for both men and women. In light of these social changes, Terentia's role fits within the traditional and the evolving values for a Roman aristocratic wife.

One of the most striking aspects of their relationship, the apparently deeply felt passion, is seen in other couples, but we have too few sources for daily intimate interaction to generalize on the emotional investments of most Roman marriages. Dixon suggests that love beyond *concordia* becomes a valued part of the ideal marriage in the late Republic and Empire.¹⁷ Thus, their marriage can be seen as surpassing the expectations and ideals for marriage.

Cicero and Terentia's divorce is difficult to evaluate because we do not have statistics for rates of divorce. However, we do know that divorce was at least superficially considered problematic, especially in instances where there was no fault attached to either party and if the couple had children together.¹⁸ We do not know the exact circumstances of Cicero's

¹⁶ The appellation is likely erroneous, but I will use it to refer to the subject of the *Laudatio Turiae* for simplification.

¹⁷ Dixon (1991) 103.

¹⁸ Treggiari (1991a) 40.

divorce from Terentia because none of the letters mention the reasons,¹⁹ but we can assume that one or both parties ultimately fell short of the ideal.²⁰

As a result, we will find that Cicero and Terentia's marriage is a reasonable example of an ideal Roman marriage in its reflection of broader trends in marital practice. However, their divorce would have been considered disappointing and untraditional by other Roman elites because of their marriage's length and the production of their two children. Whether they reflect a typical reality we cannot entirely determine based on the lack of candid evidence for the daily interactions of married couples. However, we can see through Cicero and Terentia a few of the factors that determined a successful Roman marriage and an unideal separation.

¹⁹ This may have been because of Cicero's reticence or the reluctance of Tiro to publish letters that reflected poorly on Cicero.

²⁰ Either through adultery or a desire to no longer be married. Lack of children was not an issue.

Chapter 2: Audience and Expectation

The audience as perceived and understood by Cicero and other sources is critical for our understanding of the social ideals under which they are writing and publishing. The expectations of the reader shaped the information that the author or commissioner included. In the sources that I will be comparing, the writers are all working very closely within the social value system as they understood it. Thus, a consideration of the audience will directly inform us about the ideals under which Cicero and Terentia married, as well as describing the scope in which we can reliably draw comparisons.

Letters

Cicero's expectations of an audience are more limited than those of Pliny, who edited and published his own letters for a wider group. While Cicero may have anticipated publishing his correspondence at some point, he himself never actually did. Whether he had started preparing the letters for publication we can only guess, but he was anticipating at least the addressee as audience.

The letters that are being considered here are almost exclusively to other members of the Roman elite. As a close companion of Cicero, Tiro's familiarity with the family warrants greetings from Terentia and the children, but Cicero does not include the detailed references

to Terentia that are found in the letters to Atticus.²¹ Therefore, the letters most relevant to outlining the nature of the marriage are addressed to Cicero's social equals.

Since the correspondents were social peers, they would have shared the same general values. The levels of wealth and education between them would have been similar,²² so that similar factors such as social and political pressures would have contributed to their value systems. In short, these men and women would have been operating under the same external set of ideals and norms,²³ and the outline of that system as revealed by Cicero's understanding of the addressee's expectation will inform us about Cicero's own values. Then, we can compare the letters from Cicero to his peers with those to Terentia to see whether he holds both publicly and privately to a common set of values regarding marriage.

A related, but distinct, question is the publishing decisions that Tiro made after Cicero's death. While the expected audience for the published letters would have had the same general social characteristics as the actual addressees, it would also have been broader and more public. One expects that in a personal letter Cicero would have felt more comfortable revealing a less rigidly conformist mindset, but such a missive might not have passed the requirements for publication. That is, if Cicero had made revolutionary comments, it is unlikely that Tiro would have published those letters because they could have damaged Cicero's reputation as a traditional, moral Roman citizen.

²¹ This is not to say that Tiro was not privy to that information, but it is more likely that he was often by Cicero's side in a way that Atticus was not.

²² Though it is reasonable to assume that Terentia, as the wife of such an erudite man, could have been more highly educated than other women of comparable status (Treggiari (2007) 157), it is not possible to actually determine.

²³ Their actual thoughts on that system are difficult to reconstruct.

This presents us with the problem that the letters we have will probably only be those that conform closely to the traditional Roman values. However, the difficulty is not insurmountable. For example, letters were included that describe Cicero's mourning for his daughter Tullia as excessive.²⁴ Some of these contain other information that Tiro presumably thought important or relevant, but some are mostly devoted to Cicero's search for a suitable property on which to build a monument to Tullia.²⁵ Others specifically mention the harm to his reputation that his mourning has incurred.²⁶ The reason for this inclusion is unclear, but we can infer that a slightly negative characterization need not have always prevented a letter from being published. Therefore, any information in Cicero's letters will likely have been chosen with an eye to a generally positive depiction of the writer, but should also be evaluated for a lack of strict conformity.

For example, the letters to Terentia show a Cicero who is highly, possibly excessively, emotional. He describes himself as regularly weeping and having difficulty controlling his grief.²⁷ We might explain the inclusion of very emotional letters as a result of the judgment that the overall value of the exile letters outweighed the potential loss of reputation. Alternatively, the increase in acceptability of a greater degree of attachment to family and private affairs could have influenced the decision to include these letters.²⁸ At any rate, there is a definite tension between the consideration of the expected audience and

²⁴ *Att.* 12.15, 12.16, 12.18, 12.20.

²⁵ *Att.* 12.12, 12.35, 12.36.

²⁶ *Att.* 12.38a, *Att.* 12.40.

²⁷ *Ad. Fam.* 14.4.1.

²⁸ Dixon (1991) 102-103.

the selection of relevant information. We can expect a reasonable level of conformity to social norms, but at the same time not every letter will conform.

For Pliny's correspondence, the audience for the edited, published letters was very similar. The most significant difference is that Pliny himself chose and polished the letters. While Tiro worked in the environment of the elite, he was not native to that social class and so must have had a distinct, albeit related, perspective on propriety and normative behavior. Pliny, on the other hand, would have had a similar overall experience in terms of education, wealth, and social class to that of Cicero. The greatest difference would have been in the change from Republic to Empire, but the overall value system that Cicero and Pliny operated under would have been largely the same with regards to gender roles and marital ideals.

Epigraphic Audience

The readers of inscriptions would have been a somewhat broader group because the inscriptions were publicly displayed. The audience must still be literate, but does not need to have sufficient funds to own a copy of a work or to have a friend who possesses one, like the reader of the letters would. The open publication of inscriptions expands the potential audience to include not only literate elites, but also sub-elites and even those in the lower classes who may have had a basic education. Thus, the pool of potential readers is not only greater, but it also exceeds the socio-economic characteristics that define the audiences for literature. Moreover, the originators of the inscriptions, the commissioners, come from a variety of class and financial backgrounds, as do the subjects. Extant inscriptions represent a wide array of commissioners and subjects, from freedmen to members of the senatorial class. Only the absolute poorest Romans are lacking in the epigraphic record.²⁹

²⁹ Hesberg-Tonn 108.

The variety of classes represented in inscriptions should increase the number of differentiated value systems. However, the actual body of social norms demonstrated in the epigraphic sources is rigidly conformist to a generalized set of ideals,³⁰ and there is little variation in word choice for inscriptions dedicated to either sex. The system of values represented in epigraphy is strikingly regular and uniform across socio-economic boundaries, such that a consistent set can be defined for all classes.³¹ That is not to say that the realities of everyday life were similar or undifferentiated, but the basic ideas about life, a person's role in society, and their value to family and others seem to be relatively homogenous.

However, even generalizing those ideals as an integral part of the mindset of every class of Roman may be too simplistic. The commissioners of inscriptions wanted the reader to look favorably on the person commemorated, and so they would have wanted to present the persona that would be acceptable to and approved by the majority of those seeing the monument. Yet the basic, fundamental ideals represented in epigraphy can also be a mask for the actual qualities that are being praised.³² That is, the virtues represented, such as education for a woman, might not have been acceptable without the more traditional Roman qualities such as wool spinning. A certain amount of freedom in describing the dedicatee could be allowed as long as the proper, typical formulae were observed.

As a result, epigraphic evidence, through the values that are in every inscription, defines the core set of Roman ideals, but those same definitions can be mixed with other, more atypical virtues. The unusual characteristics could contradict the traditional set, but,

³⁰ Riess section 7.

³¹ As represented by those that chose to erect an inscription.

³² Hemelrijk (1999) 112.

instead, it seems to be the case that typical and atypical descriptors can occur together. That is not to say that the latter occur without problems, since there wouldn't be a need to legitimize untraditional virtues with traditional if there weren't a tension between the two. However, as evident from the *Laudatio Turiae* and *Laudatio Murdiae*, any atypical characteristics in fact are subsumed and absorbed into the presentation of an idealized subject. That is, the untraditional is found to be supporting the primacy of the traditional.³³ Though there are variations in presentation and information, the focus nonetheless remains on the customary values.

