

FEMALE *EXEMPLA* AND EXEMPLARY *FEMINAE*: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL  
DIMENSIONS OF EXEMPLARY DISCOURSE IN ROMAN CULTURE

by

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## Abstract

This study re-examines the purpose and functions of *exempla* in Latin literature from the Late Republic to early Empire. With particular focus upon the exemplification of contemporary women in Latin letters, speeches, essays, and other such texts that engage with contemporaries, it will argue that exemplary discourse is not only situationally dependent upon the context of the *exemplum's* citation, but it is also impacted by the relationship between the author and the individual who is posited as an *exemplum*. While Latin authors are well known for using *exempla* typically to offer illustrative examples, precedents and paradigmatic models for the purposes of moral instruction, when they exemplify certain women within their social circle, they can also be seen to instrumentalise exemplification as a strategy for achieving certain social or political objectives. As this study will show, Roman authors often adopt exemplification to negotiate personal and political relationships, exploiting its complimentary potential to flatter the individual. Alongside this, they also capitalise on its capacity to immortalise individuals and create a lasting legacy, to incentivise friends and family members to fulfil their various requests, or as a means of gift exchange. In other ways, exemplifying the women within their family, or their wider social circle, works to manipulate perceptions of their character and establish a positive public persona. By proclaiming affinity with, or proximity to, these exemplary women within their world, authors are able to enhance their social prestige, rehabilitate a tarnished reputation, or even revise a personal history. This study will advance our understanding of exemplarity in Roman culture by exploring these dimensions, and by highlighting how the introduction of this temporal variable transforms the nature of the discourse.

This work is dedicated to my parents: my own *domestica exempla*.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

The *exemplum*, as a phenomenon in Roman culture, has been much discussed in recent years. From examinations of its nature and functions, to assessments of its ubiquity in society, scholars have not only explored the various ways in which the Romans utilised *exempla* in monuments and texts, but they have also considered the wider discourse of exemplarity as a whole.<sup>1</sup> However, while scholarship has shown that the deployment of *exempla* in Roman culture is both multifarious and far reaching, featuring in a variety of diverse media and functioning in multivalent ways, examinations of their deployment in Roman literature tend to focus upon the two most prominent ways in which an *exemplum* is designed to behave. The first of these is rhetorical in nature: how *exempla* function as an illustrative, clarificatory or persuasive device. The second concerns its moral and didactic potential: how *exempla* are often intimately connected to ethical values and offer a replicable model for their audience to emulate or avoid.<sup>2</sup>

Matthew Roller for example has explored the mechanisms of exemplary discourse and the various processes involved, yet with his focus on historical and canonical figures he considers the *exemplum* almost exclusively within the confines of these moral and rhetorical modes. Rebecca Langlands, another key scholar in the field, also maintains a similar focus on these dimensions across her various works. While she has considered the broader applications of exemplification and the implications for our understanding of how *exempla* might be used for other purposes, she focuses predominantly on the ethical dimensions in

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<sup>1</sup> Scholarship on exemplarity in Roman culture is extensive. Kornhardt 1936, was one of the first to systematically analyse the use and utility of the noun *exemplum*, though there are many whose works have been seminal in furthering our understanding of its purpose and presence in the Roman world. In 'Chapter 3. Scholarship and Theory', I will provide a more in-depth discussion.

<sup>2</sup> The sense of hierarchy implied here is not necessarily reflected in modern scholarship. It is only to provide a sense that there is often a dichotomised functionality observed.



exploring how the Romans used *exempla* as a means to think with and deliberate on ethical debates, or how they participated in socialisation in creating, perpetuating or even changing, social norms.

While the moral and rhetorical taxonomies might explain the majority of use cases, particularly where historical, mythological, or imaginary figures are concerned, in my research I have discovered that there are certain situations where these two categories do not fully explain the reason for the *exemplum's* invocation, nor the functions they fulfil. As I will argue within this study, when Latin authors exemplarize their contemporaries we see that further dimensions begin to emerge. When we consider more closely why individuals declare that another third party is an *exemplum* publicly or provide an exemplary characterisation for them within their works, we see that exemplification features repeatedly amongst the strategies adopted for achieving the author's own personal, socio-political aims. On many occasions we see for instance that exemplification participates in the negotiation of personal and political relationships, social networking, and the strengthening of interpersonal bonds. It is strategically employed by Roman authors to flatter individuals, alleviate tensions, or keep family and allies on their side. In some instances, we see that exemplification is also designed more immediately to manipulate people's behaviour and secure a certain outcome that they want. With its ability to provide a positive presentation within their works and secure literary immortalisation for the individual in question, we see that the elevation of friends and family members to the status of an *exemplum* is offered as either recompense for particularly supportive behaviour, or as an incentive for further favours, with the creation of an antithetically negative portrait threatened if the individual does not comply. Alongside both of these facets, how individuals interact with others, and who they are associated with simultaneously

communicates certain subliminal information about themselves. As scholars have highlighted, when individuals broadcast their associations with other exemplary individuals, or reveal that they have moulded an exemplary spouse, they are simultaneously making wider statements about their own character, and virtue signalling, to craft a positive personal persona for wider public consumption as well.<sup>3</sup>

While the use of examples and exemplars in Roman texts and monuments often oscillates between the moral and rhetorical modes, it is not always the case that Roman authors present individuals as *exempla* to simply illustrate a point, persuade an audience, or provide a model for others to behold. In this study I will show that with the exemplification of contemporaries, the situation is often more nuanced and multifaceted in its aims. Though it might include many of the conventional moral and rhetorical aspects, it is often more immediately designed to fulfil a socio-political objective.

Despite the wealth of scholarship on the Roman exemplary tradition, the socio-political dimensions of exemplary discourse remains largely under-discussed. Though some have explored some of the broader social aspects – how the Romans used *exempla* to deliberate on ethical debates for instance, or inculcate societal norms – and others, have explored certain personal or political benefits in isolated instances, or amongst individual authors – there are few who have drawn broader conclusions on the nature of the discourse in this regard, and none who have acknowledged that with the inclusion of this temporal variable, the purpose beneath exemplifying individuals often transforms.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, Shelton 2013; Carlon 2009; Lowrie 2007; Kraus 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Kraus (2005) for example, has looked at the ways in which Augustus exploited *exempla* to promote his moral programme and elevate himself. Building on the work of Gunderson (2004) and others, she explores the ways in which he instigated a programme of propaganda to both justify his position and position himself as the primary *exemplum* for others to follow. c.f. Langlands 2014, and Zanker 1999. While much attention has been paid to Augustus and his exploitation of *exempla* in a political sense, others have explored the socio-political dimensions in isolated case studies. Van der Blom (2010) for instance has explored a similar political use in Cicero's various works, and both Jaqueline Carlon (2009) and Jo Ann Shelton (2013) have explored the ways in

## Aims and Methodology

The aim of this study is to offer a new perspective on Roman exemplary discourse and a more inclusive approach. It will show that exemplification is not only situationally dependent upon the context of the work in which they feature, but also the nature of the relationship between all those involved.<sup>5</sup> With the introduction of this 'temporal' variable – namely individuals who are contemporary with the author, or from the recent past – I argue, the creation and dissemination of *exempla* functions in ways beyond the conventional moral and rhetorical modes. Often, there is often an underlying socio-political motivation to behold.

To clarify what I mean by socio-political here, I refer to the fact these functions often pertain to social politics or combine both social and political factors at the same time. As I have suggested above, exemplification features as a strategy employed for negotiating relationships, manipulating other's behaviour or cultivating a positive public persona amongst their peers or for posterity. Of course, these are but a few examples of the ways in which we find that individuals use exemplification within their various publications, yet our case studies clearly comprise both social aspects and political dimensions. In terms of politics more specifically, as I will show, the relationships that these authors are negotiating

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which Pliny the Younger creates a positive public persona through exemplary association within his letters. c.f Bennett 1997. For a fuller discussion see 'Chapter 3. Scholarship and Theory'.

<sup>5</sup> The notion of situationism in exemplary discourse has been broached before. Rebecca Langlands (2018) for instance has consistently argued that exemplary discourse comprises a certain amount of situational variability, a concept she terms 'situation ethics', in that the moral messages comprised within exemplary figures from the past are subject to the audience's personal interpretation and a series of evaluative processes that determine its applicability to their own situation. While I completely agree with Langlands' argument that the various messages communicated are highly subjective and not, as some suggest, more dogmatic and prescriptive, my notion of 'situational dependency' suggests more broadly that the medium for disseminating exemplars and the relationship between the author and the subject of exemplification affects the nature of the process and the functions these *exempla* might fulfil. While Langlands' notion of 'situational variability' in many ways focuses on the audience's perspective, I propose to consider the perspective of the author as well. I will explore both the author's intentions in applying these exemplifying strategies, along with how an audience might receive them.

are often political in nature, they are not limited to social acquaintances or familial relations, and they use exemplification to gain increased power, authority, or influence in a particular situation, or more broadly in society on other occasions.

With such a wealth of evidence to choose from however, it seems prudent to limit our material and scope. As the various socio-political dimensions that I will explore here are in many ways predicated on the exemplification of contemporaries, I will first limit my remit by focusing on the kinds of literary genres that are most pertinent in this regard. Our evidentiary base therefore will consist predominantly of Roman letter collections, speeches, consolations, panegyrics, personal essays, and poems, though it will still offer comparative material from other media and monument forms. Still, with centuries of evidence to choose from, and vast corpuses existing within these genres themselves, it will not be possible to trace every instance of exemplification within this study. I will therefore offer a selection of Roman authors, from Cicero to Pliny the Younger, as representative case studies to explore the various ways in which these dimensions emerge. Finally, and in some ways most importantly, alongside limiting my scope in terms of material and time, I will narrow my focus further by looking more specifically at the creation and dissemination of women within these works. As I will show, while the socio-political dimensions of exemplification are not necessarily gender specific, the subject's gender often plays an important and interesting role. Not only does it reveal the overtly flattering, if not at times discernibly vacuous, nature of the author's exemplifying statements, but it also reveals the author's blatantly self-serving bid to use exemplification as a means of manipulating others and creating a positive persona for themselves. By examining the exemplification of female individuals more specifically therefore within these various literary texts, we gain a clear insight into both the kinds of strategies involved in exemplification and the disparity in terms

of use. While we sometimes find these same strategies and objectives through the exemplification of contemporary males, it is often through these exemplary *feminae* such facets are more clearly discerned.<sup>6</sup>

### Terminological Issues

As the purpose of this study is to show that there is often a discernible difference between the women we find exemplified by their contemporaries, and the various historical and mythological figures that feature elsewhere within their works, certain terminological issues surrounding how we categorise these exemplary individuals might potentially emerge.

As I will argue in our chapter on Cicero for instance, while there might be a visible lack of female *exempla*, there is nevertheless a wealth of exemplary *feminae* that feature, as Cicero elevates several women to exemplary status through his general presentation, or through an exemplifying characterisation. Yet while these individuals might have exemplary potential, in terms of emulation, or as a model for his audience's socio-ethical education, we might question whether one praised for their behaviour or offered a particularly laudatory characterisation necessarily equates to the creation of an actual *exemplum*? In the case of simple praise and approbation, I would argue that it is not necessarily an instance of exemplary citation, yet with Cicero and our other Latin authors we see that they go much further than merely praise. Oftentimes we find that, alongside their glorifying statements, these authors provide a subtle or explicit nod to the exemplary potential of their subject, either by applying epithets that explicitly identify them as an *exemplum* (i.e. *exemplum*,

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<sup>6</sup> Alongside this, this study also seeks to counterbalance the visibly androcentric bias that persists in modern scholarship on the *exemplum* in Roman culture. Though some have explored how women feature as *exempla* in the works of certain authors, and others have analysed the prominence of specific individuals, the literature on *exempla* and its wider discourse is still dominated by scholarly analysis of male *exempla* in the works of other, male authors. While the male perspective is in many ways inescapable due to the nature of the evidence that survives, in focusing more exclusively on female *exempla*, this study will hopefully correct the discernible bias.

*exemplar*, or other synonymous nouns like *specimen*); or by applying the use of superlatives, intensifiers and comparative statements, that suggest that they are above others in terms of virtue, and or vice. In many ways we might consider these individuals quasi-*exempla* – people that are characterised as *exempla* but do not necessarily fulfil any of the typically associated outcomes – yet this is precisely the point that this study aims to show. While we might not ordinarily consider some of these individuals to function as genuine *exempla*, it is the binary of these two conventionally cited outcomes that seemingly constrains our view. When we look to such cases, we see that Roman authors nevertheless make a sustained effort to characterise or classify these individuals as *exempla* and thus employ exemplification strategically to fulfil alternative, more socio-politically driven, agenda too.

### Overview of Chapters

To begin this investigation, and contextualise much of my later discussion, I will first revisit the position of the *exemplum* in Roman thought and culture. In the chapter that follows, I will begin by examining the *exemplum*'s nature, form and functions. I will consider how Latin authors conceived of an *exemplum*, in Roman rhetorical theory, and how practical application provides further information about its uses and ubiquity. Following this, in the second half of the chapter, I will outline the various cultural and social institutions that engage in the production and dissemination of *exempla*, and I will survey the kinds of monuments and other media in which the discourse finds expression. Finally, to conclude our introductory material in Chapter Three I will examine modern scholarship and theory to survey the current landscape on the discourse up to now. Here I will not only outline early scholarship and those that have examined the use of examples more broadly in ancient cultures, but I will also highlight those who have shed further light upon the discourse in

their works individual authors, topics, or genres. Following this, I will discuss in more detail those who have looked at the mechanics of exemplary discourse and the socio-political dimensions of exemplarity thus far.

Having established a sense of the *exempla's* diverse functions, and the current position of modern scholarship, in Chapter Four we will examine our first case study: Cicero and his works. As I will show, not only do his works reveal the clear disparity between those who feature as *exempla* and those that are elevated to a quasi-exemplary status, but they also show the social and political dimensions of exemplification quite clearly, in how he uses the exemplarity of women to negotiate his personal and political relationships. To illuminate this dichotomy, I will divide this chapter in two. In the first half I will examine what I consider to be the '*exempla proper*'. Here, I will look at a selection of women within his speeches and treatises to see how Cicero uses them as *exempla* in conventional ways. In the second half of the chapter however, I will look to his letters, and examine how Cicero exemplifies several of his contemporaries. Here I will argue that while Cicero employs the language of exemplary discourse and presents these women as exemplars of virtue, he does so to service his own personal agenda and not necessarily to support a wider argument or postulate a model for his audience's edification, as we see *exempla* used for more conventionally.

Following Cicero, in Chapter Five I will explore the works of Ovid. However, I will not examine his entire corpus, but focus upon a selection of his works. Here I will examine his exilic elegies, the *Tristia* and *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, for in both of these we find explicit engagement with the exemplification of contemporaries. Interestingly in Ovid's poetry from Pontus, it is not necessarily the exemplification of all third parties that concerns us most, but the presentation of his wife. Not only does he praise her, on almost every occasion, for

her exceptional love and devotion, but he also designates her explicitly as a moral *exemplum*. However, as I will argue throughout the chapter, Ovid's positive presentation has little to do with providing a role model for his audience's moral instruction, it rather services another, socio-politically driven agenda. Not only does it explicitly engage with social acts, such as commemoration and gift exchange, but it also features prominently as a means of controlling his wife's behaviour and simultaneously rehabilitating his moral reputation for his wider audience and posterity.

In Chapter Six I will examine the selected works Seneca the Younger, though once more I will limit my focus to his *Consolations* to Marcia and Helvia. Here I will argue that while Seneca clearly exemplifies the recipients of his consolatory therapy (Marcia and Helvia respectively), for both rhetorical and didactic purposes, he might also be using exemplification in other more socio-political ways. With his treatment of Helvia and Marcia we see that exemplification participates not only in the management of personal relationships, but also self-promotion, as Seneca also seeks to exemplify himself, through others within the text. Alongside this we will also explore here how Seneca's novel approach to consolation, that is heavily reliant upon exemplary citation, might seek to establish a literary legacy as an *exemplum* itself.