As a result, the overall depiction of excellence is consonant with the ideal picture for both men and women that can be expected based on other sources. There are elements of non-traditional virtues, but they do not contradict or obscure the traditional set. Thus, we can work with a definable group of ideals that persists in spite of class and individual differences. The extent to which these values were pertinent to everyday life is impossible to assess directly, but a large body of the Roman people must have internalized them to some extent in order for such a stunning regularity in inscriptions to occur. Therefore, a marriage that was reasonably well-aligned with the ideals presented in the epigraphic evidence can be considered normative from the admittedly superficial vantage point that we currently have.

Conclusions

The expectations of audience for both letters and inscriptions, then, allows us to explicitly and implicitly define what would have been acceptable virtues of both individuals and marital relationships. By the very act of publishing and presenting information in a public context, the author or commissioner would have assumed that it would have resonated

³³ Riess section 5.

with their readers. Since we do not have evidence that any of the sources being considered for this paper were presented in an ironic context, it is reasonable to presume that the resonance was supposed to be generally positive.³⁴

Cicero's marriage to Terentia will necessarily not match up to an ideal in all respects, but if we find that there are several points of close comparison and few of moderate or striking contradiction, then it may safely be termed "normative." That is, it would have been considered a model of a Roman marriage, which other Romans could have looked to as a semi-idealized example of traditional values. In order to evaluate the system of ideals as perceived by Cicero, we'll compare his letters to his wife and to others. The former is a more internalized view of the marriage, while the latter is more of a public face presented to peers. Several of the letters are to close friends, but nonetheless there would have been an element of semi-public communication that filtered the image of their marriage.

Pliny's letters to his wife and others will act as a control for Cicero's letters. They were formally prepared for publication and so deliberately present a socially acceptable image of marriage. There are certainly other factors at work in Pliny's writing, such as a desire to compliment his in-laws and to present himself in a favorable light. However, these considerations tend to encourage rather than discourage social conformation.

³⁴ We would not expect, for example, Juvenal's depiction of virtue to directly reflect a set of values.

Chapter 3: Gendered Virtue: The Diction of Praise

Inscriptions showcase a very consistent set of words that define the characteristics of the ideal woman and wife. In letters and narratives, we find descriptions and elaborations on some of the same behaviors. Naturally, it is possible to use a sentence or a different word to describe the same idea, but a reader can have difficulty in determining whether an author meant for the two to be synonymous. As a result, this chapter focuses on individual or pairs of identical words rather than phrases and sentences. The traditional set of values for marriage and women are described by words that seem to resonate deeply in the Roman consciousness. Thus an author is unlikely to use such a weighted word without at least being aware of its overtones and implications. Diction in inscriptions and literary works can therefore be compared to determine whether the set of values in each is similar. In the case of Cicero and Terentia, a comparison will demonstrate whether the same ideals are considered in practice, i.e., in private communication which initially wouldn't have anticipated the same audience as inscriptions. It is not necessary for the ideals to have been strictly followed, but rather it is important whether they are in mind as a guide to behavior.

The regular set of values that are ascribed to Roman women in inscriptions stress the domestic and private nature of their sphere of influence. The most common adjectives are: “*dulcissimae, piae* and its derivatives, *bene merenti, suae, carissimae, optimae*, and *sanctissimae*,”³⁵ along with *bona, proba, frugi*, and *pudica*.³⁶ Other virtues referenced

³⁵ Riess section 3.

typically include *castitas*, and the archetypical Roman woman's characteristic, *lanificium*.³⁷

In the *laudationes* of women, longer descriptions of the praised include other positive aspects, but ultimately each can be brought back under the firmly conservative, i.e., domestic, set of virtues.³⁸

Praise in Cicero's Correspondence

The letters from Cicero to Terentia begin from his time in exile and end shortly before their divorce.³⁹ This period encompasses not only Cicero's exile but also the civil war ten years later. As a result, we have examples of their communication in a variety of circumstances: peace, war, exile, tyranny. Throughout the 24 letters, Cicero praises Terentia with words that are regularly found in funerary inscriptions: "vestrae pietatis,"⁴⁰ "amantissime,"⁴¹ "uxori meae optimae,"⁴² "castissime,"⁴³ "suavissima,"⁴⁴ and "meae carissimae animae."⁴⁵ There are more examples, but they are variations of these words.⁴⁶ These instances indicate at least a superficial internalization of widespread ideals, because

³⁶ Hesberg-Tonn 124.

³⁷ Hesberg-Tonn 221.

³⁸ Riess section 6.

³⁹ 58 to 47 B.C.E.

⁴⁰ *Ad. Fam.* 14.1.3.

⁴¹ *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.2.

⁴² *Ad. Fam.* 14.3.2.

⁴³ *Ad. Fam.* 14.4.1.

⁴⁴ *Ad. Fam.* 14.5.2.

⁴⁵ *Ad. Fam.* 14.14.2.

⁴⁶ *Honestissime* (*ad. Fam.* 14.4.5), *fidissima atque optima uxor* (*ad. Fam.* 14.4.6), *optatissima* (*ad. fam.* 14.5.2), *merito tuo* (*ad. fam.* 14.6.1), *pie et caste* (*ad. fam.* 14.7.1).

even in these private letters, affection and praise are couched in terms of those ideals. *Pietas* and *casta* refer to a wife's expected devotion and loyalty to husband and family, while *suavis*, *cara*, and *amans* emphasize the loving and companionable relationship that developed between spouses. As a group, the standard set of positive attributions for a wife stress a private, domestic role that is specifically in relation to the husband.

The *Laudatio Murdiae* reflects the same set of values⁴⁷ in an explicit enumeration of womanly qualities: “modestia, probitate, pudicitia, obsequio, lanificio, diligentia, fide.”⁴⁸ The speaker refers to these as “communia”⁴⁹ to all women, and so Cicero is identifying Terentia within the normal, expected female sphere. This universalization does not mean that he doesn't value her as an individual, but that these are the areas in which it is acceptable for a woman to excel. By using these universal terms, Cicero is praising her for being an excellent Roman wife. Terentia becomes, in essence, a manifestation of the Roman ideal, just as the women in inscriptions reflect the conservative values.⁵⁰ She can be unique in various aspects, but she must at the same time represent the Roman matron in the typical ways: chastity, *pietas*, frugality, and moderation.

Cicero occasionally refers to virtuous wives in his letters to friends. He describes two women as “gravissima” and “optima.”⁵¹ Crassus' wife is “praestantissima omnium

⁴⁷ It is interesting that this inscription is by a son to a mother, yet we see the same words that a husband would use.

⁴⁸ l. 28.

⁴⁹ l. 27.

⁵⁰ Hesberg-Tonn 223.

⁵¹ *Ad. Fam.* 15.7, *Ad. Fam.* 15.8.

feminarum.”⁵² In his speeches and other writings, women who behave indecently are portrayed as “impudicas,”⁵³ “audax,”⁵⁴ and “immoderata.”⁵⁵ Exemplary women are “nobilis”⁵⁶ and “proba”⁵⁷ and have their “pudicitia.”⁵⁸ The language that he uses to praise or blame women is consistent with the set of values presented in inscriptions. In the *De Republica*, Cicero delineates the value of a traditional gendered hierarchy within a marriage, so he publicly and privately presents a perspective consistent with social expectations.⁵⁹

However, the range of proper activities for Terentia expands during Cicero’s absence. In the letters from exile, Cicero extols Terentia for her “virtus” and “fortitudo.”⁶⁰ Such masculine characteristics⁶¹ were acceptable in the absence of a husband, but not when he is home, i.e., not at war or exiled. Terentia, at this time, could actively advocate for the protection of their property and Cicero’s return. In addition, Terentia and Tullia together arranged for the latter’s marriage to Dolabella, though Cicero, who was a governor at the time, did have to approve of the arrangements before they were official. The slaves and rest

⁵² *Ad. Fam.* 5.8.2.

⁵³ *In Verrem* actio 2, book 3, section 160, line 6.

⁵⁴ *Pro Cluentio* section 18, line 11.

⁵⁵ *Pro Caelio* section 53, line 7.

⁵⁶ *In Verrem* actio 2, book 5, section 31, line 3; *In Verrem* actio 2, book 4, section 136, line 6; *In Verrem* actio 2, book 4, section 99, line 13.

⁵⁷ *Philippicae* oration 13, section 8, line 11; *In Verrem* actio 2, book 4, section 99, line 13.

⁵⁸ *De Republica* book 2, section 46, line 2.

⁵⁹ Grebe 142.

⁶⁰ *Ad. Fam.* 14.1.1.

⁶¹ Hesberg-Tonn 237.

of the household were under Terentia's control,⁶² and the management of their properties was administered by her. She also advises him on what to do.⁶³ Her actions may have even taken her into the forum and other political arenas.⁶⁴

Regarding these types of actions, Cicero specifically refers to her "virtute...in tantas aerumnas propter me."⁶⁵ Her masculine attributes are intimately tied to unusual circumstances, in this case the trials of Cicero's exile. Those circumstances, though they can vary, must include the absence of the husband. Otherwise, the wife would be usurping the masculine role when it is unnecessary and could be censured. Moreover, public activity is permissible only in the service of the *husband's* interests.⁶⁶ That is, masculine forwardness can be a positive trait for a woman if she is acting out of dedication to her spouse and family.

Cicero refers to the actions that led to his exile as "non vitium...sed virtus."⁶⁷ His services and duties under normal circumstances are characterized in the same words with which Terentia's during his absence are described. She is, in fact, becoming the active partner in his place. Their roles are reversed, but it is important that this reversal is *temporary*. Cicero's use of masculine terms to describe Terentia decreases after the first four letters.⁶⁸ With his restoration, Cicero praises her with only the traditional, expected

⁶² *Ad. Fam.* 14.4.4.

⁶³ *Ad. Fam.* 14.3.3.

⁶⁴ Hemelrijk (2004) 190.

⁶⁵ *Ad. Fam.* 14.1.1.

⁶⁶ Hemelrijk (2004) 191.

⁶⁷ *Ad. Fam.* 14.4.5.

⁶⁸ Whether he did in letters that do not survive is impossible to account for.

adjectives and nouns, and the more masculine terms are used again only during the events and separations of the civil war.⁶⁹

We see essentially the same sequence of events in the narrative of the *Laudatio Turiae*. Turia is characterized by courage, action, and fidelity in her efforts to protect her husband and his interests.⁷⁰ Like Terentia, Turia advocated for the return of her husband and protected what properties she could:

[publicatis bonis repet]itis(?) quod ut conarere virtus tua te
hortabatur/[mira pietas tua me m]unibat clementia eorum
contra quos ea parabas/[nihilominus tamen v]ox tua est
firmitate animi emissa

You begged for my life when I was abroad - it was your courage that urged you to this step - and because of your entreaties I was shielded by the clemency of those against whom you marshaled your words. But whatever you said was always said with undaunted courage.⁷¹

Yet as soon as his safety and return are secured, she returns to the traditional role of wife within the domestic sphere.⁷² The widower says, “pacato orbe terrarum res[stitut]a re publica quieta deinde n[obis et felicia]/tempora contingerunt.”⁷³ After the return to a normal social structure, Turia’s masculine qualities are not mentioned: her husband has been restored and can take up his duties again. Her actions during the dangers to her husband are not diminished, but they are no longer necessary because he is able to re-assume traditional masculine roles.

⁶⁹ *Ad. Fam.* 14.6, 14.11. The latter is actually a reference to Tullia’s “virtus.”

⁷⁰ *Laudatio Turiae* 2.6A, 2.19.

⁷¹ *Laudatio Turiae*, 2.5a-8a, translation by E. Wistrand.

⁷² Riess, section 5.

⁷³ *Laudatio Turiae*, ll. 2.25-6, translation by E. Wistrand.

Just so does Terentia assume and then lay aside the role of a male in Cicero's absence. Cicero, during his exile, recognizes that "a te quidem omnia fieri fortissime et amantissime."⁷⁴ She also provides him with advice, which he says he will follow: "ego tamen faciam quae praecipis."⁷⁵ Terentia fulfills public roles that Cicero is unable to. Yet when social circumstances are normalized, Cicero writes to her about domestic concerns rather than political.

In Tusculanum nos venturos putamus aut Nonis aut postridie. Ibi ut sint omnia parata (plures enim fortasse nobiscum erunt et, ut arbitror diutius ibi commorabimur); labrum si in balineo non est, ut sit, item cetera quae sunt ad victum et ad valetudinem necessaria.

We think that we will come into Tusculum either on the Nones or the day after. There (make it) so that everything is prepared (for perhaps there will be many with me and, as I judge, we will stay there for a while); if there isn't a tub in the bathroom, make it so that there is, and the same with the other things which are necessary for nourishment and health.⁷⁶

Instead of giving advice and encouragement, Terentia *receives* instructions. Her sphere returns to what we would expect, i.e. principally domestic, which Walter Allen argues is in fact her normal prerogative as well as duty.⁷⁷ However, she still acts in the interests and service of Cicero. That is not to say that she does not also act in her own interest, but the dynamics of their communication have changed. Cicero has once again assumed a less subordinate role as he takes up the traditional duties that he could not during times of trial and absence.

⁷⁴ *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.2.

⁷⁵ *Ad. Fam.* 14.3.3.

⁷⁶ *Ad. Fam.* 14.20.

⁷⁷ Allen 58.

Grebe argues that Terentia's actions are extraordinary,⁷⁸ but comparison with Turia's public advocacy indicates that it was rather the extreme circumstances that dictated a necessary change in role. Terentia's commitment to obtaining security for her family in Cicero's absence may have been particularly notable, as was Turia's, but her assumption of responsibility would appear to be consistent with other examples during the turmoil of the first century. Moreover, they do not contradict the typical role of a woman because they are undertaken for the interests of the husband.⁷⁹ The duties of Turia and Terentia ultimately preserve the status quo.⁸⁰

Everyday Life

The actions of Turia and Terentia during times of stress are certainly exceptional when compared to the rest of their lives. However, at the end of the Republic, it was becoming more common for prominent elite women to participate more actively in public life.⁸¹ The most common examples include the late second century B.C.E. Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, and Fulvia, who lived in the middle first century B.C.E. and was the wife of Marc Antony. Cornelia was celebrated not only as a traditional Roman matron, but also for her striking public renown. Her public statue was the model for representations of exemplary *matronae* for centuries.⁸² An active wife could still be praised for the typical feminine values, but the example of Fulvia demonstrates that there was a fine line between praise and blame. The infamy of Fulvia, though, may have derived more from the enmity of the future

⁷⁸ Grebe 142.

⁷⁹ Hesberg-Tonn 232.

⁸⁰ Hesberg-Tonn 230.

⁸¹ Grebe 127.

⁸² D'Ambra 146.

Augustus and his propaganda war against Antony.⁸³ We cannot fully evaluate the acceptance of her activities because of the bias in the sources, but nonetheless we can see that, at the very least, it was *possible* for a woman to take such actions and be criticized for them.⁸⁴ The markedly public role of the empresses begins shortly afterward with Livia, though her functions were also viewed with a certain amount of ambiguity.⁸⁵

Hemelrijk argues that women in the Republican period became more visible, but that the traditional, domestic roles were still stressed.⁸⁶ The tension between tradition and innovation explains the disparity between portrayals of women. Any public image had to be carefully balanced by the woman or her husband, and it was relatively easy for a political rival to slant a lady's reputation in a negative light. The exemplary virtue of an elite woman, by augmenting his reputation and strengthening his public clout, could reflect positively on her husband.⁸⁷ However, a wife who overstepped that delicate balance could also easily have a negative effect on the public face of her spouse. The ambiguity and tension embodied in a woman as a public figure can thus be understood as a concern for the possible effect that they could have on her husband's political power.

We see this delicate balance in the husband's characterization of Turia: though he wishes to stress her extraordinary qualities, he must still enumerate her traditional virtues:

domestica bona pudici[t]iae opsequi comitatis facilitatis
lanificii stud[i]i religionis]/sine superstitione o[r]natus non
conspicendi cultus modici cur [memorem cur dicam de cari]

⁸³ Hemelrijk (2004) 192.

⁸⁴ Women could manage property, participate in religious cults, and be patrons (D'Ambra 94 and 166).

⁸⁵ D'Ambra 149.

⁸⁶ Hemelrijk (2004) 188.

⁸⁷ Riess, section 5.

Why should I mention your domestic virtues: your loyalty, obedience, affability, reasonableness, industry in working wool, religion without superstition, sobriety of attire, modesty of appearance? Why dwell on your love for your relatives, your devotion to your family?⁸⁸

In order to portray Turia as exceptional in her public role, the husband had to catalog the expected characteristics, or he risked her being viewed as a threat to the gendered structure.⁸⁹

The traditional feminine virtues cannot be extricated from the atypical masculine activities.

Otherwise, she would not be favorably characterized. She would simply be portrayed as male and could be criticized. She would, in effect, be viewed as another type of Fulvia.

As we saw above, Terentia is expected to fulfill the usual domestic duties. She is tasked with the preparations for Cicero's arrival at one of their properties, and he instructs her, "ut res tempusque postulat, provideas atque administres et ad me de omnibus rebus quam saepissime litteras mittas."⁹⁰ Whatever her role during times of social turmoil, she fulfills the traditional duties of a wife as well. She occupies her female sphere, though extraordinary circumstances allow her to move into the masculine realm.