In Chapter Seven I will explore the letters of Pliny the Younger, and some of the women that he presents as *exempla* within his works. Here, through a series of case studies, I will show that Pliny not only uses his association with exemplary individuals, including his own wife, as a means of crafting a positive public persona (*à la* Ovid and Seneca) for his peers and posterity, but he also seemingly uses it as a means of social networking – negotiating and maintaining his personal and familial relationships – at the same time.



In the final chapter, I will present my conclusions. I will bring the broader themes together that have been woven throughout this work and I will highlight areas for potential future scholarship.

## Chapter 2. The *Exemplum* in Roman Thought and Culture

To the Roman mind the Latin noun *exemplum* had an extensive range of meanings and associated functions.<sup>7</sup> While in its broadest forms it denoted an ‘example’, a ‘sample’ or a ‘specimen’, evidence from both theoretical discussion and practical application suggests that there are two, ostensibly distinctive conceptions that come most frequently to the fore. The first is that an *exemplum* was an illustration of the thing at hand, and adduced as part of an argument, and the second is that an *exemplum* constituted a moral-didactic model for others to emulate or avoid.<sup>8</sup>

### *Exempla* as a Rhetorical Device

To gain an insight into the nature and function of *exempla* in this first sense, we must turn to the ancient handbooks on oratory and rhetoric. Here we see that *exempla* are discussed in the context of persuasive speech: how they might be adduced illustratively, to clarify a speaker or author’s point, or injunctively, to influence the audience towards a particular decision or course of action.<sup>9</sup> In the earliest of our Roman treatises firstly, the *Rhetorica ad*

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<sup>7</sup> Van der Blom 2010: 9. n.2. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, lists up to nine variant meanings for the noun. See O.L.D. s.v. ‘exemplum’, c.f. *TLL* s.v. *exemplum*, II. Those most pertinent to this investigation will be explored here in more detail.

<sup>8</sup> It must be noted at this point that the use of examples in both their rhetorical and moral-didactic modes is not an exclusively Roman concept. Indeed, scholars like Teresa Morgan argue that it is something of a misconception. There is evidence in Greek literature from the Classical and Hellenistic periods to suggest that the Greeks also conceived of people and events as exemplary, and that they consciously adduced them for the purposes of illustration and edification, as the Romans did. Moreover, as several scholars have observed, the Greek concept of the *paradeigma* theorised by Aristotle and others forms an effective equivalent counterpart to the Roman *exemplum*, and it is often against this background of Greek intellectual culture that our Latin authors expound the various precepts surrounding the use and utility of *exempla* in their own culture. See Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1356-7; 1393; 1398. For further discussion see Morgan 2007: 122-125, who proposes that the identification with Roman culture is most likely due to Cicero’s penchant and his over representation; Bücher 2006: 152-5; Stemmler 2000: 152-5; Styka 1991: 143-156, and Alewell 1913: 11-18. Gelley 1995: 1-2 discusses how Plato provides further evidence and Pownall 2004, examines how fourth-century authors used lessons from the past.

<sup>9</sup> Roller 2018: 11-12. The role of examples in making arguments persuasive, particular in deliberative or forensic speeches, has received significant attention by modern scholars. See most recently, van der Blom 2010: 65-72 or Bücher 2006: 152-5, with a full bibliography.

*Herennium*, the unknown author of the work defines *exempla* broadly as the invocation of an individual's previous deeds and sayings, along with a specific reference to their *auctor* by name: *exemplum est alicuius facti aut dicti praeteriti, cum certi auctoris nomine proposito*.<sup>10</sup> Yet in terms of how they function, he suggests, *exempla* are quite specific in their aims. In book four for instance, during his discussion, he asserts that *exempla* are intended first and foremost to demonstrate a certain point. They are a tool within the orator's rhetorical arsenal that might be employed to demonstrate or illustrate the argument being put forward:

primum omnium exempla ponuntur nec confirmandi neque testificandi causa sed demonstrandi. hoc interest igitur inter testimonium et exemplum; exemplo demonstratur id quod dicimus cuiusmodi sit; testimonio esse illud ita ut nos dicimus confirmatur. (4.3.5-6)

First of all, examples are put forward, not to confirm or testify, but for the purposes of demonstration. The difference between testimony and example is this: by example we demonstrate that which we are talking about, whereas with testimony, we confirm that what we say is so.<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, while the author of the *ad Herennium* suggests that *exempla* are primarily demonstrative in nature, being unable to testify or confirm, on another occasion within the treatise he expands the utility of *exempla* by suggesting that their function adapts to the purpose of the work. Later in book four he explains that examples are like comparison

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<sup>10</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.49.62. The author and precise dating of the so-called *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is still unknown. It is believed to have been produced in the 80's B.C.E. due to its acknowledgement of Gaius Marius' final consulship, and Sulpicius' tribunate of 88 B.C.E., though this remains a subject of debate. For a discussion of its date and authorship see Winkel 1979: 327-332 or Douglas 1960: 65-78.

<sup>11</sup> See also 3.23.39. All translations of the *ad Herennium* will be taken from Caplan 1954, unless otherwise stated.

(*similitudo*) in that they are invoked for their similarity to the matter at hand. He states that they clarify specific points and help the audience to understand. However, as he does this, he simultaneously suggests that the purpose of *exempla* might often differ depending on the contexts in which they are deployed. While they might illuminate or clarify a specific point at times, on other occasions they might more broadly decorate a speech or work:

id sumitur isdem de causis quibus similitudo. rem ornatorem facit cum nullius rei nisi dignitatis causa sumitur; apertorem, cum id quod sit obscurius magis dilucidum reddit; probabiliorem, cum magis ueri similem facit; ante oculos ponit, cum exprimit omnia perspicue ut res prope dicam manu temptari possit.

(4.49.62)

An example is employed for the same reasons as comparison: it makes the matter more brilliant, when applied for no other reason than beauty; makes it clearer when something obscure might be elucidated better; more likely, when making the matter seem truer, and it places the thing before one's eyes, when expressing everything so lucidly, that the matter can, I might almost say, be touched by hand.

The notion expressed here that *exempla* might perform an ornamental function, and beautify a speech, is found once more within this work. In book two the author situates them explicitly amongst the various decorative apparatus (the *exornatio*) that one might employ to expand and enrich an argument:

... exornatio constat ex similibus et exemplis et amplificationibus et rebus iudicatis et ceteris rebus quae pertinent ad exaugendam et conlocupletandam argumentationem... (2.29.46)

... adornment consists of similes, examples, amplifications, previous judgements and other things which are related to expanding and enriching the argument...<sup>12</sup>

Ultimately, whether demonstrating a specific point, or embellishing their speech, for the author of the *ad Herennium*, examples are conceived of as a means of adding emphasis to an argument and persuading an audience to agree. While it has little capacity to confirm and is explicitly not a form of testimony, it is a practical tool for orators and authors to substantiate their claims and increase the likelihood (*probabile*) that their argument rings true.

In many ways the *ad Herennium*'s conception of the *exemplum* and its functions is reflective of wider Roman theory as many of these notions are echoed in other contemporary or later rhetorical works. In Cicero's *De Oratore* for instance, a fictional dialogue that outlines the principles of successful oratory, we find the *exemplum* rather similarly explained. Not only do we hear that *exempla* are generated from the *dicta et facta* of individuals and are demonstrative in their aims, but they are also situated in the realms of comparison, like the *ad Herennium*, to illuminate an orator's claims:

atque utroque in genere et similitudinis et dissimilitudinis exempla sunt ex aliorum factis aut dictis aut euentis et fictae narrationes saepe ponendae. (*De Oratore* 2.168)

In both modes of the comparative genre (similarity and dissimilarity), *exempla* are derived from the acts and sayings of others, or events and fictional narratives.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Trans. Caplan 1954, adapted.

<sup>13</sup> Trans. Sutton and Rackham 1942. For a further discussion see Price 1975: 165-168.

Like the *ad Herennium* we find that Cicero also discusses *exempla* largely in the context of argumentation and persuasive speech. Indeed, in another of his rhetorical treatise, the *De Inventione*, we see the persuasive aspect emerge quite quickly as he defines *exempla* rather specifically in the context of juridical oratory:

exemplum est quod rem auctoritate aut casu alicuius hominis aut negoti  
confirmat aut infirmat. horum exempla et descriptiones in praeceptis elocutionis  
cognoscentur. (*De Inventione* 1.49)

The *exemplum* is that which confirms or weakens a case by appeal to some authority or the events and business of men. Descriptions and examples of these, will be expounded within the precepts of style.<sup>14</sup>

Importantly however, while the *exemplum* works predominantly to illuminate or persuade, in Cicero's consignment to the various sections on style we also gain a similar sense that they are simultaneously ornamental in their aims. Indeed, on some occasions, we see that Cicero goes further than the *ad Herennium* in asserting that *exempla* can delight an audience as well as amplify a speaker's claims. See for example the following extracts from Cicero's essay on oratory, and his second speech against Verres:

commemoratio autem antiquitatis exemplorumque prolatis summa cum  
delectatione et auctoritatem orationi affert et fidem. (*Orator* 34.120)

The mention of antiquity and the reference of examples give the speech authority and credibility as well as affording the highest pleasure to the audience.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Trans. Hubbell 1949.

<sup>15</sup> Trans. Hendrickson and Hubbell 1939.

exempla ex uetere memoria, ex monumentis ac litteris, plena dignitatis, plena antiquitatis; haec enim plurimum solent et auctoritatis habere ad probandum et iucunditatis ad audiendum. (*In Verrem* 2.3.209)

Examples are drawn from ancient tradition, from old monuments and old documents, full of dignity, full of antiquity. For such examples usually have both a great deal of authority in proving a point and are very pleasant to hear cited.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, while Cicero and the *ad Herennium* might initially seem concordant in their various explanations, in certain instances we see that there are certain fundamental areas where they disagree. Take first the source from which *exempla* might be drawn. While both identify the *dicta et facta* of individuals as the fund from which *exempla* might be created, Cicero makes no mention of any requirement for the individual to be explicitly named. Moreover, as we see in several of the extracts above, with Cicero, the spectrum of *materia* from which *exempla* might be drawn is dramatically increased. Unlike the *ad Herennium's* seemingly limited parameters, Cicero suggests that old documents, monuments, historical events and customs (presumably referring to the frequently cited ways of the ancestors, the *mos maiorum*) the rather vaguely described 'business of men', and even imaginary scenarios (*fictae narrationes*) may also provide material for examples to offer within a speech or text.

Perhaps the largest difference between Cicero and the *ad Herennium* however can be seen in the notion that *exempla* have an authorising function and an ability to confirm. As Bennett Price has highlighted, Cicero is rather distinctive for his persistent focus on this authorising capability, repeatedly proclaiming that they endow a speech with authority and increase the credence of a speaker's point at the same time.<sup>17</sup> In the *De Inventione*, as we

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<sup>16</sup> Trans. Greenwood 1935. See also Cicero *De Partitione Oratoria* 40, where examples are supposed to make a point believable. For a discussion of this last example, see van der Blom 2010: 74.

<sup>17</sup> Price 1975: 129. See also Petitfils 2013: 35; Bücher 2006: 154, and Kornhardt 1936.

have seen, *exempla* are defined essentially as the appeal to some authority or precedent to confirm or weaken a case (*confirmat aut infirmat*), and in his essay on oratory, while he alludes to the *exemplum's* ability to please an audience, he once more alludes to these authorising aims.<sup>18</sup> While Cicero's proposal here, that *exempla* increase a speaker's credibility (expressed here with *fidem*), perhaps echoes the sentiments in the *ad Herennium* that examples can increase probability, an equivalent suggestion of its authorising capabilities is clearly not displayed. Indeed Cicero's assertion that they also have the capacity to confirm or undermine a speaker's case conflicts directly with the *ad Herennium's* explicit delineation that they fulfil no confirmatory function. The ostensible concordance between these two authors then masks a deeper issue of discord in their respective stance in this regard. While the *ad Herennium* explicitly refutes the notion, Cicero ardently defends it, considering it to form a kind of proof.

With our final rhetorical handbook, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, we find that the nature and functions of *exempla* are similarly explained. Though he seems more aligned with Cicero's explications where certain issues are concerned. Like Cicero, Quintilian also situates the *exemplum* as a form of comparison and as a kind of technical proof.<sup>19</sup> Although he claims to be unlike his predecessors in equating the Latin *exemplum* to the Greek *paradeigma*: that is, a thing which is invoked for its representative similarity to other, matching things. As he states in book five:

tertium genus, ex iis quae extrinsecus adducuntur in causam, Graeci vocant παράδειγμα, quo nomine et generaliter usi sunt in omni similibus adpositione et specialiter in iis quae rerum gestarum auctoritate nituntur. nostri fere similitudinem vocare maluerunt quod ab illis parabole dicitur, hoc alterum

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<sup>18</sup> Cicero *Orator* 34.120; *In Verrem* 2.3.209.

<sup>19</sup> Petitfils 2013: 37. See *Institutio Oratoria* 5.11.1. cf. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.3.5.



exemplum, quamquam et hoc simile est, illud exemplum. nos, quo facilius propositum explicemus, utrumque παράδειγμα esse credamus et ipsi appellemus exemplum. (*Institutio Oratoria* 5.11.1-2)

The third kind of Technical Proof, one which is based on matters introduced into a Cause from outside, is called *paradeigma* by the Greeks; they have used this word both generally of any matching of similar things, and especially with reference to things which rest on the authority of history. Our writers have generally preferred *similitudo* to render what the Greeks call *parabolē*, and *exemplum* for this other form; though *exemplum* also involves likeness and a *similitudo* is an Example. To make exposition easier, let us take both to be *paradeigmata* (Paradigms) and let us too call them *exempla* (Examples).<sup>20</sup>

Despite his purported deviation from traditional categorisation and terminology however, we see that Quintilian's discussion across the work largely amalgamates the definitions of those that came before. Like the previous two authors, he also conceives of the *exemplum* in terms of the invocation of historical deeds (*res gestae*), or at least deeds treated as through already performed (*ut gestae*), and that their recollection (*commemoratio*) is a means by which one might persuade an audience. Indeed, the notion is developed further in his suggestion that the orator should consider whether the *exemplum* is wholly similar to what one wishes to illustrate, or only partly, so that it might be adapted or partially presented, to suit its respective purpose:

potentissimum autem est inter ea quae sunt huius generis quod proprie vocamus exemplum, id est rei gestae aut ut gestae utilis ad persuadendum id quod intenderis commemoratio. intuendum igitur est totum simile sit an ex parte, ut aut omnia ex eo sumamus aut quae utilia erunt. (*Institutio Oratoria* 5.11.6)

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<sup>20</sup> All translations of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* henceforth will be provided by Russel 2002, unless otherwise stated.

The most effective thing of this kind is what is properly called Example, that is to say the mention of an event which either took place or is treated as having taken place, in order to make your point convincing. We have then to consider whether it is similar as a whole or only in part, so that we can take either all its features into use or only the potentially useful ones.

Through these three Roman authors and their respective treatises then, not only have we gained an impression of the *exemplum's* nature – something which is similar to the matter at hand – but we also have also gained a sense of its multifarious functionality: illustration, clarification, ornamentation, and persuasion. Through their respective discussions, moreover, we have also gained a sense of the various sources from which *exempla* might be drawn. Collectively they identify that *exempla* are constituted from the *dicta, facta, res gestae, euentis* or *fictae narrationes*, recalled, invoked, or set forth (*commemoratio / proposito*). Indeed, with Cicero and Quintilian, the creation of fictional *exempla* purportedly have more persuasive force.

However, while the rhetorical handbooks might shed important light on how the Roman's perceived *exempla* to function, they only provide a foundational basis for our understanding of its nature and functions in the Roman world. With their particular focus on its utility in oratory and rhetoric they are promoting a set of specific use cases and outlining its functions in relation to their own pedagogic aim of developing a successful orator. If we look beyond the various theoretical definitions, to instances of application throughout the wider corpus of Latin literature, we see that a second, and in many ways more prevalent, conception of the *exemplum* comes to the fore.

### Exempla as Models and Precedents

As scholars have highlighted, an example by its nature is simultaneously both a singular, isolated instance, and a *genus* or a type.<sup>21</sup> In many ways, the actions or events from which *exempla* might be drawn were seen to offer a template or a model: something that can be replicated or imitated in situations that are similar or alike. On many occasions we see that the Romans conceived of an *exemplum* as a precedent within this broader model kind. An earlier action or historical event would often be cited to advise others in similar circumstances by providing a pattern for them to follow or as a referential guide. Cicero's definition in the *De Inventione*, exudes something of a precedential connotation as we have seen, but there are also numerous allusions to this precedential sense within his other works more broadly. In his speech against Verres for instance, Cicero proclaims, that the judges must consider their verdict carefully, for it will establish a precedent for others to exploit.<sup>22</sup> Alongside this occasion, and as van der Blom has observed, in the *Pro Flacco* he urges the jury to acquit Flaccus for his alleged crimes, for his acquittal would signal that good qualities and excellent service to the state can protect an innocent man accused of unjust crimes.<sup>23</sup> Beyond Cicero and the judicial sphere however we see that *exempla* are understood as precedents within other literary genres too. To provide an example here, in Livy's narrative history of Rome's regal period he reports that the infamous Tarquinius Superbus not only used Romulus' actions as a justification for depriving his own father-in-law of a proper burial, but that he was also purportedly conscious that another precedent

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<sup>21</sup> Kraus 2005: 187. See also, Lowrie 2007, and Roller 2018: 15-16.

<sup>22</sup> Cicero *In Verrem* 1.47.

<sup>23</sup> Cicero *Pro Flacco* 24-25. For a further discussion of *exempla* and their precedential connotations see van der Blom 2010: 77; 81.

(*exemplum*) had been set in his own actions for those wishing to rule by criminal means.<sup>24</sup>

Like the rhetorical *exemplum* then we find that precedents are employed both illustratively and injunctively. Not only do they illustrate the kinds of outcome that might be expected if certain actions or events are replicated, but they also work to persuade an audience by legitimising the merits of adopting or rejecting a certain strategy.

However, while in certain situations *exempla* were perceived to function as a precedential template from the past, more often we find that actions, events or individuals were endowed with social and ethical meaning to provide moral and didactic guides. As Bell has summarised, there was a recursive tendency in Roman culture to set forth *exempla* as cognitive ethical models for others to observe.<sup>25</sup> They were deployed in texts and monuments not only to celebrate exemplary behaviour, but also to teach others how to live their lives. While the rhetorical handbooks do not explicitly define the *exemplum* beyond their illustrative and injunctive roles, they nevertheless still acknowledge that the *exempla* might function in this mode. The second century C.E. lexicographer Festus for example defines *exempla* broadly as something that we follow or avoid: *exemplum est quod sequimur aut uitemus*.<sup>26</sup> And if we consider that the verb *sequi*, employed here, has ‘imitation’ amongst its uses, then the *ad Herennium*’s author might display his cognisance of the *exemplum*’s capacity to act as a model in his discussion of defective *exempla*:

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<sup>24</sup> *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.49: *inde L. Tarquinius regnare occepit, cui Superbo cognomen facta indiderunt, quia socerum gener sepultura prohibuit, Romulum quoque insepultum perisse dictitans, primosque patrum, quos Servi rebus favisse credebat, interfecit; conscius deinde male quaerendi regni ab se ipso adversus se exemplum capi posse, armatis corpus circumsaepsit.* (‘Next, L. Tarquinius began to rule. His deeds had procured for him the epithet ‘The Arrogant’, because he forbade his father-in-law a burial, asserting that even Romulus had perished uninterred, and because he put to death the leading men of the state believing that they favoured Servius’ cause. Conscious that a precedent could be taken from his own actions by those seeking to rule by crime, and that they might turn against him, he took up an armed bodyguard.’) See also Tacitus *Annals* 14.44.

<sup>25</sup> See for example, Bell 2008: 2.

<sup>26</sup> Festus *De Verborum Significatu* 57 (Lindsay 1913). Festus also makes a subtle distinction between an *exemplum* and an *exemplar* here as he continues: *exemplar, ex quo similitudinem faciamus. illud animo aestimatur, istud oculis conspicitur.* See further, Habinek 2001: 46.

*exemplum uitiosum et si aut falsum est, id reprehendatur, aut inprobum, id non sit imitandum, aut maius, aut minus quam res postulat.*<sup>27</sup> Beyond Festus and the *ad Herennium* however, there are innumerable instances where others like Cicero also conceive of an *exemplum* in this moral-didactic model type. Two prime examples can be seen in the *De Oratore* where he implores his audience to look to Romans for examples of virtue and to the Greeks for models of learning: *nam ut exemplum uirtutis a nostris, sic doctrinae sunt ab illis petenda*,<sup>28</sup> and in his speech defending Archias (the *Pro Archia*), where he recommends that his audience should adopt historical examples from literature for an effective moral guide:

sed pleni sunt omnes libri, plenae sapientium voces, plena exemplorum vetustas: quae iacerent in tenebris omnia, nisi litterarum lumen accederet. quam multas nobis imagines non solum ad intuendum, verum etiam ad imitandum fortissimorum virorum expressas scriptores et Graeci et Latini reliquerunt, quas ego mihi semper in administranda re publica proponens animum et mentem meam ipsa cogitatione hominum excellentium conformabam. (*Pro Archia* 14)

All literature, all philosophy, all history, abounds with incentives to noble action, incentives which would be buried in black darkness were the light of the written word not flashed upon them. How many pictures of high endeavour the great authors of Greece and Rome have drawn for our use, and bequeathed to us, not only for our contemplation, but for our emulation! These I have held ever before my vision throughout my public career, and have guided the workings of my brain and my soul by meditating upon patterns of excellence.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.29.46: 'an example is defective, if it is false and thus refutable, immoral and thus not to be imitated, or when it is greater or less than the matter proposed.' For the imitable connotation of 'sequi' see O.L.D. s.v. sequi.

<sup>28</sup> *De Oratore* 3.137: 'just as we look to our own for examples of virtue, so too must we look to the Greeks for models of learning.' Trans. Sutton and Rackham 1942.

<sup>29</sup> Trans. Watts 1923. See also, Seneca *Consolatio ad Polybium* 11.5.

While the examples above are but a few short instances that allude to the practice of extracting models from the *dicta et facta* of individuals, or *euenta* that Cicero and others suggest *exempla* might be drawn, they are particularly useful for our consideration of the *exemplum*'s nature and functions as they highlight two important facets that are often present within this broader model sense.<sup>30</sup> First they show that *exempla* were often intimately connected with socio-ethical values, to stand as representative symbols of virtues and vice. Second, they show that *exempla* often comprised a didactic dimension and functioned, with or without their moral associations and categorisations, an edifying device. Thus, just as the rhetorical *exemplum* was considered to fulfil a variety of nuanced functions within its illustrative and injunctive roles, we find an equally diverse set of functions within this broader model mode. As Cicero and others suggest in many ways, we might conceive of an *exemplum* a paradigm or a 'role model' for others to observe. They were posited as the embodiment of certain moral ideals that others should strive towards within their lives.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, evidence suggests, *exempla* have aspirational, inspirational, and motivational qualities within this positive type. They inspired those who engaged with them to act, encouraged emulation and even motivated individuals to compete with original *auctor* on certain occasions, to surpass their actions or behaviours and become the new and improved paradigm. Suetonius, in his biography of Julius Caesar for instance suggests that Caesar was so affected by the deeds of Alexander the Great, that upon observing his statue at Gades, he lamented his lack of progress and was inspired to seek further glory and fame.<sup>32</sup> And

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<sup>30</sup> See also *De Inventione* 2.2; *De Re Publica* 35 and *De Officiis* 3.4.16, to cite only a few.

<sup>31</sup> Skidmore 1996: 27. See also, Kornhardt 1936: 13. See for instance Seneca *Epistles* 11.10; 104.19-26; 83.13; Cicero *De Oratore* 1.229; *Pro Archia* 14; *Pro Roscio Amerino* 10.27 or Tacitus *Annals* 16.35. The term 'role-model', first coined by Robert Merton in 1957 stemmed from a series of studies on social groups and social roles. For a further discussion of the term and its applicability to the Roman context, see Bell 2008: 3, and D'Ambra 1993: 104.

<sup>32</sup> Suetonius *Divus Julius* 7. See also Dio Cassius 37.52.2. Plutarch, alternatively has Caesar reading about Alexander's deeds instead of observing his statue *Caesar* 11: ὁμοίως δὲ πάλιν ἐν Ἰβηρίᾳ σχολῆς οὐσης

Sallust suggests that a similar inflammatory response might occur when individuals are confronted by exemplary individuals via other monuments that participate in the production of *exempla*:

nam saepe ego audivi Q. Maximum, P. Scipionem, praeterea civitatis nostrae praeclaros viros solitos ita dicere, cum maiorum imagines intuerentur, vehementissime sibi animum ad virtutem accendi. scilicet non ceram illam neque figuram tantam vim in sese habere, sed memoria rerum gestarum eam flammam egregiis viris in pectore crescere neque prius sedari, quam virtus eorum famam atque gloriam adaequaverit. (Sallust *Bellum Jugurthae* 4.5)

For often I heard that Q. Maximus, P. Scipio and other eminent men of our community used to say that when they looked upon the wax masks of their ancestors, their spirit was most vehemently incensed, directed towards virtue. It was certainly not the wax, nor their shape themselves, that held power over these men, but the memory of the things these eminent men did that ignited and grew the flames in their heart, something that did not lower until their own virtue had equalled their renown and glory.<sup>33</sup>

As we see in the above extracts, alongside these three aspects, *exempla* were perceived to also have an emotional impact on those who might engage with them. They not only motivate individuals into action but also elicit other emotions as well. Livy further encapsulates the supposition that there would be an emotional response to someone

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ἀναγινώσκοντά τι τῶν περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου γεγραμμένων σφόδρα γενέσθαι πρὸς ἑαυτῷ πολὺν χρόνον, εἶτα καὶ δακρῦσαι τῶν δὲ φίλων θαυμασάντων τὴν αἰτίαν εἰπεῖν· “Οὐ δοκεῖ ὑμῖν ἄξιον εἶναι λύπης, εἰ τηλικούτος μὲν ὢν Ἀλέξανδρος ἤδη τοσοῦτων ἐβασίλευεν, ἐμοὶ δὲ λαμπρὸν οὐδὲν οὕτω πέπρακται;” (‘In like manner we are told again that, in Spain, when he was at leisure and was reading from the history of Alexander, he was lost in thought for a long time, and then burst into tears. His friends were astonished, and asked the reason for his tears. “Do you not think,” said he, “it is matter for sorrow that while Alexander, at my age, was already king of so many peoples, I have as yet achieved no brilliant success?”’) Trans. Perrin 1914.

<sup>33</sup> Trans. Ramsey 2013. For a further sense of the inspirational qualities of *exempla* see also Seneca *Epistulae ad Lucilium* 120 and Pliny *Panegyricus* 13.4-5.

confronted by *exempla* when he states: *si tot exempla virtutis non movent, nihil umquam movebit* ('if so many examples of virtue do not move you, nothing ever will')<sup>34</sup>; and Aulus Gellius documents in his *Attic Nights*, that the Philosopher Favorinus said he was emotionally affected by the tales of the duel between Manlius and the Gaul that took place centuries before his time that he was visibly 'shaken and stirred':

quem locum ex eo libro philosophus Favorinus cum legeret, non minoribus quati adificique animum suum motibus pulsibusque dicebat, quam si ipse coram depugnantes eos specataret. (*Noctae Atticae* 9.13)

the philosopher Favorinus used to say that while he read this tale from his book he was shaken and stirred, and affected emotionally, no less than if he had himself witnessed them fighting.<sup>35</sup>

As Festus and others remind us however, *exempla* embrace a range of behaviours across the ethical spectrum, to incorporate the bad as well as the good. While on many occasions we find *exempla* posited in a positive sense, as a role-model to aspire towards, we also see that *exempla* were intended to serve as an effective warning or a deterrent for others, displaying actions, or qualities to avoid. Suetonius for instance comments on the plethora of '*pessimi exempli*' that survived following the civil wars in the first century B.C.E., in his recollection of the emperor Augustus' life.<sup>36</sup> And Seneca the Younger, in a letter to Lucilius, acknowledges the potential for individuals to constitute exemplars of negative behaviour, advising his correspondent to remove such models of vice:

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<sup>34</sup> Livy *Histories* 22.60.14.

<sup>35</sup> Trans. Rolfe 1927. For a further discussion see Langlands 2018: 2. See also, Cicero *De Finibus* 3.32; 5.62.

<sup>36</sup> Suetonius *Augustus* 89.2.



si uelis uitis exui, longe a uitiorum exemplis recedendum est. avarus corruptor, saeuus, fraudulentus, multum nocituri, si prope a te fuissent, intra te sunt. ad meliores transi: cum Catonibus uiue, cum Laelio, cum Tuberone. quod si conuiuere etiam Graecis iuuat, cum Socrate, cum Zenone uersare; alter te docebit mori, si necesse erit, alter antequam necesse erit... (*Epistulae ad Lucilium* 104.21)

If you want to shed your vices, you must move far away from models of vice. A miser, a fraudster, a cruel and treacherous man, men who would do you much harm if they had been near you, are actually within you. Turn to better men; live with Cato, with Laelius, with Tubero, or, if you prefer, even with the Greeks, keep company with Socrates and Zeno, one will teach you to die if it is necessary, the other to die before it is necessary...<sup>37</sup>

It is important to note at this point that while *exempla* in this model sense are often representative of qualities admired or detested, they can also function on occasion in a more morally neutral sense. As Cicero's earlier reference to Greek *exempla doctrinae* reveals, the Romans saw potential for a model to be constituted from modes of learning, from other authors or works (literary/artistic models) or in other initiatives besides.<sup>38</sup> And we will explore later within this chapter, their didactic potential meant that they were often used as vehicles for transmitting not only social and ethical values, but also practical skills.

The nature of the *exemplum* then, particularly within this secondary mode, is highly complex. While in its broadest sense, it mediates between singularity and repeatability, offering a model, or a pattern, for imitation (or avoidance), the proclivity to connect these deeds, sayings, events, or persons with moral values augments its nuances and ancillary

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<sup>37</sup> Trans. Fantham 2010, adapted. See also, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.35.47, and Cicero *ad Quintum Fratrem* 1.2.5.

<sup>38</sup> For example, Frontinus *Strategmata*.

variations beyond the generic template.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, some have suggested that this as an automatic process: that ethical import is automatically adduced. Lowrie for instance has recently hypothesised that as soon as an action or event is identified as repeatable, the moralistic nature of *exempla* emerges. As she states,

The *exemplum's* moral weight emerges precisely at the time it stops being conceived of as an entirely singular instance: it provides a model and is to some degree repeatable.<sup>40</sup>

In my view however the supposition that 'moral weight' is automatically instilled upon cognisance of repeatability is not only too deterministic, but it also fails to fully appreciate the cognitive and evaluative processes involved. I would rather argue that recognition of repeatability does little more than result in the *potential* for moral weight to be adduced, it does not necessarily mean that moral and ethical values will be automatically transposed. As Matthew Roller, in his model of exemplary discourse has shown, ethical import occurs through a separate, though perhaps simultaneous, process of internal evaluation instead. One that identifies and categorises the deeds or persons within a wider discursive framework of moral standards and social values. According to Roller, deeds and sayings can only become 'moralistic' when a connection or a correlation has been identified between wider social values and the action, behaviour or event: when they have been evaluated in accordance with wider social and ethical principles and deemed representative of them in some way.<sup>41</sup> In short, when actions are repeatable, or persons imitable, they become a

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<sup>39</sup> Lowrie 2008: 177.

<sup>40</sup> Lowrie 2008: 166-7.