However, it is not only in particular instances that a woman's role could expand. With the general trend in the expansion of women's roles in the late Republic, Terentia's typical, everyday duties included an increased public presence with respect to her family. Moreover, she possesses considerable property of her own, which she manages through her

⁸⁸ *Laudatio Turiae*, ll. 2.30-1, translation by E. Wistrand.

⁸⁹ Riess, section 5.

⁹⁰ *Ad. Fam.* 14.21.

own administrators. Terentia must still have a guardian to approve certain transactions at this time, but the *tutor* is not a serious impediment to enacting her will.⁹¹

Cicero describes Terentia as a source of aid, presumably to his *clientes* or others seeking his patronage or expertise: “*mea lux, meum desiderium, unde omnes opem petere solebant!*”⁹² Even after his exile, Terentia administers some of the financial concerns, though she may be acting more as an intermediary for Cicero than truly independently.⁹³ Plutarch also remarks upon a comment of Cicero’s that she tended to intrude on politics more than he did into the domestic sphere.⁹⁴ Since this observation is the only such commentary on Terentia’s boldness, it is unlikely that her actions were too unusual for an elite woman of the time or there probably would have been more negative references to it. Cicero would presumably criticize her behavior as he does his sister-in-law when she behaves inappropriately in public.⁹⁵

The efforts that Terentia took during Cicero’s exile, then, can be seen as an amplification of her everyday, normal duties. They are more extensive and involve more public interactions than usual, but they are a product of the same trajectory of an increased female presence in general and specific circumstances. Women are able to participate more

⁹¹ Dixon (1986) 100.

⁹² *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.2.

⁹³ *Ad. Fam.* 14.5.2.

⁹⁴ Shackleton Bailey 22. This dichotomy may also reflect on the general tendency of patriarchal societies to view a masculine aspect in women as positive, but effeminizing in men as negative and worthy of censure. Thus most instances of the former, assuming that they are not extreme, will intrinsically be more acceptable than the latter. (Hemelrijk (2004) 189)

⁹⁵ *Att.* 5.1.3-4.

fully in the public role of their families as long as they act in the service of husband and household.

The Civil War

In later letters, Cicero once again emphasizes her masculine virtues during the events of the civil war. His praise is even stronger in this case, though, because she is now described as surpassing men in her qualities. “Cohortarer vos quo animo fortiores essetis, nisi vos fortiores cognossem quam quemquam virum.”⁹⁶ He again requests her assistance in his absence: “Qua re quantum potes adiuva; quid autem possis mihi in mentem non venit.”⁹⁷ Her ability to help him is not limited by her innate competence so much as the general lack of any avenue of improvement. Cicero relies on the fact that, if there is something that can be done, she will do it. Terentia’s role has once again expanded on account of extraordinary circumstances.

The recurrence of Terentia’s more active, masculine role indicates that her assumption of duties was not an isolated incident. Each time political affairs disrupt her family life, she becomes a more public advocate for its interests. The two situations, in which her role drastically changes, are quite distinct. The first is exile in 58-57 B.C.E. and the second is Cicero’s absence from 49 to 48 B.C.E. during the civil war. Thus a variety of circumstances could require a broadened range of duties for an elite wife. However, at the reassertion of normal⁹⁸ social conditions, Terentia puts these aside to resume her usual feminine roles. Any unusual masculine attributes are rigidly circumscribed by the ability of

⁹⁶ *Ad. Fam.* 14.7.2. This description also refers to Tullia.

⁹⁷ *Ad. Fam.* 14.12.1.

⁹⁸ Though they were not necessarily the same. After the civil war, Cicero’s public role would necessarily have been dramatically different than at any other point in their marriage. However, it appears as if her domestic duties were unchanged.

the husband to fulfill his normal duties. Cicero's letters suggest that Terentia followed these social expectations because he mentions any exceptional behavior only in the context of separation.

The only other woman that Cicero describes as being publicly active is Servilia, the mother of Marcus Junius Brutus. She is involved in the attempts to restore the Republic after Caesar's assassination.⁹⁹ Servilia's actions are strikingly bold for a Roman woman, but, again, the context is necessary to how her contemporaries would have perceived such visible behavior. As with Terentia's efforts on behalf of Cicero, Servilia was working for the benefit of the state. The Roman legends about their history demonstrate that women who took action for the good of the people were in fact seen as virtuous. The Sabine women and Veturia, when she turned back Coriolanus, are two examples of positive public deeds performed by women. However, their actions are honorable only because the women act not for themselves, but for the state and people.¹⁰⁰ In addition, Servilia is working under specific, extraordinary circumstances, e.g., the restoration of a republican government. As a result, Cicero's neutral presentation of her agrees with his views on the role of women in his other letters.

The lack of a complete record of their correspondence prohibits us from confirming whether Cicero and Terentia's entire marriage conformed to the established gender hierarchy. At any rate, the preponderance of the letters we do have firmly match social norms. The majority of Cicero's communications with Terentia refer to her traditional feminine roles, and the only deviations occur during periods of upheaval. The reality of their relationship is

⁹⁹ *Att.* 15.11.1-2, *Att.* 15.12.1, *Att.* 15.17.2.

¹⁰⁰ Pomeroy 176.

difficult to ascertain, but Tiro's selection of the letters to publish suggests a concern with presenting conformity to the public.

The Ideal Woman in Pliny

In Pliny's letters, there are distinct portraits of idealized women. Occasionally, he will mention a positive characteristic in passing, but his eulogistic and panegyric letters provide a much fuller definition of what Pliny claims is the ideal woman. Most of the letters deal specifically with the subject's role as wife, but letter V. 16 concerns the death of a young girl who hadn't married yet. As a result, there is a broader sense of women in general as one reads through the entirety of the letters.

The women dealt with most thoroughly are Calpurnia (Pliny's wife), Arria the Elder, Fannia, and Minicia Marcella. The first three are married or widowed women, and Minicia is the young girl who died while she was betrothed. Pliny claims familiarity with each of them except Arria, but he asserts an intimate knowledge of her through his relationship with her granddaughter, Fannia.¹⁰¹ Thus, the reader is to expect that the depictions of these women come from a trusted source, who can provide personal details of their lives. Even so, the terms that Pliny uses to describe them regularly fall into the typical patterns of praise that have already been discussed. The major difference is that Pliny uses some terms to refer to women's intelligence or education, which would have been less acceptable in the Republican period.¹⁰² In part Pliny's choice of words reflects a general increase in the education of women, so that the use of these atypical descriptors in normal, non-crisis situations is actually much less pronounced. However, Pliny also describes Arria and Fannia using words

¹⁰¹ Carlon 57.

¹⁰² Hemelrijk (1999) 94.

that would normally be reserved only for men. As with Terentia, though, these women both experienced crisis situations, including exile. Their masculine virtues are intimately related to these events. Thus feminine virtues in Pliny follow similar patterns to the examples in Cicero's letters.

Arria

Pliny's letter concerning Arria the Elder is his first overtly programmatic statement about a woman's virtues in the corpus. Arria is most well-known for her dramatic suicide, where she stabbed herself before handing the knife to her husband and saying, "It doesn't hurt, Paetus." In Pliny 3.16, however, the writer focuses on other events that are not known to the public, but which he feels more truly display her embodiment of a mature Roman matron's devotion to her husband and family. In fact, Arria's most famous deed is considered less important because she could expect *gloria* from it,¹⁰³ whereas the others were only motivated by her desires to fulfill her duties. Thus, according to Pliny, Arria's most virtuous actions are not those implicated in a public fame, but those that no one knows about because they were solely focused on her private family.

Pliny 3.16 does not contain many of the usual descriptors that are applied to wives and mothers, and even then the usage is unusual. Arria is not described as *pulcher*, but instead her death is "pulcherrimae," and another deed is "praeclarum."¹⁰⁴ Pliny also references her "gloria" and "fama, and her actions are classified as "maiora" and "clariora."¹⁰⁵ The emphasis in this letter is on the renown that Arria's deeds won for her and

¹⁰³ "Sed tamen ista facienti dicentique gloria et aeternitas ante oculos erant; quo maius est sine praemio aeternitatis, sine praemio gloriae abdere lacrimas, operire luctum amissoque filio matrem adhuc agere." (*Ep.* 3.16)

¹⁰⁴ *Ep.* 3.16.

¹⁰⁵ *Ep.* 3.16.

the relative nobility and greatness of those actions. Thus the actual virtues are not strongly defined by the traditional diction because the purpose of the letter is to expound upon the relationship of an action's fame to moral weight. Descriptors, therefore, invoke public acknowledgement, and this word choice makes the letter seem strongly masculine (i.e., public-oriented) in its praise.