<sup>41</sup> Essentially my view in this regard, follows Roller's hypothesis that it is only when *dicta et facta* are evaluated that they become *res gestae* endowed with ethical meaning. See Roller 2004: 5.

potential model for others to behold. The moral element arrives separately, post evaluation, and is not automatically transposed. The process that I have described here, is perhaps illuminated by Quintilian, in his treatise on the orator and his ideal education:

neque ea solum quae talibus disciplinis continentur, sed magis etiam quae sunt tradita antiquitus dicta ac facta praeclare et nosse et animo semper agitare conveniet. quae profecto nusquam plura maioraque quam in nostrae civitatis monumentis reperientur. an fortitudinem, iustitiam, fidem, continentiam, frugalitatem, contemptum doloris ac mortis melius alii docebunt quam Fabricii, Curii, Reguli, Decii, Mucii aliique innumerabiles? quantum enim Graeci praeceptis valent, tantum Romani, quod est maius, exemplis. (*Institutio Oratoria* 12.3.29-30)

It is not only the content of these kinds of studies that we should know and consider, but even more important are the noble sayings and deeds handed down to us from antiquity. Nowhere is there a larger or more striking supply of these than in the records of our own country. Could there be any better teacher of courage, justice, loyalty, self-control, frugality and contempt of pain and death than Fabricius, Curius, Regulus, Decius, Mucius and countless others? However strong the Greeks are in their precepts, Rome matches with examples and examples are a far greater thing.<sup>42</sup>

As we see, not only does Quintilian advocate the active consideration of these deeds and sayings against a wider fund of *exempla*, found here within antiquity, but he also neatly illustrates how connections are established between these figures and certain moral-ethical values. He presents a cast of characters that he, and no doubt others, have connected with abstract virtues and invokes them here to illustrate his point. Clearly then, it is not only the

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<sup>42</sup> Trans. Russell 2001, adapted. See also Cicero *De Oratore* 2.335, where he explains how men collect examples for moral edification. Interestingly, both of these sources demonstrate the Roman rhetoricians' conscious awareness that *exempla* constituted moral-didactic models once more.

identification of an action's imitability, but also their conscious, or unconscious association with certain moral or social values that transform the generic model into a moral-didactic *exemplum*.

In many ways, the precise nature of the *exemplum* is predicated on its application and the context of the work itself. As is the case with the rhetorical *exemplum* discussed earlier, the various ways in which we might conceive of it – as a role model, a symbol of virtue or vice, or a pragmatic/practical guide – they are all directed by the context of the *exemplum's* invocation and the function it is intended to fulfil. As scholarly discussion of the *exemplum* reveals, its multifarious nature is equally matched by its multifarious functionality. Most often, as I have suggested above, the *exemplum* functioned as a moral-didactic model for others to observe. As nodes of ideology, *exempla* were a means by which to transmit social and moral values. Yet, as scholars have highlighted, moral-didactic *exempla* also have an inherently normative function as well.<sup>43</sup> They function as a standard for evaluating others deeds and participate in the perpetuation and inculcation of societal values and norms.

Habinek has recently suggested that an *exemplum* is essentially something that is 'taken out of' (*eximere*) a group in order to serve as a standard by which other instances of the type can be evaluated (*existimare*.)<sup>44</sup> Thus, just as they have themselves been evaluated against social and ethical norms, the *exemplum* can proceed to function as a moral standard for evaluation of other, subsequent deeds, behaviours and events.<sup>45</sup> A general sense of this can be seen from the proclivity to invoke the *mos maiorum* (the ways of the ancestors) in

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<sup>43</sup> Roller 2009: 217. Also van der Blom 2010: 71.

<sup>44</sup> Habinek 2001: 46.

<sup>45</sup> The process is also implied in both Matthew Roller's model of exemplary discourse, and Kraus' proposal of 'thoughtful viewing', although Kraus suggests that the connection made is between the *exemplum* and their educational value, and not necessarily, moral messages. See further, Roller 2009: 217, and Kraus 2005: 197.

prescriptions of correct or detestable behaviour.<sup>46</sup> Though a more specific testimony of using examples as comparative standards, arrives in Tacitus' *Histories*:

... et Triaria licentiam modestum e proximo exemplum onerabat, Galeria imperatoris uxor non inmixta tristibus et pari probitate mater Vitellorum Sextilia antiqui moris, dixisse quin etiam ad primas filii sui epistulas ferebatur, non Germanicum a se sed Vitellium genitum. (*Histories* 2.64)

... the licentiousness of Triaria was more aggravating by proximity to the modest example of Galeria, the emperor's wife, who took no part in these honours and Sextia, the mother of the two Vitellii, equally upright and of the old ways, is said indeed to have even exclaimed, on receiving the first of her son's letters, that it was not Germanicus [that she bore] but Vitellius.<sup>47</sup>

As we see here, Tacitus suggests that Triaria's licentiousness was more onerous by proximity to the modest *exemplum* of the emperor's wife, Galeria and Sextia, the mother of the Vitellii. With the modesty of one and the integrity of the other serving as a comparative standard for evaluation, he judges Triaria's behaviour in relation to the character and actions of these women. Interestingly, Tacitus even mimetically punctuates the process of comparison with the very text itself. In placing *licentiam* and *modestiam* besides each other, and then supplying the ablative caveat '*e proximo*', he not only plays on word order to emphasize their appositional behaviours but also directs his reader to see stark difference between them at the same time.

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<sup>46</sup> For example, Cicero *De Oratore* 2.91; *De Officiis* 1.115-21. The prevalence of the *mos maiorum* and its importance in Roman society should not be underestimated. As van der Blom (2010: 12-16) has argued, it played a vital role in Roman self-understanding, self-presentation in the wider world, and impacted both cultural and political rhetoric, particularly in the late-republican period. See further, Bücher 2006; Holkeskamp 2004; 1987; 1996; Flaig 2004; Stemmler 2000; Oppermann 2000; Blösel 2000; and Lind 1972.

<sup>47</sup> Trans. Moore 1925.

In their capacity to transmit moral values and ethical information, moral-didactic *exempla* therefore had a wider normative effect. By constantly comparing and evaluating other's actions and against a wider fund of accepted societal norms and values, it reinforced the various approved and disapproved behaviours to the community at large.<sup>48</sup>

### Further functions of *Exempla*

So far, I have outlined several functions within the *exemplum's* broader model mode, yet alongside these, scholars have also identified that *exempla* were often utilised for more specific ends. Peachin for instance, argues that *exempla* were often exploited as legitimising tools for emperors. That during the imperial period, they served repeatedly to justify the imperial position.<sup>49</sup> Such a function, while highlighted as an imperial prerogative in Peachin's analysis, is however not so dissimilar from the ways in which *exempla* were utilised by earlier, Republican aristocrats. In the Republican period, those who were competing for political power and social distinction, can equally be seen to justify their respective claims to pre-eminence through a complex process of self-promotion and ancestral veneration.<sup>50</sup>

While in some contexts scholars argue that *exempla* might be utilised for legitimisation and justification of one's position, according to Parker and van der Blom, *exempla* might also be used to comfort and console. Parker, in his analysis of tales pertaining to the loyalty of slaves and wives, argues that *exempla* formed a strategy for elite males to deal with both their conscious and unconscious anxieties. They were a form of

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<sup>48</sup> Roller 2009: 217.

<sup>49</sup> Peachin 2007: 81.

<sup>50</sup> See also, Kraus 2005, Lowrie 2008, van der Blom 2010, and Langlands 2014.

psychological comfort for their audience, especially in times of crisis.<sup>51</sup> And van der Blom, in her analysis of the Ciceronian corpus, argues that in Cicero we see a similar use applied. She highlights how, in the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero uses example of other's grief in order to console his own.<sup>52</sup>

The functions of the *exemplum* then, within this broader model sense, are clearly many and they are varied, yet in many ways we see that there is overlap between them. The capacity to console, for instance, may equally be subsumed into the greater function of persuasion, since Cicero's attempts to console are often part of a greater attempt to persuade his audience to abandon excessive grief. In addition to persuasion, one might also emphasize the visible normalising effect these *exempla* would have had through their deployment, they effectively confirm or deny that behaviour x (in this case excessive grief) is positive or negative, that it is concordant with tradition, or divergent from socially accepted norms.

Ultimately, the frequent overlap between the senses and the various functions of *exempla* reminds us that heuristic separation into various taxonomies like rhetorical or moralistic, didactic or normative, persuasive or consolatory, is a scholarly divide.<sup>53</sup> No ancient source, as we have seen, dissects and categorises an *exemplum* in such a fashion. Though they did have other synonymous terminology at their disposal (*exemplar* or *specimen* for instance), they use the term *exempla* as we use 'examples' in the modern world interchangeably to describe examples, precedents, exemplary events, individuals and

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<sup>51</sup> Parker 2001: 153; 156; 159. We perhaps see something comparable in Pliny's Panegyric to the Emperor Trajan. While it is not exactly an *exempla* story, the patently prescriptive nature of Pliny's calls for 'imperial example', clearly reveal a greater senatorial anxiety. Moreover, his exemplary portrait of Trajan's virtues might in many ways be read as an attempt at pseudo-reassurance.

<sup>52</sup> van der Blom 2010: 67. See also Seneca who also uses *exempla* to console his friend Lucilius in his letters, or in his consolations – particularly the *Consolatio ad Helviam Matrem*. See Skidmore 1996: 26.

<sup>53</sup> As Lowrie 2008: 166, has suggested.

characters alike. Nevertheless, as Lowrie has suggested, such divisions are still useful for us to appreciate the fuller spectrum of meaning encapsulated by the term.<sup>54</sup> They allow us to consider more precisely the manner in which *exempla* feature in specific cases, as well as the wider discourse as a whole. It is important therefore, for us to understand that the moral-didactic *exemplum*, the persuasive ‘rhetorical’ *exemplum* and even the pragmatic template, not only co-exist, but have the potential to be deployed simultaneously within a monument or text. A prime illustration of this can be found in book five of Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, where he discusses the use of unequal comparisons with an argument. Here Quintilian neatly demonstrates how invoking moral-didactic *exempla* might also be deployed simultaneously for a persuasive, rhetorical effect:

ad exhortationem uero praecipue ualent inparia. admirabilior in femina quam in uiro uirtus. quare, si ad fortiter faciendum accendatur aliquis, non tantum adferent momenti Horatius et Torquatus quantum illa mulier cuius manu Pyrrhus est interfectus, et ad moriendum non tam Cato et Scipio quam Lucretia...

(*Institutio Oratoria* 5.11.19)

unequal comparisons are most useful in exhortation. Courage is more deserving of admiration in a woman than a man, and therefore, if a person is to be impelled towards a deed of valour, the examples of Horatius and Torquatus will not hold influence over him as that of the woman by whose hand Pyrrhus was killed, and to motivate a man to die, the deaths of Cato and Scipio will not be so efficient as that of Lucretia...<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Lowrie 2008: 167. Also, van der Blom 2010: 78.

<sup>55</sup> Trans. Russel 2001. While the passage is very interesting and pertinent to the aims of this these, I will reserve further discussion until later.



As a final note, we might also do well to remember Velleius Paterculus' statement, in his history of Rome, that *exempla* often escape their user's intentions and that authors have little control.<sup>56</sup> As he suggests, in poetic fashion, *exempla* often wander further than intended to affect those who engage with them in a variety of ways. *Exempla* are not only flexible and malleable, in the sense that they might be manipulated to suit the auctor's own objectives in deploying them, but they are also highly subjective in the sense that the way they are interpreted is subject to the audience's own experiences.<sup>57</sup>

### Evidence for the *Exemplum* in Wider Roman Culture

Having outlined how the Romans conceived of an *exemplum*, and considered its nature and its functions, in this section we shall now look at where *exempla* can be seen to feature in wider Roman culture. Here I shall survey the various cultural institutions in which *exempla* can be seen to participate in, and the kinds of monuments and media in which they might exist. I will discuss in its prominent position in Roman education systems, its ubiquity in Roman texts and monuments and the propensity to feature in other cultural practices as well.

### Literature and Education

We have already gained a sense of its pervasiveness in literature, through our discussion of its nature and functions. Yet we gain further insight into its prevalence when we consider

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<sup>56</sup> Velleius Paterculus 2.3.4: *non enim ibi consistunt exempla, unde coeperunt, sed quamlibet in tenuem recepta tramitem latissime euagandi sibi uiam faciunt, et ubi semel recto deerratum est, in praeceps pervenitur, nec quisquam sibi putat turpe, quod alii fuit fructuosum.* ('*Exempla* do not stop where they have begun, but in however small a path they have been received, make for themselves a way of wandering off very far, and once one has wandered from the right way, it goes headlong, and no one thinks foul for himself what was fruitful for another.') Trans. Shipley 1924.

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of the flexibility of *exempla* see Kraus 2005, and Langlands 2011.

the fuller spectrum of literary genera. As scholars have often observed, the practice of collating examples was prominent at Rome.<sup>58</sup> Suetonius' reports that Augustus used to collect examples for his personal and political staff, and more systematic collectors, gathered *exempla* intentionally for publication.<sup>59</sup> Though many of these works have not survived, we know through other sources, that there were several collections in antiquity: from Hyginus, Varro and Nepos, to Pomponius Rufus and most famously, Valerius Maximus.<sup>60</sup> Collections of *exempla* stories then, constituted a veritable sub-genre of Latin literature in their own right.<sup>61</sup> Yet these books of moral *exempla* are but a small part of the *exemplum's* prevalence in the wider literary corpus. As scholars have often highlighted, the tendency to promote *exempla* can be seen to feature in all manner of genres, from historiography, biography, epic and love poetry, to *epistulae* and consolations, political speeches and rhetorical set pieces.<sup>62</sup>

In many ways, the *exemplum's* visible ubiquity in Roman literature may be explained by its inherent flexibility and multifarious functionality. Yet most often it is its edifying capacity that finds consistent expression. The *exemplum*, in this regard, is intimately connected to the notion, reflected by Cicero and others, that history was life's teacher, and concordantly, annalists and historiographers, from Sempronius Asellio to Tacitus, and others, often colour their narratives with the greater purpose of establishing *exempla* for edification.<sup>63</sup> The notion is most clearly seen in Livy's programmatic statement:

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<sup>58</sup> Mayer 1991: 146. Also, Morgan 2007: 123.

<sup>59</sup> Suetonius *Augustus*, 89.2. For further discussion, see Mayer 1991: 146.

<sup>60</sup> Litchfield 1914: 62-3. The prevalence of these collections in the (early) imperial period is discussed in Kraus 2005.

<sup>61</sup> For a sense of their popularity see Appian *Civil Wars* 4.16. Acknowledged by Parker 2001: 170.

<sup>62</sup> See the respective surveys of Chaplin 2000: 15-29, or Skidmore 1996:13-16. Its prevalence throughout the multitude of literary genres has also been acknowledged more recently by van der Blom 2010: 15.

<sup>63</sup> See Cicero *De Oratore* 2.36: *historia magistra vitae*. ('History is the teacher of life.') Sempronius Asellio is often credited with recording the moralistic purpose of history first. See Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 5.18.9. For a discussion see Skidmore 1996: 14. And also, Walsh 1961:29.

hoc illud est praecipue in cognition rerum salubre ac frugiferum. omnis te  
exempli documenta in inlustri posita monument intueri, inde tibi tuaeque Rei  
Publicae quod imitere, capias inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu, quod uites.

(Livy *ab Urbe Condita Praefatio* 10)

There is something particularly beneficial and profitable in learning of deeds that  
have passed – to behold the lessons placed before you, through the clarity of  
examples, as a monument. From these you may take for yourself or your country  
what you wish to imitate, and from others – detestable from beginning to end –  
what you wish to avoid.<sup>64</sup>

The ubiquity of *exempla* within literature then, may be partially explained by its connection  
to the notion of history's moral value.<sup>65</sup> Yet equally, its persistence was somewhat aided by  
the Roman education systems that, by their nature, consistently reinforced notions of its  
significance and potential.

As scholars have highlighted, the *exemplum* was a central mechanism within Roman  
education, especially though not exclusively amongst the elite. Fundamentally, a young  
Roman's education focused on two central areas of concern. First there was the  
development of practical skills required for future life (e.g. literacy, oratory, rhetoric and  
knowledge of the laws) and second, the acquisition of conscience: that is, the inculcation of  
morals and values, reliable references and a particular way of life.<sup>66</sup> Quintilian's  
prescriptions for the ideal education for instance, reflect this dichotomy:

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<sup>64</sup> Trans. Foster 1919. See also 45.40.6; 45.41.10; 5.51.8. Tacitus *Annals* 3.55. 3.65; 4.33; 15.57; *Histories* 2.13.47; 3.51.67; 4.67 and Cicero *De Officiis* 3.47.

<sup>65</sup> See further, Kraus 2005: 181-200, and Chaplin 2000.

<sup>66</sup> See Marrou 1956: 234. I would like to note here that the order in which I have listed these two facets are not reflective of a hierarchy. If anything, there is more emphasis placed on the second area than the first. Of course, these things are highly subjective and most likely varied greatly dependent upon individual family circumstance.

in primis, ut tenerae mentes tracturaeque altius, ... non modo quae diserta sed vel magis quae honesta sunt, discant. (*Institutio Oratoria* 1.8.4)

Above all, uninformed minds which are liable to be all the more deeply impressed upon, ... must learn not only what is eloquent but also, more importantly, what is morally upright.

The premium placed here, as elsewhere, on the acquisition of conscience, is often considered an elite concern. Yet while we might consider the rudiments of education amongst the lower classes to focus more intently on the development of practical skills, there is evidence to suggest that acquiring a sense of morality was a concern shared across the social spectrum. Horace for instance, reflecting upon his own childhood, provides a prime example. Although well educated, as the son of a freedman, his is not one which we would necessarily consider 'elite':

...liberius si dixero quid, si forte iocosius, hoc mihi iuris cum uenia dabis: insuevit pater optimus hoc me, ut fugerem exemplis uitiorum quaeque notando. cum me hortaretur, parce frugaliter atque uiuerem uti contentus et quod mi ipse parasset: 'nonne uides, Albi ut male uiuat filius utque Barrus inops? magnum documentum, ne patriam rem perdere quis velit. (Horace *Sermones* 1.410-415)

...if I might say something too freely, if I jest too strongly, then permit me this indulgence, for my superlative father taught me this way, by noting the examples of other's faults, so that I might avoid them. When he would encourage me to live thriftily, frugality and content with that which he had provided for me [he would say] don't you see, how badly the son of Albinus lives, or that wretched Barrus? Both are a great testimony to prevent those who would want to squander their patrimony.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Trans. Barsby 2015. See also *Sermones* 1.6.65-92. See Skidmore 1996: 19, for a discussion.

As Horace neatly demonstrates here, *exempla* in this educational sphere, comprises two important aspects. Firstly, they feature as the means by which to transmit information, providing the source material for consideration, and secondly, the transmitters themselves –for example parents, guardians, elders, teachers and ancestors – constituted a powerful *exemplum* as well. In this next section I shall discuss both of these aspects further, to illuminate how in both the domestic sphere and more formal school like environments, the Romans were frequently confronted by *exempla* and indoctrinated to see the lessons they convey.

Traditionally, a young Roman’s education would be provided by the family, and parents, as we see with Horace, would educate their children by invoking contemporary and historical figures to convey some moral message.<sup>68</sup> An extract from Terence’s *Adelphoe*, written in the second century B.C.E., provides a prime, though fictional, example of this process:

*Demea*: ‘Syre, praeceptorum plenust istorum ille.’

(“Syrus, he’s full of those wonderful maxims, my boy is.”)

*Syrus*: ‘phy! domi habuit unde disceret.’

(“No wonder, he was schooled by those at home.”)

*Demea*: ‘fit sedulo, nil praetermitto, consuefacio. denique inspicere tamquam in speculum in vitas omnium iubeo atque ex aliis sumere exemplum sibi. “hoc facito.”’

(‘One does one’s best. I never turn a blind eye. I teach him good habits.

Above all I tell him to look into the lives of others as if into a mirror and to take from them an example for himself. “Do this,” I say.’)<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Joyal, McDougal and Yardley 2009: 178. See also, Mayer 1991: 144, or Marrou 1956: 232.

<sup>69</sup> Terence *Adelphoe* 414-418. See Kornhardt 1936: 27 or more recently, Skidmore 1996: 19.

As we can see here, Terence neatly conveys that even the 'lowly farmer' Demea strove to instil into his children the notion of morality. As he has the character Demea outline himself, his primary pedagogic strategy revolved around the invocation of illustrative models of others in society.

The proclivity to adopt this strategy, however, goes beyond the domestic sphere. In more formal 'school-like' environments, we see a similar system of edification by exposure to *exempla* maintained, as part of the teacher's methodology. As sources such as Quintilian suggest, pupils were educated initially by reading moralistic literature like fables, maxims and mythological stories, and then through epic poetry and historiography. Indeed, the centrality of exemplary didacticism, at all stages of the educational cursus, is perhaps reflected in Quintilian's prescription that even in preliminary exercises, children should be exposed to some form of moralising tenet:

... ii quoque versus qui ad imitationem scribendi proponuntur non otiosas velim sententias habeant, sed honestum aliquid monentis. prosequitur haec memoria in senectutem et inpressa animo rudi usque ad mores proficiet. etiam dicta clarorum virorum et electos ex poetis maxime (namque eorum cognitio parvis gratior est) locos ediscere inter lusum licet. (*Institutio Oratoria* 1.1.35-6)

... even the lines set for copying should not be meaningless sentences, but should convey some moral lesson. The memory of such things stays with us till we are old, and the impression thus made on the unformed mind will be good for the character also. The child may also be allowed to learn, as a game, the sayings of famous men and especially selected passages from the poets (which children particularly like to know).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> See further, Skidmore 1996: 22.

In both the home and school environments then, evidence suggests, the proffering of *exempla* formed a principal pedagogic strategy for the transmission of information. From moral lessons to social values or even more practical skills, edification by observation and evaluation was the predominant approach.<sup>71</sup> Yet evidence suggests that this system of exposure, though undoubtedly preeminent, is only one of several strategies in which *exempla* were exploited for edifying means. In Quintilian, again, we see that formal Roman schooling comprised of exercises that not only encouraged students to observe *exempla*, but to actively generate or manipulate them for a variety of formative ends. Prime examples can be seen in the *declamationes* – the practice of delivering rhetorical pieces on a chosen theme – where students of rhetoric employed stock characters from history and myth as *exempla* for persuasive or aesthetic effect.<sup>72</sup> Equally, we see this also in the precursory *progymnasmata* – preliminary exercises on composition – where, students were expected to use traditional stories and characters as the raw material from which to fashion new fictional tales.<sup>73</sup> As Webb, and others have highlighted, such exercises effectively reinforced pervading social values used for praise and blame, persuasion and dissuasion, and in fact, introduced the student to the art of censure itself.<sup>74</sup> I would argue further that alongside this, they simultaneously perpetuated the value of *exempla*, both as an educative tool and a rhetorical device for oratorical success.

The *exemplum* then, can be firstly seen to feature in the educational sphere in its strategies adopted for edification. Yet as I have suggested above, pervading ideologies meant that in many ways, the transmitters of these *exempla*, could function in an exemplary

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<sup>71</sup> See also St. Augustine *Letters* 91.4; Pliny *Letters* 8.14.

<sup>72</sup> See for example, *Declamationes Maior* 3.11. For a further discussion of Roman declamation see Bonner 1949; 1977; Webb 2001, or Gunderson 2003.

<sup>73</sup> Webb 2001: 289.

<sup>74</sup> Webb 2001: 289.

capacity themselves. Throughout the Roman period, the notion pervaded that certain figures in society ought to lead by example. Parents, first and foremost, were considered to constitute a powerful *domesticum exemplum*, not only in a practical sense – how to be a mother, how to be a father, how to be a senator or a wife, but in their general behaviour – how to be virtuous, how to be chaste. In Roman ideology, the most potent *domestic exemplum* was the father.<sup>75</sup> Yet several sources place equal stock on the exemplary potential of other familial and extra-familial figures to transmit moral values. Two sources here will provide testimony. Firstly, we see a rather nostalgic reference to the ‘traditional’ form of education, in the correspondence of Pliny the Younger. In a letter to Titus Aristo, Pliny not only reaffirms the father’s primacy, but highlights how other, extra-familial elders might assume the exemplary role:

erat autem antiquitus institutum, ut a maioribus natu non auribus modo uerum etiam oculis disceremus, quae facienda mox ipsi ac per uices quasdam tradenda minoribus haberemus ... suos cuique parens pro magistro, aut cui parens non erat maximus quisque et uetstissimus pro parente ... quod fidissimum percipiendi genus exemplis docebantur. (*Letters* 8.14.4-7)

There was an ancient institution whereby we would learn from our elders by watching their ways, or listening to their advice, and having thus acquired the principles on which to act ourselves, we would hand them on in turn to our young ones ... Thus everyone had a teacher in his own father, or, if he was fatherless, in some older man of distinction who took the father’s place ... men learnt by examples, the most trustworthy kind of instruction.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Mayer 1991: 144. For the primacy of the father see Plutarch *Cato Maior* 20; *Aemilius Paulus* 6.9; Nepos *Atticus* 1.2; Suetonius *Augustus* 64.3; Tacitus *Dialogus* 28.

<sup>76</sup> Trans. Radice 1969.



In our second source, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, we see again how the ideology surrounding the position of the parent remained prominent:

in parentibus vero quam plurimum esse eruditionis optaverim, nec de patribus tantum loquor. nam Gracchorum eloquentiae multum contulisse accepimus Corneliam matrem, cuius doctissimus sermo in posteros quoque est epistolis traditus: et Laelia C. filia reddidisse in loquendo paternam elegantiam dicitur, et Hortensiae Q. filiae oratio apud Triumviros habita legitur non tantum in sexus honorem. nec tamen ii, quibus discere ipsis non contigit, minorem curam docendi liberos habeant; sed sint propter hoc ipsum ad cetera magis diligentes. (*Institutio Oratoria* 1.1.6-7)

With regard to parents, I should like to see them as highly educated as possible, and I do not restrict this remark to fathers alone. We are told that the eloquence of the Gracchi owed much to their mother Cornelia, whose letters even to-day testify to the cultivation of her style. Laelia, the daughter of Gaius Laelius, is said to have reproduced the elegance of her father's language in her own speech, while the oration delivered before the triumvirs by Hortensia, the daughter of Quintus Hortensius, is still read and not merely as a compliment to her sex. And even those who have not had the fortune to receive a good education should not for that reason devote less care to their son's education; but should on the contrary show all the greater diligence in other matters where they can be of service to their children.<sup>77</sup>

Pliny and Quintilian then, while they attest to the persistence of traditional ideology, they equally augment the spectrum of characters that have exemplary potential. Later in Quintilian's treatise, we also hear how one's teacher, like the parent or an elder, also has

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<sup>77</sup> While it is true that Cornelia was considered an exemplary *mater*, particularly for her close involvement in Gaius and Tiberius' education, Quintilian is perhaps more in the minority here for rejecting the father's primacy in this regard.

the capacity to constitute an *exemplum*. As Sampley has recently observed, Quintilian conceived of the relationship between a child and the teacher as an extension of, or at least analogous to, that which is established in the domestic sphere.<sup>78</sup> As a figure that acts *in loco parentis*, he expects his teacher to be an exemplary model: not only for his craft, but more importantly for correct, moral behaviour.<sup>79</sup>

Clearly, while ideological tenets expect that parents will fulfil an exemplary role, there is equally a striking focus on all transmitters of information in their capacity to constitute effective *exempla*.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, we see a manifestation of this concept in two cultural institutions: the *tirocinium fori*, and the *contubernium*. While they are admittedly located somewhat outside of the conventional educational sphere, they are still relevant in this regard. As the literary sources that describe these suggest, both institutions relied heavily on the installation of *exempla* for edification, perceiving the experienced elder to act as a kind of ‘role model’ for the younger mentee.<sup>81</sup> A prime example can be seen in Tacitus’ account of the *tirocinium fori*:

apud maiores nostros iuvenis ille qui foro et eloquentiae parabatur, imbutus iam domestica disciplina, refertus honestis studiis, deducebatur a patre vel a propinquis ad eum oratorem qui principem in civitate locum obtinebat. Hunc sectari, hunc prosequi, huius omnibus dictionibus interesse sive in iudiciis sive in contionibus adsuescebat, ita ut altercationes quoque exciperet et iurgiis interesset, utque sic dixerim, pugnare in proelio disceret. magnus ex hoc usus, multum constantiae, plurimum iudicii iuvenibus statim contingebat, in media luce studentibus atque inter ipsa discrimina, ubi nemo impune stulte aliquid aut

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<sup>78</sup> Sampley 2016: 176.

<sup>79</sup> Sampley 2016: 176. See Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 2.1-8.

<sup>80</sup> We might consider here Cicero’s proclamation in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 10: *domestic exemplis abundamus*, as relevant in this regard.

<sup>81</sup> cf. Marrou 1956: 241, who sees these institutions as purely pragmatic strategies for skill acquisition, and unrelated to exemplary discourse.

contrarie dicit quo minus et iudex respuat et adversarius exprobrat, ipsi denique advocati aspernentur. (*Dialogus* 34.1-2.)

In the good old days, the young man who was destined for the oratory of the bar, after receiving the rudiments of a sound training at home, and storing his mind with liberal culture, was taken by his father, or his relations, and placed under the care of some orator who held a leading position at Rome. The youth had to get the habit of following his patron about, of escorting him in public, of supporting him at all his appearances as a speaker, whether in the law courts or on the platform, hearing also his word-combats at first hand, standing by him in his duellings, and learning, as it were, to fight in the fighting-line. It was a method that secured at once for the young students a considerable amount of experience, great self-possession, and a goodly store of sound judgement: for they carried on their studies in the light of open day, and amid the very shock of battle, under conditions in which any stupid or ill-advised statement brings prompt retribution in the shape of the judge's disapproval, taunting criticism from your opponent—yes, and from your own supporters expressions of dissatisfaction.<sup>82</sup>

### Other Cultural Practices

So far, we have seen how *exempla* feature in both literature and education, yet the *exemplum* is a figure that is central within several of Rome's cultural institutions and social practices beyond these two spheres alone. Aristocratic funerals, for instance, are often cited as participating in exemplary discourse, particularly for their tendency to model exemplary conduct.<sup>83</sup> As van der Poel has highlighted, it was customary during funeral ceremonies of prominent families that one of its members, typically a son, delivered a speech to honour

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82 Trans. Ogilive 1989. For the *tirocinium fori* see also: Plutarch *Cato Maior* 3.4; Cicero *De Officiis* 2.13-46; Pliny *Letters* 6.11; 8.23; 8.14.4-6; and Seneca *Epistulae ad Lucilium* 6.5. A further reference may also be seen in the claims of Cicero's interlocutor Crassus, in the *De Oratore* 1.154: 'My school was the forum, my master's experience, the laws and institutions of Rome and the customs of our ancestors.'

<sup>83</sup> Chaplin 2000: 14; Flower 1996: 11.

the virtues and accomplishments of the deceased.<sup>84</sup> The *laudatio funebris*, as it was known, essentially promoted the idea of the dead's exemplary status.<sup>85</sup>

Importantly however, aristocratic funerals also honoured ancestors and contextualised the deceased's achievements against a backdrop of wider familial accomplishments. The vehicle for veneration, alongside the *laudatio*, was the *imago*: the likeness of an individual cast in wax while they were still living, that was paraded in the funeral procession. As Flower argues, for all intents and purposes these wax *imagines* served a socio-political function.<sup>86</sup> In both the home that they were displayed, and the funeral where they were paraded, their presence was designed to promote the ancestral pedigree of individual families: celebrating and memorialising those who achieved political office.<sup>87</sup> Yet in their capacity to simultaneously commemorate individual lives, accomplishments, and qualities more generally, the *imagines* might equally serve as purveyors of *exempla* themselves.<sup>88</sup> As we have seen in our earlier discussion, they not only stood as physical reminders to the residents, or the attendees at a funeral, of the standards set by previous generations and had a powerful inspirational affect.<sup>89</sup> As Sallust suggests, they encouraged emulation and motivated those who looked upon them to successfully replicate if not surpass, the accomplishments that they achieved.