Yet *gloria* could not have been awarded to Arria if she had acted too publicly or transgressed too far beyond gender boundaries. Instead, her actions fall more appropriately within the slightly broader definitions of gender spheres that are dictated by crisis situations. As noted previously, the absence or restricted political status of the husband can lead to a necessary increase in the public role that the wife must play. Paetus was exiled and ordered to commit suicide, and so his and Arria's circumstances qualify as extraordinary and emergency. Even so, Arria demonstrates a commitment to the safety and comfort of her husband rather than to securing her own circumstances in the midst of crisis. In each episode that Pliny describes, that commitment is constant, and so her actions are really an extension of her behavior in everyday life. As a result, Arria the Elder fits neatly within the pattern that women such as Turia and Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, exemplify. They are extraordinary women who nonetheless behave within the set of social rules that apply to Roman wives.

Calpurnia

In a letter to his wife's aunt, Pliny praises Calpurnia as an exemplary young wife. Unlike his description of Arria, Pliny uses no words that could/would normally be applied only to men. He does refer to her "acumen,"¹⁰⁶ but this usage is probably reflective of the

¹⁰⁶ *Ep.* 4.19.

increase in frequency of women's education.¹⁰⁷ That is, it would have been more acceptable and even desirable for a woman to have received a more thorough basic education.¹⁰⁸ he is not simply ascribing an exclusively male characteristic to his wife. A learned woman was not always considered to be an unalloyed good, but such a wife seems to have been generally perceived as good for the education of children and administration of the household as long as the woman didn't overstep her social boundaries and display her learning in a too-public setting.¹⁰⁹

Pliny also ascribes to Calpurnia the characteristics of "frugalitas," "castitas," and "sollicitudo."¹¹⁰ His concern is to present himself as a competent, traditional Roman male, and so he has to represent his family life as under his control and completely within expected boundaries.¹¹¹ That is not to say that Calpurnia didn't have these traits, but this letter, as the most important document regarding his family life, must portray her as close to the ideal as possible. Pliny describes her very traditionally and, except for the reference to her "acumen," uses epithets and descriptors that would not be out of place in a Republican inscription. Thus, Pliny presents her and, by extension, himself as exemplary Romans by using the standard language for feminine virtue.

Fannia

¹⁰⁷ As a counterexample, Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, was known and praised for her extensive education. Thus the education of women could be acceptable in the Republican period, but it was more likely to be viewed as positive in the Imperial.

¹⁰⁸ Hemelrijk (1999) 95.

¹⁰⁹ Hemelrijk (1999) 86-7.

¹¹⁰ *Ep.* 4.19.

¹¹¹ Carlon 16.

The letter about Fannia, the granddaughter of Arria the Elder, is written eulogistically even though she is still alive at the time the letter was first written. The format allows Pliny not only to describe an intimate relationship with her, but also to emphasize her good moral character, which in turn reflects well on him since he claims to be such a close friend. As a result, many of the descriptors used are the ones that would be expected in a funerary inscription. The diction overall, though, is a mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics. The reason for this combination is twofold. First, Fannia and her husband, Helvidius Priscus, were exiled, so there are extraordinary circumstances that dictate unusual actions. It is not surprising, then, that Pliny uses masculine diction for both Arria and Fannia when they both experienced similar hardships. Secondly, since Pliny knew Fannia intimately, his letter about her contains more instances of praise words than the one about her grandmother. Pliny includes more details because he has more at hand, so letter VII.19 presents a wider array of positive characterizations of Fannia than III.16 does of Arria.

Fannia has many of the traits of an ideal Roman woman, including “castitas,” “veneranda,” “constantia,” and “sanctitas.”¹¹² However, Pliny’s characterization takes a striking turn when he refers to her “virtutibus” and “fortitudinis.”¹¹³ In light of her family’s situation, these virtues correspond to the other instances of masculine ideals being ascribed to female subjects. A crisis situation, in this case exile and the suppression of her husband’s biography, require extraordinary measures on the wife’s part. Such actions may in fact cross over into traditionally male spheres, but these tasks are acceptable and even necessary in the

¹¹² *Ep.* 7.19.

¹¹³ *Ep.* 7.19.

husband's absence. Hence, it is reasonable to apply male virtues to women who, in order to support their spouse or family, must act like men.

Minicia Marcella

Minicia is the young teenage daughter of Pliny's friend Fundanus. In this instance, the eulogistic letter 5.16 actually follows her death, and, while the details are vaguer than in the letter about Fannia, Pliny describes the young woman in glowing terms that indicate a fairly close relationship with her. The words that he uses to characterize her are a mixture of ones that are appropriate for a child and some are appropriate for an adult, mature woman. Indeed, some of the terms are more usually seen describing adult males. In part, Pliny describes Minicia in this way because she is being closely identified with her father. Praise of her is in fact praise of her father.¹¹⁴ Thus it is readily intelligible that a few masculine descriptors are used to refer to her. However, the preponderance is epithets used for children and women because, even if she is identified with her father, an overly masculine daughter would not reflect well on him.

For example, Minicia is characterized by being "amabilis" and having "suavitas,"¹¹⁵ words that are typically associated with young children of either sex and young women.¹¹⁶ However, she also possesses "prudentia," "verecundia," "temperantia," "patientia," and "constantia,"¹¹⁷ qualities that are usually found in mature matrons and not young women. Most of these, like *prudentia* and *constantia*, are also often used to describe men, so they are characteristics that are acceptable in both sexes. Thus, Minicia is depicted as a very mature

¹¹⁴ Hemelrijk (1999) 91 and Carlon 156-57.

¹¹⁵ *Ep.* 5.16.

¹¹⁶ Carlon 151, 153.

¹¹⁷ *Ep.* 5.16.

young woman, with all the positive traits of youth and of adulthood. She is a model daughter who presumably would have gone on to be an exemplary Roman matron.

Pliny also emphasizes her intellect and educational diligence, which are part of how he identifies her with her father. It is, in fact, the only way that he can draw acceptable parallels between a young woman and a mature father using a more stereotypically masculine characteristic. As noted previously, the increase in educated women was more accepted in the Imperial period, so this point of comparison would have been positive rather than problematic. Any other male realm would be inappropriate for a woman, let alone a teenager. However, he doesn't emphasize her *use* of her education: he simply refers to her as "studiose" and "intellegenter." Any implementation would require a transgression of gender boundaries, for example if she were to be overly involved in dinner conversations or to pursue a more public role.¹¹⁸ To avoid these implications, Pliny focuses on her studiousness and quick mind rather than any untoward use to which she might put them.

In contrast, Cicero rarely mentions the education of women in any of his writings. While many elite women were partially educated, their instruction did not become a part of the upper-class ideals until the Imperial period. One of the few positive references to a learned woman in Cicero is his description of the speeches of Laelia.¹¹⁹ Even in this instance, the emphasis is on her identification with her father. Her speeches are enjoyable because they are like reading her father's orations. Her individual achievements are only

¹¹⁸ Hemelrijk (1999) 97.

¹¹⁹ *Brut.* 211 and *De Or.* 3.45.

valuable as a reflection of her male family member's glory. Cicero briefly mentions Caerellia and her love of books, but only in passing.¹²⁰

Overall, though, Pliny uses largely the same sort of language for feminine virtue as Cicero. There are some differences, such as the increase in female education and the financial independence of women. These changes were not without controversy,¹²¹ but a moderate level of administration of one's own estates and a basic level of education seem to have been haltingly accepted by the late Republic and more readily in the Imperial period.¹²²

Conclusions

Terentia's sphere of activity in her marriage to Cicero is not a static conception. Changing circumstances dictate that she take up duties and activities, that would normally be fulfilled by Cicero. In his absence, either she or a close male friend¹²³ had to advocate for their family and position. Like Turia, Terentia took up the challenge and worked within permissible limits to affect positive outcomes for her husband and family. In fact, if she hadn't, she would have been seen to fail in her devotion and support of her husband. Instead, she worked with male friends to secure his return, suffered public humiliation,¹²⁴ and contemplates actions to maintain financial security.¹²⁵ All these duties were acceptable and

¹²⁰ *Att.* 13.2a.4-5.

¹²¹ Hemelrijk (1999) 95.

¹²² Dixon (1986) 99-100 on the financial independence of women and Hemelrijk (1999) 94-5 on the education of women.

¹²³ Grebe 127, n. 1.

¹²⁴ "...quem ad modum a Vestae ad tabulam Valeriam ducta esses" (*ad. Fam.* 14.2.2).

¹²⁵ "...scribis te vicum vendituram..." (*ad. Fam.* 14.1.5)

even expected within the context of familial support. If Terentia were to act in this manner for her own benefit, she would have been viewed less favorably.

However, as has been demonstrated, her public role was not strictly limited to unusual circumstances. Terentia was an integral aspect of Cicero's everyday business dealing with his *clientes*, and this expanded role was a general trend among elite women of the late Republic. It must be stressed again that an increased presence in public affairs was positive in the context of the *husband's* daily business and concerns. A rise in Cicero's public capital would have affected her prestige and personal stability, but she could only engender changes by working within familial concerns.