Like literature and other conduits for exemplary production, public funerals were a stage for the creation of *exempla* for a new generation, and the reaffirmation of the

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<sup>84</sup> van der Poel 2009: 334. See Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 3.7.2; Gellius *Attic Nights* 13.20.17; Seneca *Dialogues* 6.15.3; Tacitus *Annals* 3.5.1 and Polybius *Histories* 6.53.4.

<sup>85</sup> Or simply *laudatio*. See Cicero *Pro Milone* 33. Livy 27.27.13; Tacitus *Annals* 13.3.1.

<sup>86</sup> Flower 1996: 10.

<sup>87</sup> Flower 1996: 2; 10.

<sup>88</sup> Chaplin 2000: 14. For a recent analysis of how women in particular might engage with the *imagines* see Webb 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Chaplin 2000: 14. Also, Flower 1996: 2; 10. See Polybius *Histories* 6.53.4; Sallust *Bellum Jugurthae* 85.23; Ps. Quintilian *Declamationes Minores* 388.35.

standards and, or models, set by familial ancestry. The cumulative effect of the *laudatio* and processual *imagines*, can be felt quite clearly in Polybius's account:

Whenever one of their illustrious men dies, in the course of his funeral, the body with all its paraphernalia is carried into the forum to the Rostra, as a raised platform ... Then with all the people standing round, his son, if he has left one of full age and he is there, or, failing him, one of his relations, mounts the Rostra and delivers a speech concerning the virtues of the deceased, and the successful exploits performed by him in his lifetime. By these means the people are reminded of what has been done, and made to see it with their own eye ... After the burial ... they place the likeness of the deceased in the most conspicuous spot in his house ... and when any illustrious member of the family dies, they carry these masks to the funeral, putting them on men whom they thought as like the originals as possible in height and other personal peculiarities. And these substitutes assume clothes according to the rank of the person represented: if he was a consul or praetor, a toga with purple stripes; if a censor, whole purple if he had also celebrated a triumph or performed any exploit of that kind, a toga embroidered with gold ... There could not easily be a more inspiring spectacle than this for a young man of noble ambitions and virtuous aspirations. For can we conceive any one to be unmoved at the sight of all the likenesses collected together of the men who have earned glory, all as it were living and breathing? Or what could be a more glorious spectacle? (*Histories* 6.53.4)<sup>90</sup>

Aristocratic funerals therefore, participated in the production and reaffirmation of *exempla*, through its inclusion of two inherently commemorative modalities. Yet both the *laudatio funebris* and the *imago*, are but a fragment of a wider collective fund of media and monument forms that have the capacity to recall the lives and deeds that constitute

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90 Trans. Waterfield 2010. C.f. Sallust *Bellum Jugurthae* 4.5-6: *sed memoria rerum gestarum eam flammam egregiis viris in pectore crescere neque prius sedari, quam virtus eorum famam atque gloriam adaequaverit.* ('The memory of great deeds kindles in the hearts of noble men this flame that cannot be quelled until they have equalled the fame and glory of their forefathers by their own prowess.') Trans. Ramsey 2013.

*exempla*. The ephemeral *laudatio*, for instance, finds a more permanent equivalent in the funerary epitaph, or equally, other commemorative epigraphy.<sup>91</sup> And the *imagines* are merely one of many forms of representation that commemorate individuals and their lives. As Bell has highlighted, busts, statues, painted portraits and even genealogical maps (*stemmata*), fulfilled a similar function within households.<sup>92</sup> Not only did they impress upon clients and friends the elite patron's authority through noble ancestry, but they engaged in the production of further *exempla* by impressing upon younger members of the household the need to realise family greatness.<sup>93</sup>

### Monuments and Other Media

Beyond the *domus* and the funerary setting, we find that other forms of monument equally participated in the production of *exempla* in their own way. From the honorific statuary that stood, with or without their informative *elogia*, in public spaces to promote the exemplary deeds of the great and the good, to the various columns, arches and other public works that commemorated famous actors and events, they were all media with which *exemplary* individuals, peoples and wider events could be immortalised and commemorated.<sup>94</sup>

However, while overtly commemorative forms like these provide a conventional source for expression, other forms of monument might equally engage. Testimony from Cicero and Plutarch, for instance, suggests that the *domus* of individuals stood as an inspirational monument to famous exemplars.<sup>95</sup> And scholars, in their surveys, frequently

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<sup>91</sup> Examples of these can be seen in the tombs of Murdia and Turia, or in Augustus' *Res Gestae*, that donned the walls of buildings within major civic centres across the empire, and promoted the idea of Augustus as an *exemplum par excellence*. *Laudationes* themselves could be more permanent. Several sources suggest that they were sometimes published.

<sup>92</sup> Bell 2008: 9.

<sup>93</sup> Bell 2008: 10. See also, Stewart 2003: 256-7.

<sup>94</sup> A prime example can be seen in the statues of the *summi uiri*, housed in Augustus' forum.

<sup>95</sup> See for example, Plutarch *Cato Maior* 2.

identified how jewellery, *cognomina*, coinage and medallions also function in a similar capacity.<sup>96</sup> In many ways, even bodily afflictions, or battle wounds and scars, can act as a medium for expression of exemplary status.<sup>97</sup> Essentially, anything that recall the deeds of individuals or events, can act as a commemorative monument. As Varro suggests, in his treatise on the Latin language, it is the things that are written (*scripta*) and made (*facta*) to preserve their memory (*memoria*), that constitute a monument (*monimenta*).<sup>98</sup> While we might see a discernible proclivity to more frequently adopt certain forms, it does not diminish the potential for other, less conventional types, to exist and be exploited.<sup>99</sup>

## Conclusion

From this survey it seems that the Roman's encountered *exempla* in almost every aspect of their everyday lives. From the monuments that lined the city's entrances and exits, to the honorific statues that filled the most frequented areas; in political speeches, performed in the courts and forum, and in the funerals and triumphs that paraded in the streets; in pedagogical strategies, and in its literary production; in both the private *domus* and the public *forum*, *exempla* feature prominently throughout the physical, intellectual, and socio-political landscapes, the portrait that emerges is one of repeated confrontation through commemorative monuments and other media, and that they were indoctrinated to see the potential in others to convey lessons, values and other information, at all times.

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<sup>96</sup> See van der Blom 2010: 15; Bell 2008: 14; Roller 2004: 19; Meadows and Williams 2001. While I would like to acknowledge that coinage in normal circulation did have the capacity to promulgate exemplary characters, in my view perhaps too much stock is placed on their potential potency.

<sup>97</sup> Bell 2008: 10; Roller 2004: 5; Chaplin 2000: 28; Flower 1996: 21. As illustrated by the speech of Marius in Sallust's *Bellum Jugurthae* 85.29-30. Also Plutarch *Marius* 9.2; Livy 45.39.17.

<sup>98</sup> Varro *De Lingua Latina* 6.49: *sic monimenta quae in sepulcris, et ideo secundum uiam, quo praetereuntis admoneant et se fuisse et illos esse mortalis. ab eo cetera quae scripta ac facta memoriae causa monimenta dicta*. Bell 2004: 2, suggests that even more temporary events, like spectacles can participate in exemplary production in their capacity to function as vehicles for commemoration. See also, Gleason 1999: 69-70.

<sup>99</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of the varieties of monument involved in *memoria* see Walter 2004; Holscher 2001; or Holkeskamp 1996: 302-8.

## Chapter 3. Scholarship and Theory

Having outlined the purpose and prevalence of the *exemplum* in Roman thought and culture, we will now turn our attention to modern scholarship and the various theoretical models that scholars have proposed. As I have suggested earlier, the bibliography for this topic is extensive, however there are a number of notable works that have made a significant contribution to our understanding of *exempla* and its application in the Roman world. While the list is not exhaustive, in this chapter we will review them here. We will survey the scholarly landscape up until now.

### Early Studies

One of the earliest modern scholars to discuss the *exemplum* in Roman thought and culture was Karl Alewell. In his 1913 dissertation, 'Über das Rhetorische Paradeigma Theorie', Alewell sought to provide an extensive study on the functions of examples within rhetorical theory, presenting all mentions from antiquity until his present day. As Bennett Price has commented however, despite attempting to fulfil this mammoth task, Alewell pays unequal attention to his selected authors and his selection of primary sources is incomplete. He awards Aristotle and Anaximenes individual attention but groups all others together (including *Cicero, the Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *Quintilian*), and treats them almost as one.<sup>100</sup>

While Alewell focused on the *exemplum's* rhetorical functions, Wheatland-Litchfield (1914) looked at its moral dimensions. Less concerned with examining its use in rhetorical theory, in his 1914 paper, 'National *Exempla Virtutis* in Roman Literature', Wheatland-

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<sup>100</sup> Price 1975: 5-6.



Litchfield focuses on its moralistic purpose and social repercussions. He argues that it functions as a stimulus for national patriotism and inculcated certain moral values. In his analysis, he traced the development of a possible canon or virtues, and explored how these changed over time.<sup>101</sup>

Building on work of both these earlier scholars, Hildegard Kornhardt attempted to provide a more comprehensive view.<sup>102</sup> In her 1936 dissertation, '*Exemplum: Eine bedeutungsgeschichtliche Studie*', she systematically dissects the use of examples in both Greek and Roman cultures to understand its various forms. Not only does she discuss its many rhetorical functions, but she acknowledges its connection to moralising discourse, its capacity to function as a more general model for imitation, and its prevalence in wider culture, beyond literature alone.

While Kornhardt's study remains relevant today, others have augmented our understanding by providing similarly broad assessments. Bennett J. Price's 1975 dissertation, '*Paradeigma and Exemplum in Ancient Rhetorical Theory*' further elucidated the various Greek and Roman concepts for an English-speaking audience. He systematically examines the concepts expounded in a range of ancient authors, to see how they fit into the matrix of other rhetorical devices. Sinclair Bell and Lyse Hansen (2008) have examined a number of facets of exemplarity in Roman culture in his work, '*Role Models in the Roman World: Identity and Assimilation*'. Seeking to explore a wider evidentiary base, and a more diverse approach, they aimed to seek out the *exemplum* across a broad range of genres,

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<sup>101</sup> Litchfield also argued that the use of the term *exemplum* in a technical sense began with Seneca, and that only after him did it become common in the Latin vernacular. However, as we can see from the previous chapter, this is not necessarily true.

<sup>102</sup> Around this time, we also have Canter 1933, who examined the use of mythological paradigms (*exempla / paradeigmata*) in Greek and Latin poetry. However, while he identified and categorised over a thousand citations of mythological *exempla* from across a variety of poetic genres, with a brief comment on each type, his work provides little analysis on the citations themselves, it provides more of a reference guide.

contexts and periods, as well as probe the ‘catholicity’ of its understanding in Roman culture, in a collection of essays. Olive Sayce (2008) has looked at the use of *exempla* as a means of comparison from Homer to Petrarch examining the significance, function and placing of comparisons and identifications with an exemplary figure in the Western European vernacular, and David Urban’s 2011 study similarly traced the use of *exempla* in this rhetorical form, though he limits his remit to the works of Roman authors from Cicero to Pliny the Younger. While Urban focuses on their use particularly as a means of constructing an argument, he also explores how they comprise a moral-ethical dimension.<sup>103</sup>

The moralistic aspects of *exempla* have been explored by many scholars. Willcock (1964) and Goldhill (1994) for instance, have looked at mythological *exempla* in classical literature, and Alexander Gelley (1995) has examined the ‘rhetoric of exemplarity’ in the classical and Christian traditions. Through a collection of twelve essays, he and his contributors probe the ethical and philosophical dimensions of examples in the western world, from the bible onwards. Alongside these contributions to the debate, Rebecca Langlands (2000; 2006; 2011; 2018) has explored this ethical dimension in a number of works (discussed further below), as has Teresa Morgan (2007). In Morgan’s work entitled ‘Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire’ she dedicates an entire chapter exclusively to *exempla*, examining its proliferation in literature and education; its origins in Greek culture; and its utility in disseminating certain social and ethical values.

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<sup>103</sup> See also, Lumpe 1966: 1229-1257.

## Individual Authors and their Use of Examples

While some have provided more general studies of the *exemplum* and its functions, others have focused upon its use with specific authors and, or their works. Maskalov (1984); Bloomer (1992); Skidmore (1996); Wardle (1997) and once again, Langlands (2000; 2006; 2011) for example, have looked at Valerius Maximus's *Dicta et Facta Memorabilia*, and Nordh (1954) has looked at Martial. Davis (1980), Watson (1983), Davisson (1984; 1993), Johnson (1997), Hinds (1999), and Petersen (2005) have examined Ovid's works, and Horsfall has looked at Virgil.<sup>104</sup> Morrison (2007) has looked at Horace; and Gaisser (1977); Dunn (1985); Hallett (1973) Gazich (2004); Lowrie (2008; 2009) and Thayer (2015) have studied Propertius.<sup>105</sup> Chaplin (2000) and Feldher (1998) have looked at Livy, and Alston (2008) has looked at Tacitus.<sup>106</sup> Gazich (2003) Méthy (2003; 2008); Gowing (2005); Bradley (2010), and Henderson (2002; 2011) have explored the works of Pliny the Younger, and Mayer (1991: 2008); Roller (2004; 2007; 2015) and Gloyn (2017) have looked at Seneca.<sup>107</sup> Many have looked at Cicero, from Schönberger (1911; 1914), Rambaud (1953) and Blincoe (1941) to D'Arms (1972); Gaillard (1978); David (1980), and more recently, van der Blom (2010), and there is much on Christian authors.<sup>108</sup> Not only do these works provide a valuable contribution to our understanding of how each author uses *exempla*, but they also shed valuable information on the broader discourse of exemplarity in contextualising their

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<sup>104</sup> For Virgil see also, Paraskeviotis 2014.

<sup>105</sup> We might also include here Daniella Dueck who examines historical figures in Strabo's *Geographica*. See Dueck 2000: 176-196, and also, Seo 2013, who has surveyed the use of *exempla* more generally in Roman poetry.

<sup>106</sup> Alston 2008, argues that Tacitus' operates within the traditions of Roman historiography; that his history has a moral and didactic purpose in using his history to teach men to distinguish good from bad behaviour, using characters within his narrative as *exempla*.

<sup>107</sup> See also, Carlon 2009, and Shelton 2012. Henderson 2007, has also looked at Juvenal.

<sup>108</sup> Burns 2003, has looked at St. Augustine; Skemp 2011, has examined St. Jerome; Sampley 2016, contextualises St. Pauls' work within the wider discourse of Roman culture, and Goldfarb 2005, looks at Biblical figures as moral *exempla*; c.f. Carlson 1948. Inglebert 1994, has surveyed Roman heroes and Christian martyrs; c.f. Brown 1983.

individual respective works within the wider framework of exemplarity in Roman culture. Maskalov (1984) and Skidmore (1966) for instance, have highlighted the ubiquity of the *exempla* in Roman society, and Jane Chaplin (2000) has revealed the propensity for literature beyond the collections of *exempla* stories to promote *exempla* within their works. Henriette van der Blom, in her 2010 monograph entitled, 'Cicero's Role Models: The Political Strategy of a Newcomer', explores how Cicero used historical and personal *exempla* to develop his public persona and political influence. She highlights not only the importance of *exempla* to Cicero, in servicing his political ambitions, but also the importance of *exempla* in wider culture with her in-depth examination of the nature and functions of historical examples, and her discussion of the *mos maiorum* and its importance in shaping contemporary political discourse.<sup>109</sup> The position of the *mos maiorum* and its connection to the Roman exemplary tradition is a topic that has also been much discussed in modern scholarship itself. While they often adopt a historicist approach, scholars like Bücher (2006); Walter (2004); Purcell (2003); Hölscher (2001) Linke and Stemmler (2000); Bettini (2000); Blösel (2000) and Hölkeskamp (1996; 2003; 2004; 2010) have not only highlighted its importance as a cultural and political reference point, but also how it participated in exemplary discourse as a further source from which *exempla* might be drawn.<sup>110</sup> To return to studies on individual authors, finally, the various works on Pliny the Younger, and Cicero produced by Shelton, Carlon, Henderson, Langlands, and others have illuminated how Roman authors might construct *exempla* to reflect well upon themselves. Though they tend

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<sup>109</sup> In other works, van der Blom has also explored how historical *exempla* feature as tools of praise and blame in Ciceronian Oratory, and more recently, how *exempla* played a role in Roman educational culture. See van der Blom 2011; 2020.

<sup>110</sup> See also Wallace-Hadrill 2008, and Bleicken 1975. Hölkeskamp 1996; 2003; 2004; 2010, is particularly relevant for the information he provides about the broader picture of exemplary discourse. Hölkeskamp offers an overview of exemplarity as a distinctive historical consciousness but has also illuminated and reinforced the importance of the *mos maiorum*, and the monuments and media that participates in exemplary discourse.

not to draw any broader conclusions on the wider discourse within their various individual studies, they have shown that individual authors might create a positive portrait for themselves by association with other exemplary individuals, particularly their friends and wives.<sup>111</sup>

### Social and Political Dimensions of Exemplary Discourse

While the list above is not exhaustive, it clearly shows that some scholars have explored how the *exempla* might be used by Latin authors to fulfil certain socio-political objectives. In fact, van der Blom's monograph on Cicero is in many ways dedicated to the personal and political implications of *exempla* within his works, and in Rebecca Langlands' most recent work she devotes an entire chapter to the social and political implications of exemplary discourse explicitly herself.<sup>112</sup> As we can see, Langlands is a key contributor to the topic, producing an array of varying works. While she focuses predominantly upon exploring the conventional moral and rhetorical dimensions in her works on gender and ethics in Valerius Maximus, Cicero, Pliny, Seneca and Suetonius, in her most recent book, *Exemplary Ethics in Ancient Rome*, she offers a particularly refreshing and comprehensive approach.<sup>113</sup> Within this study, Langlands explores how and what the Romans learnt from moral *exempla*, from core values like courage and loyalty, to controversies and ethical debates. Yet she also sheds important light upon the discourse more broadly in her consideration of life stages and

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<sup>111</sup> On the topic of women and wives in Roman literature, once more the bibliography is replete. However, while many have looked at individual case studies, or the presentation of women across various media and monument forms, only a few have explored the topic of how women are used as *exempla* more broadly, and even less, how the exemplification of contemporaries might highlight further aspects to the discourse of exemplarity as a whole in Roman culture. While the list is not exhaustive, some useful works on the subject, particularly with regards to how we might 'read' the presence and presentation of Roman woman include Richlin 2014, Centlivres Challet 2013, Lowrie 2006; 2007, Milnor 2005, James 2003, Dixon 2001, Holt-Parker 1997, Pomeroy 1994, Wyke 1987; 2002, and Hallet 1973, to name a few.

<sup>112</sup> See Langlands 2018.

<sup>113</sup> See Langlands 2000; 2002; 2006; 2011; 2014, respectively.

social status, highlighting how personal circumstances might affect the ways that individuals might engage. According to Langlands, the Romans were cognisant that there was a certain amount of situational variability, both in terms of how the actions were evaluated and categorised along the ethical spectrum, and how *exempla* might apply to their own lives. She argues that we should be sensitive to the context in which they are deployed, as well as the applicability for the reader alongside. In many ways, Langlands provides a framework for how we might perceive *exempla* to function and their meanings for the Romans themselves. But she is also particularly pertinent to this investigation as she considers the socio-political functions of exemplarity as well. Langlands' socio-political dimensions however are very much grounded on the socio-ethical side. Though she highlights that *exempla* had a wider political purpose in reaffirming the hegemony of the upper classes, she explores how *exempla* stories might be used to inculcate people in a society to confirm to certain social ideologies or types of behaviour through the ethical values that they often comprise.<sup>114</sup>

Langlands is not alone however in exploring the social and political dimensions of exemplary discourse within her various works. As I have suggested earlier, Michael Peachin has also highlighted such dimensions in considering how *exempla* played an active role in establishing a constitutional rationale for the emperors and their assumption of certain powers in the first to early second centuries C.E.<sup>115</sup> Drawing on evidence from historical texts and inscriptions, particularly Augustus' *Res Gestae* and the *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani*, he argues that exemplary discourse was used as a legitimising tool for emperors, legalising and justifying both the imperial position, as well as their own. In a similar vein, much

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<sup>114</sup> Langlands also contributed to Michèle Lowrie, and Susanne Lüdemann's 2007 book: 'Exemplarity and Singularity: Thinking through Particulars in Philosophy, Literature and Law.' Here she argues that the Roman's took advantage of the flexibility inherent in *exempla* and their meaning to developed nuanced and responsive methods of reasoning.

<sup>115</sup> Peachin 2007.

attention has been paid by scholars to Augustus and his use of *exempla* as part of his own political machinations.<sup>116</sup> There are a number of scholars that have explored the various ways that he exploited the *exempla* to justify his position and consolidate his power base. Gunderson has argued that Augustus was particularly aware of the power of *exempla*, and that he placed considerable effort to both align himself with traditional republican *exempla* of the past and present himself and his family as fresh *exempla* for the new imperial age.<sup>117</sup> And Christina Kraus even argues that a sea-change occurred under Augustus in stating: ‘When history’s gaze is more or less forcibly directed at the emperor – especially (but not exclusively) to the emperor functioning as a positive role model – the prescriptive function of *exempla* becomes dominant. The flexibility inherent in the *exemplum* being thus threatened or even lost, the audience’s independent response to the spectacular suggestiveness of exemplarity is repressed and redirected, and its constructive use profoundly compromised.’<sup>118</sup>

In scholarship that explores the socio-political dimension of the discourse we see the emergence of repeated themes. Not only do they highlight that *exempla* were flexible devices exploited by individuals in power to justify their social standing or political authority, but they also consider how exemplifying individuals and aligning them with other *exempla* plays an active role in securing certain political objectives. However, while scholarship is invaluable for augmenting our understanding of the discourse and how it functions for

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<sup>116</sup> Gowing 2005, also sees a political agenda with later emperors in suggesting that they sought to devalue the past in favour of the present.

<sup>117</sup> Gunderson 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Kraus 2005: 188. See also Langlands 2014; Lowrie 2009; and Zanker 1999. Kraus, also considers how Augustus’ own self-promotion and promotion within literature as a moral *exemplum* engaged within reconstruction. And Leonhard Burckhardt 2014, examines how the examples of politically active women had a socio-political purpose. He argues that they were hardly role models for concrete actions of Augustan women, but rather served to confirm and perpetuate traditional social roles propagated by Augustus to suit his ideological propaganda.

purposes beyond the typical moral and rhetorical modes, the socio-political dimensions often extend further than the imperial family and individual case studies alone. As I will argue within this study, the creation and dissemination of *exempla* can also comprise a socio-political dimension in being used as part of the author's wider bid to negotiate personal and political relationships, or strengthen interpersonal bonds. In other cases, we also see that exemplification is used strategically as a tool for manipulating individuals and their behaviour to secure something in particular that they want. While there are elements of flattery, niceties, and observing of social conventions in many cases, it suggests that exemplarity has a certain amount of social currency as well. Exemplification is also important for elevating an individual's public persona by association or refashioning a new one for themselves. There is a socio-political dimension in that they use the exemplification of others in public relations, to rehabilitate a tarnished reputation, or direct their audience to view them in a certain light. While some scholars might have looked at the socio-political dimensions of exemplarity in their various works, they are not necessarily in the ways in which I will discuss. They often focus on socialisation (i.e., the inculcation of ethical values), high politics, or the servicing of personal ambitions through exemplary alignment amongst individual authors alone. While I will acknowledge some of these aspects, in this study I will explore some of the alternative socio-political dimensions and shed further light upon the discourse as a whole. I will go beyond these individual authors to draw broader conclusions on the patterns that emerge.

### Theories of Exemplarity

Despite the wealth of research over the previous century on the nature and function of *exempla* in Roman culture, scholars still lament that exemplarity remains under-theorised in



classical scholarship.<sup>119</sup> Currently we have Kristoffel Demoen's model to explain the use of paradigms in Greek texts from Aristotle until the sixth century CE, and Matthew Roller's model of 'exemplary discourse' (2004; 2009; 2018) to illuminate the use of *exempla* in the Roman context. Beyond classical scholarship however, there also a number of theoretical models proposed by psychologists and sociologists, that might also help us to understand how exemplarity works in different ways. Perhaps the model that is most obviously connected to the Roman context is Linda Zagzebski's Exemplarist Virtue Theory (2010; 2013); but Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory (1977) and Robert Merton's Role-Set Theory (1957) are also particularly pertinent in this regard. In this section we will explore these various theories, to determine how they might apply. We will highlight how they help us to understand the processes and outcomes of exemplary citation, as well outline any limitations that we might find.

#### Roller's Model of 'Exemplary Discourse'

To date, perhaps the most focussed theoretical discussion of the exemplarizing process, at least in relation to the Roman context, lies with Roller and his (2004) model of 'exemplary discourse'.<sup>120</sup> According to Roller, exemplarity is a discourse: 'a loosely coherent system of symbols that organises and represents the past in a particular way and facilitates a particular way of knowing it.'<sup>121</sup> Thus, as Roller suggests, exemplary discourse formed an actual means by which Romans confronted the past and gave it value and purpose.<sup>122</sup> In Roller's original model, exemplary discourse comprises of four notionally sequential

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<sup>119</sup> See for example Demoen 1997: 125-6, or more recently Connolly 2013: 252.

<sup>120</sup> See also, Roller 2009: 216-7; 2018: 4-10.

<sup>121</sup> Bell 2008: 34.

<sup>122</sup> Roller 2004: 7.

operations.<sup>123</sup> First there is an *action*: a thing considered consequential for the Roman community and suitable for ethical categorisation in embodying, or failing to embody, certain social values.<sup>124</sup> Second there is an *audience* – an eyewitness to the action who evaluates it and places it in an appropriate ethical category.<sup>125</sup> With this, Roller suggests, the action in question is, by its very spectatorship and evaluation, transformed from something ethically neutral, to something socially and ethically significant – a ‘deed’ or *res gesta*.<sup>126</sup> Following evaluation, the third stage is *commemoration* – the invocation or celebration of not only the deed, but also its consequences to the community at large, and the ethical value it has received from the audience. As Roller suggests, commemoration occurs by means of a monument, that is, ‘a device that calls the deed to memory’;<sup>127</sup> and while typically they will be such things as narratives, statues, toponyms, cognomina, rituals and scars or other bodily marks, the list is not exhaustive.<sup>128</sup> Through these monuments, both the deed and its evaluations are made accessible to the wider community – they create, in Roller’s terms, secondary audiences – i.e. those persons who may not have witnessed the original action, but have learnt of it through exposure to the monument commemorating it.<sup>129</sup> According to Roller, the final stage is *imitation*. As he describes: ‘imitation entails the production of a (new) action in the public eye in light of a previous deed it resembles it in some way’.<sup>130</sup> It not only incorporates the submission of this new action to various audiences for judgement and commemoration, but it also aims to incite further imitation in due course. Consequently, any spectator, whether primary or secondary, is invited to strive

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<sup>123</sup> Roller 2009: 216.

<sup>124</sup> Roller 2004: 4.

<sup>125</sup> Roller 2004: 5.

<sup>126</sup> Roller 2004: 5.

<sup>127</sup> Roller 2004: 5.

<sup>128</sup> Roller 2004: 5.

<sup>129</sup> Roller 2004: 5.

<sup>130</sup> Roller 2004: 23.

to replicate, if not in fact surpass, the deed in question, or, as in the case of negative *exempla* - avoid replicating it.<sup>131</sup> With the identification of imitation as a feature of the exemplarizing process, Roller suggests that while exemplary discourse is 'notionally sequential', it also assumes a cyclical dimension. In a 'discursive loop', Roller states, 'deeds inspire other deeds which, in turn produce more audiences and monuments in an endless loop of social reproduction.'<sup>132</sup>

In more recent publications, Roller claims to have revised and refined the original model to broaden its definitions and scope. Yet aside from a few small alterations, the model is schematised largely in the same way. The 2018 iteration for instance still maintains these four sequential operations, but he redefines the second and fourth stage. Stage two is now termed *evaluation* rather than *audience*, and the fourth is now *norm setting*, in place of *imitation*.<sup>133</sup> With *evaluation* we see that Roller's original explication remains largely unchanged. However, with *norm setting* he expands the remit of this stage to not only highlight the imitable and replicable aspect, but also that deeds (*res gestae*) are considered to confirm to a moral standard and participate in wider acculturation in a variety of ways. In Roller's 2018 version of the model, he includes three supplementary addenda in this final iteration to better explain the broader nuances of the discourse and its aims. First, he asserts, the nature of the process is introspective and prospective, considering past actions in relation to previous performances, and offering a norm for future actions. Second, he reminds us importantly, that there might be certain unobservable practices, beliefs and values that might escape symbolic representation and might only be speculated or

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<sup>131</sup> Roller 2004: 6.

<sup>132</sup> Roller 2004: 6.

<sup>133</sup> Roller 2018: 5-8.

postulated by scholars like himself.<sup>134</sup> Finally, he echoes the sentiments of scholars like Sinclair-Bell, that highlight how individuals across the social spectrum participate in exemplary discourse as well. While the surviving evidence is largely biased towards the elites, in the third addendum, Roller reiterates that others further down the social strata might equally engage in exemplary discourse themselves.<sup>135</sup>

Roller's model has often been celebrated in recent scholarship, both for its capacity to provide a useful framework for analysing exemplars in Roman culture, and for de-monopolising the predominant elite perspective in its cognisance that all persons can engage in exemplary discourse.<sup>136</sup> Not only does it outline the principal features or key processes that constitute the exemplarizing process – allowing us to systematically identify, categorise and analyse exemplars, but it also raises a number of important questions, particularly in relation to the correlation between exemplars and their imitators. As Roller himself suggests, it leads us to consider 'what deeds does x imitate?' and 'what subsequent deeds imitate x'?'<sup>137</sup>

However, while the model has many benefits, it is not without its limitations. While I agree with much of Roller's narrative, particularly that the four processes he has identified are in many ways central to exemplary discourse, on many occasions I remain unconvinced that *all* four are always required, and that they *always* transpire in the order schematised. My first issue with Roller's model therefore lies in its somewhat teleological suggestion that the course of exemplary discourse follows linear progression between these stages: that action precedes audience/evaluation, evaluation precedes commemoration,

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<sup>134</sup> Roller 2018: 9.

<sup>135</sup> Roller 2018: 9.

<sup>136</sup> For praise of Roller, see most recently, Bell 2008: 28. For Roller's cognisance that exemplary discourse embraces all peoples, regardless of social class, age or gender see Roller 2004: 6.

<sup>137</sup> Roller 2004: 5.

commemoration precedes imitation/norm setting before restarting the process once more.