Terentia thus fulfilled her marital duties, no matter the changing circumstances. Her devotion and commitment to the fortunes of her husband and family parallel the praise in the *Laudatio Turiae*. Grebe's claim that the usual gender roles were characteristically reversed in Cicero and Terentia's marriage¹²⁶ is unsatisfactory because of the varying terms with which he expresses admiration of her. If a complete inversion of male and female were the case, I would expect Cicero to refer to her masculine qualities and activities even in ordinary situations. Instead, we see a vocabulary that changes with the fluctuating political and familial circumstances. Turia, too, is variably described based on the requirements placed on her. Both wives are active, zealous advocates who place their own comfort and safety at risk in order to secure their husbands' lives and positions. As such, their spouses adjust the terms with which they express their admiration of and gratitude to Turia and Terentia to include positive depictions of masculine activity. Still, at the restoration of normalcy, both women return to a more subordinate, domestic role. Accordingly, terms of praise are adjusted to

¹²⁶ Grebe 144.

reflect the more traditional social expectations. That does not mean that Terentia does not have a prominent role, but that Cicero's is greater. He is, in fact, the dominant public partner.

Pliny's description of various exemplary women, despite the gap of over 100 years, is still very consistent with the Republican praises. There appears to be a development in the acceptance of the education of women, but he still restricts most masculine virtues to women who endure extraordinary familial circumstances. Calpurnia and Minicia, who both live basically ordinary lives, are praised with traditionally feminine virtues.¹²⁷ Thus, the dichotomy between the praises for women and men is remarkably regular over time. What is found in the Republican period is still largely true later: the virtues that Cicero ascribes to Terentia would still have resonated with the Romans down into the Imperial period.

¹²⁷ Pliny also refers to Fannia and Minicia as "amabilis," an adjective more usually used to refer to children (see notes 115 and 116). Since Minicia is just out of childhood, it seems natural to describe her in this way. In Fannia's case, Pliny is likely stressing their personal connections and how much time they spend together rather than attempting to portray her as particularly childlike.

Chapter 4: Affection and Devotion

The general presence or absence of affection in Roman marriages is necessarily difficult to determine with any sort of meaningful certainty, since so few pieces of evidence survive that can attest to unmediated emotion. Cicero's letters to Terentia are not completely unfiltered, but they are one of the best primary sources for matrimonial love because they were private communications. Some commissioners of inscriptions must have felt the affection they expressed in writing, but the very nature of publishing something alters the presentation. Moreover, the standardization of the language of inscriptions tends to obscure individualization, and this universality obscures how the commissioner felt about the deceased. Similarly, literary works that discuss affection and love are particularly difficult to interpret because what is factual and what is literary can be impossible to separate.

Pliny's letters to Calpurnia are a natural comparison, but the more artificial and polished character of Pliny's correspondence must be taken into account. In fact, notable parallels between some of Pliny's expressions of desire and the style of elegiac poetry can be drawn. His emotions may still be genuine, but there are other literary factors that influence how he expresses them. However, if, as argued in the previous chapter, Pliny's goal is to present himself in a favorable light, then literary concerns do not obscure the image that he thinks his audience will find most appealing.

As a result, this chapter focuses on how much we can determine about Cicero and Terentia's level of affection from his letters and whether it corresponds with the ideal of

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marital love in Pliny's communications. A variety of ancient sources that discuss affection and marriage confirm the values and ideals that can be drawn from Pliny's letters. While most sources reflect the view of the elites, the epigraphic evidence suggests that an emotional attachment in marriage is an idea that resonated across the Roman classes.

Expressions of Affection

In spite of the image of the sternly stoic Roman male, Cicero, in his private communication with his wife, is surprisingly affectionate and passionate. He doesn't express himself in the learned style of poets like Propertius, but rather he regularly stresses his feelings with terms of endearment and statements of longing and desire. The extraordinary circumstances may have influenced the decision to commit these expressions to writing, but the sentiment behind them appears to be genuine.

Cicero refers to her importance to him when he describes her as a source of support and comfort. As a member of his immediate family, she is one of the few people from whom Cicero says he derives true comfort.¹²⁸ He even claims that he only wants to be able to die in her arms.¹²⁹ In terms of support, Terentia is described as helping him with his *clientes*, working to secure his return,¹³⁰ and offering her financial resources for his use.¹³¹ These are not generalizations about women, but rather the qualities and actions that he admires are specific to her. While the exact nature of their relationship is difficult to define, Terentia appears to be a real partner in their marriage. That is not to say that their partnership is completely equitable, but she is a valued and valuable wife for more than her finances and

¹²⁸ *Att.* 1.18.1.

¹²⁹ *Ad. Fam.* 14.4.1.

¹³⁰ *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.2.

¹³¹ *Ad. Fam.* 14.1.5.

fertility alone. It is her as person and partner that Cicero appreciates and loves, and that specificity is what distinguishes his affection from an expression of platitudes and formulae.

As a means of expressing his affection, Cicero is fond of referring to Terentia with pet love names. She is variously “*mea lux, meum desiderium*,”¹³² “*mea vita*,”¹³³ and “*animae meae*.”¹³⁴ Terentia is more than a means of producing children: she is also an important, integral part of his life in her own right. She is both desired and necessary. Each of his terms for her conveys the significance that he places on her role in his life: enjoyable and as necessary as his life. Love names cannot always be taken literally, as, for example, Terentia is a person and not a source of light. Thus we can assume a certain amount of natural metaphor in Cicero’s references, but at the same time the desire to emphasize Terentia’s significance indicates her importance to him. Moreover, Cicero could go on living and breathing without her, but her absence is one of the ways that life becomes so unbearable for him during his exile. Thus, she is not literally necessary, but metaphorically since she is one of the people that make his life worthwhile.

In addition, Cicero refers to his longing and affection for her in greater detail. He weeps when he thinks of her and their children and the suffering he has caused them.¹³⁵ He debates whether to have her come out to be with him because her presence would be a great comfort to him.¹³⁶ Cicero thinks that he sees her when she is not there.¹³⁷ He wishes to be

¹³² *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.2.

¹³³ *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.3 and 14.4.1.

¹³⁴ *Ad. Fam.* 14.14.2 and 14.18.1.

¹³⁵ *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.1.

¹³⁶ *Ad. Fam.* 14.4.3.

¹³⁷ *Ad. Fam.* 14.3.5.

with her even if it is only to die in her arms. Moreover, he claims that if they can be restored to each other, that would be enough for him after his exile.¹³⁸ Cicero constantly urges her to take care for her health,¹³⁹ whether she is healthy or sick. These declarations are brought about by their longer separations because of exile and war, but we see a consistent thread of anxiety for and longing for Terentia that absence exacerbates. The level of intensity of his expression changes, but the underlying emotions seem to be the same. Even when Cicero is back in Italy after the civil war, he nonetheless plans to write to Terentia, although he has no idea what he would say.¹⁴⁰ The very act of communication between them is important.

Even if we assume a certain amount of exaggeration from unusual circumstances, a considerable level of positive emotional investment remains. After all, if he had been exaggerating beyond the level of the believable, Terentia would have been the person most likely to recognize any faked emotion. However, as confirmation of some level of affectionate sincerity from Cicero, she not only works for his benefit back in Rome, but she offers to sell her properties¹⁴¹ and to come out to be with him.¹⁴² Considering the level of discomfort and even danger that travel and exile would entail, it seems that her offer is out of genuine concern. Terentia could easily continue to stay in Rome and work for his return from there without censure. Instead, the letters demonstrate a mutual concern for the well-being of the partner and a desire to be together.

¹³⁸ *Ad. Fam.* 14.1.3.

¹³⁹ *Ad. Fam.* 14.4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24.

¹⁴⁰ *Ad. Fam.* 14.16.

¹⁴¹ *Ad. Fam.* 14.1.5.

¹⁴² *Ad. Fam.* 14.3.5.

Cicero himself asserts that their relationship has an element of love. He says that Terentia would always do things “amantissime”¹⁴³ in their everyday lives. From what we can observe, which is limited by the lack of any of Terentia’s letters to him, there does appear to be genuine affection beyond the level of *concordia*. The exact nature and level of that affection is not completely clear, but it is safe to say that Cicero felt love for Terentia and she showed him the same love in return.

Pliny’s Letters

The communication between Pliny and Calpurnia displays a similar type of marital affection, but it is expressed somewhat differently. Perhaps the most striking example is Pliny’s depiction of himself as the *exclusus amator*.¹⁴⁴ He alters the *topos* because the object of desire is his wife, and she is not deliberately shutting him out so much as simply absent. Pliny’s writing is very literary and sophisticated, while Cicero tends toward a straightforward, elegant prose style. In part, the difference lies in their goals and audience. Cicero’s letters are meant for Terentia, but Pliny’s are for Calpurnia and a larger group of readers. As a result, Pliny’s letters reflect the styles of other published works as well as the epistolography genre.

In his letter to Calpurnia’s aunt, Pliny praises his wife extensively and affectionately. A significant focus is given to Calpurnia’s affection for him. Pliny mentions the many ways that she shows her love: “amat me, quod castitatis indicium est,” “accedit his studium litterarum, quod ex mei caritate concepit,” and “Versus quidem meos cantat etiam formatque cithara non artifice aliquo docente, sed amore, qui magister est optimus.” However, the

¹⁴³ *Ad. Fam.* 14.2.2.

¹⁴⁴ Dixon (1991) 106.

description of her and her virtues is so detailed and warm that the overall impression is one of mutual love. Pliny not only details typical virtues like “frugalitas” and “castitatis,”¹⁴⁵ he also describes how considerate she is towards him when he is on a case. He also thanks Calpurnia Hispulla, “ego, quod illam mihi, illa, quod me sibi dederis.”

In letter 6.7, Pliny reiterates her importance to him and his to her. In the absence of the other, each of them holds their letters close in place of their partner. It is, of course, a poor substitute for the actual spouse, but the sentiment of attachment and reliance on each other is clear. *Ep.* 7.5 also expands on this theme, and Pliny specifically mentions his “amor” for Calpurnia. He even describes himself as the “exclusus amator” to emphasize the depth of his pain at the separation from her.

Pliny also expresses great concern for Calpurnia when she is ill and when she miscarried. There is some confusion over the two letters on the miscarriage because Pliny is more practical when talking to his wife’s grandfather and more emotional to her aunt. This is likely due to the audience he is addressing rather than an indication of coldness on his part.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, his references to her aunt’s joy at the danger that Calpurnia evaded is intended to reflect his own relief at his wife’s recovery.¹⁴⁷ Letter 6.4 describes his discomfort when she is away and ill: he is constantly worried and asks her to write to him at least once a day so that he might know how she is. His concern for her illness seems frantic in comparison to her miscarriage, which can be understood as worry for a current crisis. When he writes to her grandfather and aunt, the danger to Calpurnia from the miscarriage had already passed.

¹⁴⁵ *Ep.* 4.19.

¹⁴⁶ Carlon 173.

¹⁴⁷ *Ep.* 8.11.

Thus the reader is privy to a range of examples that demonstrate a sustained affectionate relationship.

Yet part of the purpose of Pliny's letters is the construction of a public persona, and so his depictions are at least somewhat uncoupled from reality. It seems unlikely that he would stray too far from the truth, since presumably some of his primary readers were friends of his who might be familiar with his marital relationship.¹⁴⁸ According to Pliny, Calpurnia herself would read these because she reads all of his works.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, there isn't an apparent reason to create a fiction of a loving relationship when *concordia* is the sufficient ideal. In other words, Pliny would have to say only that their marriage was harmonious for it to be praiseworthy. Even Arria the Elder describes her relationship as one of harmony rather than one of love,¹⁵⁰ and she was willing to commit suicide with her husband. Moreover, it is Pliny that mentions Arria and Paetus' *concordia*, so he does not seem to think that love is a necessary component of an ideal marriage. Fannia, too, is described as a devoted wife, but love is not explicitly mentioned as a part of her relationship. It can be present, and it can even be a desirable aspect, but harmony and agreement are the minimum requirements for a normative happy marriage.

Thus Pliny does not have to depict a relationship of mutual love in order to present his marriage as ideal. He is in fact going beyond what is necessary to achieve his objective. This over-achievement implies that love as a part of a marriage is either acceptable or even valuable. That is, mention of it would not hurt Pliny's program of depicting himself as a

¹⁴⁸ His first letter, if it is not merely a literary conceit, indicates that his friend requested the collection of letters (*Ep.* 1.1). Whether or not it is fact, Pliny's first readers are likely to be those that he gives copies to, i.e., people he knew.

¹⁴⁹ *Ep.* 4.19.

¹⁵⁰ *Ep.* 3.16.

traditional Roman male or it would actually augment his characterization. Since Pliny is laying claim to something that even the idealized and highly praised marriages of Arria and Fannia did not have, it seems likely that marital love is counted as valuable. After all, if he wishes to include himself in the ranks of the moral elite, it would be helpful not only to show his marriage as equally traditional as some of the most celebrated, but actually to surpass the most brilliant examples.

In the end, whether they actually loved each other is not a question that is necessary to this investigation. The most relevant fact is that one of the ways that a writer could portray a stable, traditional private life is through a marriage that includes affection and not just a lack of discord. Marital love was desirable and one of the most important aspects of a marriage. In addition to the production of children, the development of real emotional attachment is the most significant aspect of a Roman marriage in the letters of Cicero and Pliny. *Concordia* is ideal and necessary for a successful marriage, but marital love is important even beyond that.

Conclusions

In addition to the expression of a consistent set of virtues and values, Pliny expresses affection for Calpurnia that is comparable to Cicero's for Terentia. The circumstances under which they write are quite different, and this distinction contributes to the varying ways that they express their emotions. It is important not to overstate how similar the two relationships might be since we know so little about either of them. However, with the information we do have, it is reasonable to infer that both couples, as presented, had a level of affection or passion that was beyond *concordia*.

In the article “The Sentimental Ideal of the Roman Family,” Suzanne Dixon describes a gradual increase in the acceptance of marital love to the point where, in the Imperial period, it becomes a firmly entrenched part of the ideal for elite Roman marriages.¹⁵¹ Love as an integral aspect of a successful marriage is reflected in Imperial authors like Gaius Musonius Rufus,¹⁵² Tacitus,¹⁵³ and Plutarch.¹⁵⁴ Dixon argues that this trend begins in the Republic and can be seen in such authors as Cicero himself and even Catullus.¹⁵⁵ The selection of works indicates that a trend towards idealizing marital love was not isolated, but in fact appears in a variety of contexts. Those contexts are heavily biased towards the elite, but there is also evidence for similar values in the inscriptions of the lower classes.¹⁵⁶ Thus, there is a continuous tradition of idealized affection between spouses from the time that Cicero was writing to Pliny.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ These changes were not entirely without marked dissent, but the greater problem was with women in the provinces who behaved poorly (Dixon (1991) 103).

¹⁵² 13A.17-19.

¹⁵³ *Agricola* 6.1.

¹⁵⁴ *Moralia* 142E.

¹⁵⁵ Catullus 61.209-13.

¹⁵⁶ Dixon (1991) 109.

¹⁵⁷ This tradition is not limited to the period between Cicero and Pliny, but continues before and after them.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Children and Divorce

This paper has focused on only two aspects of Cicero's marriage to Terentia: praise and affection. There are, certainly, many other factors that contribute to a relationship. The presence or absence of children, external friendships, financial security, and any prior or subsequent unions are just some of the issues that affect the perceived success or failure of a marriage. While this investigation is not concerned with every aspect of Cicero and Terentia's relationship, at this point a few relative items will be discussed to provide a broader perspective.

By the standards of the production of legitimate offspring, Cicero and Terentia were fairly successful. Since childbearing is one of the principal purposes of Roman marriage, their two children that survived to adulthood would have qualified that aspect as normative. Both spouses seem to have been actively involved in the rearing of the children and to have shared in concern for their happiness and well-being later in life. In Pliny VIII.10, a keen desire to have children of his own is expressed, so the procreative aspect of marriage doesn't diminish in spite of the increasing perception that marriage in and of itself could and should be beneficial to the spouses. These two ideals coexist, even though individuals might value one over the other. Turia's husband refuses to divorce her on account of their lack of children.¹⁵⁸ Instead, he prefers to remain in their happy union without a legitimate heir.

¹⁵⁸ *Laudatio Turiae* 2.44-47.

While divorce among the elite classes was certainly not unheard of, it was acceptable only when no children were produced or in the case of adultery.¹⁵⁹ Many Romans still proceeded to divorce and remarry, but it was nonetheless the ideal that a marriage lasted until the death of the partner. In the case of women, the idea of the “univira” extended even past the death of the husband.¹⁶⁰ From this perspective, Cicero and Terentia’s divorce was not normative. However, such an injunction against divorce without cause does not seem to have had much bearing on Cicero’s decision to remarry and divorce a second time. His second marriage would have been considered less problematic because there weren’t any children, but divorce without sufficient reason could still be negatively perceived.¹⁶¹ Since Cicero’s second marriage was so short, it is likely that the divorce would have been viewed as without cause. There hadn’t been enough time to produce children, and there is no evidence of adultery. As a result, the end of Cicero’s marriage to Terentia was less than the Roman ideal, and so was his subsequent union.

Thus, we cannot call their marriage completely normative: their divorce is an obvious rebuttal. It may have occurred after some fault, like adultery, that would have made separation acceptable, but Cicero never directly refers to the reasons in any letters. Moreover, none of the proposals by writers like Plutarch¹⁶² seem to be based on any solid evidence. Thus, the divorce as presented is one that would have been considered unacceptable by the strictly traditional Roman standards.

¹⁵⁹ Treggiari (1991a) 38.

¹⁶⁰ Hesberg-Tonn 224-25 and Williams 23.

¹⁶¹ Treggiari (1991a) 40.

¹⁶² Claassen 212.

It is important, then, to qualify just how normative their relationship was. If Cicero and Terentia were willing to get a divorce in the absence of a “justifiable” reason, this mindset could well have colored the way that they perceived and fulfilled their marital roles. Cicero’s later marriage to Publilia was influenced by a clear willingness to separate without any indications of fault. That is not to say there wasn’t fault, but no certain record of any legitimate reason remains. As a result, the duration of his marriage to Terentia appears, in the documents that we have, to have been quite normative in terms of affection, legitimate children, and spousal roles. The end of the union, on the other hand, is distinctly not normative.

The Conservation of Ideals

The range of time when these values would have been considered ideal is quite extensive. Roman culture was highly conservative in gender relations, and so the changes that did occur in marital conceptions happened in small steps over long periods of time. One of the most important evolutions in Roman marriage was the preference for *sine manu* unions that developed in the late Republic.¹⁶³ Even this monumental change did not fundamentally alter the wife’s role as primarily domestic. It did influence the independence of matrons,¹⁶⁴ but even that level of freedom was curtailed by social pressures. Any incursion into an overtly public sphere that was not for the benefit of husband or family risked censure. Such disapproval did not stop women like Fulvia from a greater interest in politics than was strictly seemly, but she was then an easy way for Octavian to attack Antony.

¹⁶³ Hemelrijk (1999) 102.

¹⁶⁴ The requirement that a woman have a *tutor* does not seem to have significantly hampered most women.

The introduction of a Greek educational system also influenced gender ideals. In the letters by Cicero and Pliny, the increase in the acceptability and desirability of educating elite women is evident. Cicero does not refer to his wife or daughter's intellectual capability, though he does note positive examples of women in other scenarios.¹⁶⁵ Pliny, on the other hand, mentions his wife's interest in reading (his works) and the education of two other women as reflections on the men who educated them.¹⁶⁶ Some women were instructed in at least basic concepts as far back as Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, but such education became much more frequent in the Imperial period. In part, the education of a family's daughters was seen as a status symbol since there was enough money to have both boys and girls taught. Also, a properly educated woman was thought to have improved morals and to be an asset in the education of her subsequent children. Not everyone agreed with this viewpoint, as Juvenal's satirical presentation of obnoxiously learned woman attests.¹⁶⁷ However, the problematic aspect in most cases is the improper use of education. A woman who utilized her learning for the benefit of her children and for the moral improvement of herself¹⁶⁸ was beyond reproach. Certainly some families would have educated their children as a means for encouraging them in intellectual pursuits and to improve their minds, but this motivation was not mentioned in arguments for educating girls. From the social point of view, then, the improvement of women for their own sake was not a generally held ideal.

As a result, the emphasis in writers like Pliny is on the ways that a woman's education reflected on her father or husband and supported their family. Once again, the

¹⁶⁵ *Brut.* 211 and *De Or.* 3.45, *Att.* 13.21a.

¹⁶⁶ *Ep.* 1.16, *Ep.* 5.16.

¹⁶⁷ *Juv.* 6.448-56.

¹⁶⁸ That is, so she wasn't tempted to drink, commit adultery, and otherwise disgrace her family.

achievement or natural character of a woman is not principally about or for her. Its relevance is only in relation to the familial unit or the male relative. The education of women might be viewed as a liberating movement, except for the fact that socially it was brought back under the support for the traditional, conservative values. Individually, women like Cornelia enjoyed the benefits of their education, but publicly it was always associated with the benefits it conferred on their families. Cornelia was celebrated for being a principle figure in her children's education, even though she surrounded herself with an intellectual circle later in life. Pliny's description of Minicia also reflects the adherence to conservative ideals because her education is principally a means of identifying her with her father.

On the other hand, the increasing value placed on marital love is based on merits implicit in having an affectionate marriage. It is celebrated as the best kind of marriage with a union of harmony and *concordia* being the next most preferable. It may still be the case that the changing views on marital love in fact reflect a concern to develop more lasting marriages, but the presentation in published documents¹⁶⁹ is that affection between spouses is valuable in and of itself. As a result, we see the willing publication of letters that demonstrate Cicero's passionate devotion to Terentia and that celebrate Pliny's love for Calpurnia.

In contrast to these developments, the role that was available to a wife and matron was consistently restricted throughout the Republic and the Empire. In typical periods, a wife worked within the domestic sphere with only slight overlaps on a public role as related to her husband. For example, Cicero mentions Terentia as an intermediary for his *clientes*. In extraordinary circumstances, her role might expand to public advocating for the husband's

¹⁶⁹ See notes 153-156 in Chapter 4.

interests or seeking legal justice in the absence of a male relative.¹⁷⁰ However, these actions are always narrowly circumscribed to be for the benefit of husband or family, never for the woman's interests alone. The administration of her properties would have been done through a male administrator with the advice and permission of the woman's *tutor*. Most women would not have found these necessities very restrictive, but the appearance of male control was vital to the image of a proper Roman matron.

Consequently, the circumstances under which typically masculine virtues can be applied to women are very specific. Either some extraordinary danger threatens the husband or he is absent, such that his actions are restricted. These constraints create a need for the wife to act in place of the husband even in public avenues. Thus she temporarily assumes a masculine role, but then sets it aside when the husband is able to take up his own duties again. The non-permanence of such situations is crucial, because an unnecessary extension of a woman's role into masculine prerogatives is not virtuous. Rather, it is cause for censure from society and one's family. Accordingly, Cicero applies male adjectives and characteristics to Terentia only in the events of his exile and the civil war. Pliny, too, describes the ideal women as masculine only if their families undergo circumstances that require them to take action for their husbands. Similarly, Turia acts beyond the domestic sphere only when her husband cannot. Afterwards, her duties remain restricted to the home and the support of her spouse.

Cicero and Terentia

Overall, Cicero and Terentia's marriage is not ideal in every respect. It is likely that few if any unions were ever successful in this way. However, the normative values would

¹⁷⁰ *Laudatio Turiae* ll. 1.3-1.8.

have been important in how other Romans and how they themselves perceived their relationship and its relative success or failure. That perception in turn would have influenced their behavior and interactions. The extent of that influence is unknown, but its importance is reflected in the criticism of women like Fulvia. A refusal to abide by social values could lead to infamy and complications for the husband's political career.

Cicero's writings reflect a regular concern with conforming to strict social standards. His speeches and treatises describe the well-behaved wives with traditional epithets. The infamous spouses or mistresses, on the other hand, are characterized with antonyms of the feminine virtues. Some of these descriptions are rhetorically motivated, but Cicero's use of marital and gender standards in his political speeches underscores the overall importance of those very values. A man's domestic life is an extension of his character, and so inappropriate behavior in his household could harm his political and social aspirations. However, marital stability not only affected the individual, but it was also perceived as vital to the well-being of the state.¹⁷¹ Eventually, the association of familial harmony with governmental stability developed into the correlation of the imperial family with the health of the state.¹⁷² Thus a virtuous household was crucial to both the individual's and the state's success.

Cicero uses similar language to praise women in his letters to friends. However, there are relatively few instances of praise or blame in his correspondence. In fact, references to women are generally rare with the exception of Cicero's own family and Atticus' wife and daughter. The political nature of many of Cicero's letters would have eliminated any need to

¹⁷¹ Dixon (1992) 24.

¹⁷² Carlon 145.

discuss women. Even in the letters of recommendation, he doesn't attempt to create the image of proper Roman citizens by describing their virtuous home lives. Cicero's relative silence on the subject of women reflects the masculine, public orientation of interpersonal communication between men except with the most intimate of friends.

There is a similar reticence about the education of women throughout Cicero's works. Beyond the basics of reading and writing, Cicero rarely mentions a woman's learning or intellect. Ultimately, though, even his discussion of Laelia is more about praise of her father and how she is a reflection of his brilliance and eloquence. The education of women was still evolving and developing in the late Republic, so it is not surprising that Cicero is so circumspect. Even Pliny, writing when the education of daughters was more established, is very careful to present that learning is beneficial only for the family, not the individual.

Whether these normative values were consciously or unconsciously internalized, Cicero and Terentia, as presented in his letters, strongly conform to Roman ideals on gender roles and marital love. As one would expect, they do not completely reflect social values, as their divorce especially shows. However, for the decades that they were married, Cicero and Terentia would have been viewed as a good example of what a Roman couple should be and how they should behave.

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