<sup>138</sup> If his model were represented diagrammatically, we see this clearly. (See Fig. 1, below)

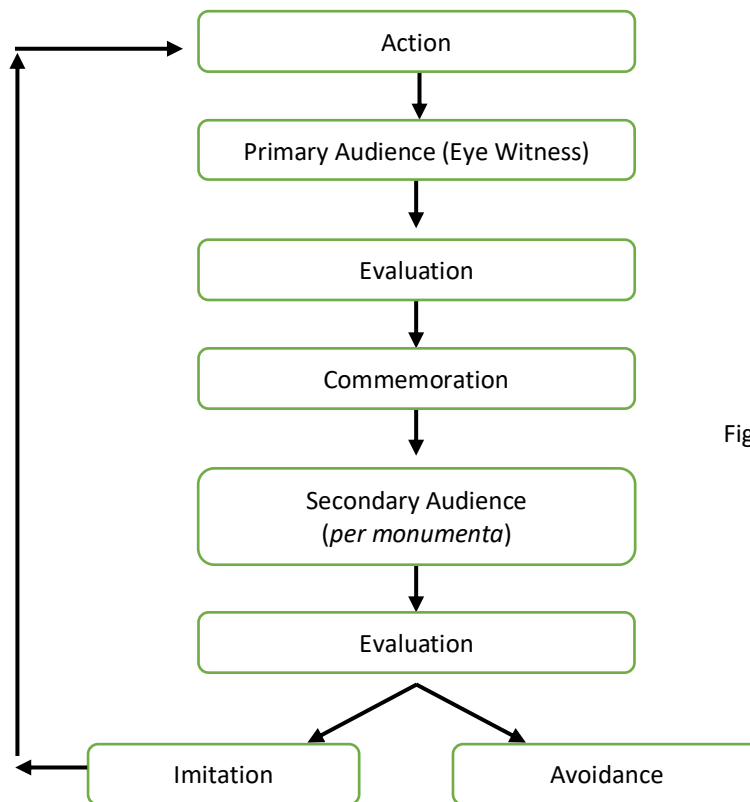


Fig. 1. Roller's Model (2004)

According to Roller then, not only are these stages both sequential and cyclical but all of them are also required to be present for exemplary discourse to exist. One cannot transpire without the other and his use of prognostic terminology like 'primary' and secondary audiences punctuates this. Yet while many of the principal features of exemplary discourse are ostensibly co-dependent, there are many conditions and situations where exemplary discourse can transpire without the presence of all four. As van der Blom has highlighted that it is not always the case there will be a primary audience who evaluates an action and commemorates it, and, furthermore if we consider that the Romans often proffered

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<sup>138</sup> Roller 2004: 4; 2018: 8.

fictional *exempla*, in some cases there need not necessarily be an actual, real-life originating action at all.<sup>139</sup> While Roller's model might account for the way in which the exemplarizing process transpires in some, 'conventional' circumstances (if we may claim that such exists), the plethora of variants involved means that the discourse is more complex than the model initially suggests. It is not so simply the case that one stage progresses to the next but rather, there are variety of options determined by both context and circumstance, that branch off at each level.

To my mind, the key component of exemplary discourse – that which initiates the exemplarizing process, is commemoration. Just as Roller suggests that action is metaphorically transformed into a deed by its evaluation, it is only with commemoration that the deed, or its actor, is transformed into *exemplum*.<sup>140</sup> One could however argue that this effectively occurs at the evaluative stage; that theoretically at least, the process is initiated once the evaluator has considered the action to be exemplary. Yet realistically, I believe, it is not until the actor or deed is referenced, that it may be considered to constitute an *exemplum*. An *exemplum*, in my view, does not become actualised until it is either presented by one party to another, or until one or more individuals decide to consciously act in accordance with someone or something that they consider to constitute a model. In the case of the latter, this might be considered a form of internal citation: establishing and proffering a personal *exemplum*. Once more therefore, exemplary discourse does not necessarily require a pre-requisite action to have taken place for an

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<sup>139</sup> Van der Blom 2010: 79. Consider also the order in the process of exemplarizing *domestica exempla*. Fathers for instance, were often proffered as 'exemplary' and worthy of imitation without any (specific) action necessarily taking place. In this case, the conventional 'action' – 'audience' – 'evaluation' dynamic is subverted as evaluation precedes action. This might be an a-typical circumstance, but does leads us to think about whether action is always required when persons, and not their specific deeds, are concerned.

<sup>140</sup> In many ways, my views here have been inspired by van der Blom's discussion especially, van der Blom 2010: 79.

*exemplum* to be established. It is initiated by determination and citation and as we have seen in our earlier discussion, can be drawn from such things as one's general character. With its implicit suggestion that exemplary discourse requires all four processes, Roller's model is in some ways flawed. Although both action and evaluation are central to the process in many instances, they are not necessarily the initiators of the discourse. Equally, one might argue that the fourth and final stage in Roller's model – imitation/avoidance/norm setting – is rather a consequential bi-product of exemplary discourse. As the presence of a specific originating action is not always required, one does not necessarily need to imitate or avoid an action or event for it to be considered an *exemplum* in the eyes of those involved.

While scholars like van der Blom suggest that the model is limited due to Roller's historiographical perspective and his reliance on an audience being involved, in many ways the issues outlined above are symptomatic of the model's greater failure to acknowledge certain critical factors.<sup>141</sup> As is clear from Roller's narrative, his conception of the exemplarizing process is almost entirely founded on the presumption that one party (the *auctor*) is performing the action, and another third party is witnessing, evaluating and to a certain extent, commemorating it. Yet, despite his acute awareness that on many occasions individuals proffered themselves as *exempla*, his model does not permit the *auctor* of the original action to engage in exemplary discourse in any other capacity than performing the action itself.<sup>142</sup> It seems therefore that Roller overlooks the fact that the *auctor* has the potential to self-evaluate, self-commemorate and even self-imitate. Such a factor has a powerful effect, not only on the nature of the model itself but also on the course that

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<sup>141</sup> Van der Blom 2010: 79.

<sup>142</sup> Some prime examples where individuals exemplarize themselves can be seen Julius Caesar, Augustus and his *Res Gestae*, and Pliny the Younger and his *Letters*.

exemplary discourse takes. If the *auctor* of the action, or the 'self' fulfils the evaluative stage, it effectively negates the requirement for an audience's presence (at least the 'primary audience' that Roller identifies) at the time of the event.<sup>143</sup> The so-called 'secondary audience' *would* still be expected, as the nature of commemoration presupposes the existence of a third-party audience, though they too need not necessarily be the one commemorating or even imitating the action. To account for such cases, Roller's model should perhaps be modified to incorporate the potential for the 'self' (the original *auctor*) to engage in all four stages of exemplary discourse.

Closely related to the notion of agency, a second critical factor that Roller's model does not account for, is choice. If the *auctor* of the action acts as his/her own evaluator, as I have suggested is possible, then the need for an external third-party audience would be bypassed, and the commemorative stage would follow suit. Although we must consider the possibility that in such cases, the *auctor* may not necessarily choose to commemorate, or equally imitate the earlier action themselves, and so neither stages would necessarily transpire at all. Of course, if this were the case then, as suggested earlier, the original action and any subsequent instances of self-imitation would not be considered 'exemplary' in of itself. However, the greater point is that in Roller's model, there is little room for such choices at all. Once more, in teleological fashion, the model stipulates that those who engage in exemplary discourse must follow the course dictated without deviation or variation. Such limitations can be seen clearly, in his narrative of the final stage: *norm-setting / imitation*. In Roller's model, there are only three pre-determined outcomes of exemplary discourse that we might see: the first is norm-setting, and the second and third

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<sup>143</sup> Unless of course it could be argued that the 'self' can function as one's own audience?



are adoption (imitation), or rejection (avoidance) respectively. Yet not only is this somewhat determinist, suggesting that these *will* always take place whenever audiences engage with *exempla*, but it is also reductionist as well. Effectively, Roller's reduction of an audience's choice to these binary opposites denies the existence of a tertiary option: non-engagement. While imitation/avoidance was often the desired and expected outcome, as we have seen, there must equally have been numerous, perhaps unaccounted instances whereby audiences felt indifferent and chose not to adopt the *exemplum* posited at all. It should be emphasized here that non-adoption does not always necessarily equate to rejection, but to a third, distinct initiative instead. For there is the potential that non-action or non-engagement might equally exist within the wider discourse as well. The existence of such an option, further highlights the short comings with the model in its original form. While non-engagement post-exposure does not necessarily prevent exemplary discourse from transpiring, it does suggest that imitation/avoidance are not the only outcomes of exemplary discourse. Moreover, if non-engagement occurs, the cyclical nature of exemplary discourse is no longer the case as it is terminated at this point.

Roller's model might then be considered to be somewhat reductionist and consequently limited for its failure to account for instances of non-engagement. But it might also be considered reductionist for its failure to also acknowledge that there are different degrees of imitation. Despite asserting that *exempla* are subject to personal interpretation and categorisation, in his narration of the model we find that imitation and avoidance are always absolute. However, as Langlands and others have highlighted, there is an element of selectivity, and situational variability involved within the process.<sup>144</sup> As Langlands argues,

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<sup>144</sup> Langlands 2011; 2018. See also, Zagzebski 2010; 2013, (discussed further below); van der Blom 2010: 116; 146-7, and Morgan 2007: 185.

the Romans understood that not all aspects were replicable and applicable to their own individual situation. They had to decide what might be relevant to their circumstances, if anything at all.<sup>145</sup> Both imitation and to a certain degree rejection therefore might not necessarily be wholly observed on every occasion, as emulators and rejecters may select only certain aspects of the action for imitation, or perhaps even adopt only a likewise mentality to that of the exemplar proffered.<sup>146</sup> Considering this, Roller's final stage, *imitation/norm-setting*, should be further divided to distinguish between total and partial imitation, and total and partial rejection of the original action in question.

Alongside the model's inability to acknowledge such things as selective adoption and the potential for non-engagement, it also fails to recognise that not all who engage with *exempla* will have understood its meaning. In many ways, his model is predicated on the assumption of understanding. While Roller does acknowledge that *exempla* may be misunderstood, and that interpretation is subjective – with some rejecting the ethical evaluations of others and re-categorising them for themselves – on both of these accounts, there is always some level of understanding that is assumed. The model therefore does not allow for instances of non-understanding – something that might not change the nature of the discourse (i.e. the *exemplum* is still an *exemplum* whether the audience understands it to be one or not – as long as someone has proffered or considered it so in the first place), but does change the direction that the discourse takes. Like non-engagement, in instances of non-understanding, the discourse is effectively terminated at this point. Its nature, no longer cyclical.

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<sup>145</sup> Langlands 2011: 101.

<sup>146</sup> This point is also acknowledged by Zagzebski 2013: 201-2.

## Roller vs Propertius

At this point it might be useful to provide a working example: an illustrative *exemplum* to highlight some of the issues that I have outlined above. In this section I will attempt a reading of Propertius' *Elegy* 4.11 and its protagonist – Cornelia – to assess how far Roller's model might explain the exemplifying processes observed. It should be noted first however that there are several issues which might complicate this assessment, as Propertius' elegy which presents the imaginary speech of Cornelia, the stepdaughter of the emperor Augustus, to her husband Lucius Aemilius Lepidus Paullus from beyond the grave, has many absurdities and ambiguities. Not only does it straddle two incompatible speech situations – assuming both the form of a funeral *laudatio* and a juridical defence speech simultaneously – but it also does so in at least two incompatible locations: the underworld and the gravesite.<sup>147</sup> Alongside the various narratological illogicalities we also have a narratological conundrum to contend with too. In conventional third person narratives the author's point of view is often foregrounded by interjection and stylistic colouring, yet in Propertius' elegy the author's own evaluations are achieved instead through first person interlocution. While the poem centres around the thoughts and actions of an historical person, it is in reality a fictional speech. It reflects the evaluations of the poet therefore and not those of subject herself.

Nevertheless, *Elegy* 4.11 is a particularly interesting case study for examination here, not only because it is explicitly concerned with creating and disseminating *exempla*, but also because it confirms that self-evaluation, self-commemoration and self-exemplification might exist. It allows us to determine how far Roller's operant schema might apply to genres

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<sup>147</sup> Lowrie 2008: 168.

beyond historical third person narratives and *exempla* stories, in more complicated situations such as this. In this section I will first provide an overview of the elegy before addressing the model itself. I will argue that while on first inspection we see that many of the stages Roller considers essential in exemplary discourse are present and correct, the model does not account for certain variables and the ordering of the discourse here is upside-down.

The poem begins with Cornelia addressing her husband at the gravesite, and imploring him not to grieve. As she asserts, the gates to the afterlife remain closed forever, irrespective of a loved-one's pleas:

desine, Paulle, meum lacrimis urgere sepulcrum:  
nempe tuas lacrimas litora surda bibent.  
Vota movent superos: ubi portitor aera recepit,  
non exorando stant adamante viae.  
Te licet orantem fuscae deus audiat aulae,  
panditur ad nullas ianua nigra preces. (4.11.1-6)

Cease, Paullus, to burden my grave with tears:  
doubt not that infernal shores will drink your tears unmoved.  
Prayers move the gods above: after the ferryman has received his coin,  
the way stands fast in inexorable adamant.  
Though the god of the hall of darkness hear your pleading,  
the black door opens to no prayers.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> All translations will be provided by Goold 1990, unless otherwise stated.

In the second stanza Cornelia rhetorically questions her legacy and laments the purpose of her life. (4.11.11-18) What use, she proclaims, was her marriage to Paulus, her ancestors' achievements, or her offspring in the end, she still passed before her time:

quid mihi coniugium Paulli, quid currus avorum  
profuit aut famae pignora tanta meae?  
Non minus immitis habuit Cornelia Parcas:  
en sum, quod digitis quinque legatur, onus.  
Damnatae tenebris et vos, vada lenta, paludes,  
et quaecumque meos implicat ulva pedes,  
immatura licet, tamen huc non noxia veni;  
nec precor huic umbrae mollia iura meae. (4.11.11-18)

What availed my marriage to Paullus, what the triumphs of my ancestors  
or such fine vouchers for my good name?

Cornelia has not found the Fates any less harsh for that.

See, all I am now can be gathered with the fingers of one hand!  
O cursed with darkness, both ye, O waters, sluggish shallows,  
and whatever sedge entangles my feet,  
though here before my time, I come not as one guilty;  
nor do I seek indulgent treatment for this my shade.

In the third stanza Cornelia is pictured before the judges in the underworld, who will evaluate her life (19-26). Here she speaks in her own defence (*ipsa loquar pro me*) providing evidence of her merit by recalling how she behaved within her life.<sup>149</sup> First, she invokes her

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<sup>149</sup> 4.11.27-28: *ipsa loquar pro me: si fallo, poena sororum / infelix umeros urgeat urna meos.* ('I shall speak in my own defence: if I speak falsely, / let the luckless urn that is the Danaids' punishment weigh down my shoulders.')

illustrious ancestry and the honour of her house on sides.<sup>150</sup> Then she turns to her wedding day, and how she was married to one man alone:

mox, ubi iam facibus cessit praetexta maritis,  
vinxit et acceptas altera vitta comas,  
iungor, Paulle, tuo sic discessura cubili,  
ut lapide hoc uni nupta fuisse legar. (4.11.33-36)

Thereafter, when maiden's toga gave way to the nuptial torch,  
and a different headband caught up and bound my hair,  
I was wedded to your couch, Paullus, destined so to leave it  
that on this stone I shall be recorded as married to one man alone.

From here Cornelia calls to witness, the ashes of her forebears once more. While they were revered throughout Rome, she claims, she did nothing to diminish the symbolic trophies of their victories at all:

testor maiorum cineres tibi, Roma, colendos,  
sub quorum titulis, Africa, tunsae iaces,  
et, Persen proavi stimulat dum pectus Achilli,  
qui tumidas proavo fregit Achille domos (4.11.37-40)

I testify by the ashes of forebears who command Rome's reverence,  
beneath whose triumphs Africa lies ground in the dust,  
and him, who, when Perses was spurred on by the spirit of his ancestor Achilles,  
crushed the house inflated by its ancestor Achilles

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<sup>150</sup> 4.11.29-32: *si cui fama fuit per avita tropaea decori, / aera Numantinos nostra loquuntur avos: / altera maternos exaequat turba Libones, / et domus est titulis utraque fulta suis.* ('If any has ever derived ennobling fame from ancestral trophies, / then our house has bronze spoils that tell of ancestors who took Numantia: / a second host claims equality for the Libones of my mother's line, / and my family is sustained on either side by achievements of its own.')

No-one was ever embarrassed by her; she maintained her household and ancestral prestige.

At this point she proclaims that she was a model woman, and should be emulated explicitly:

me neque censurae legem mollisse neque ulla  
labe mea nostros erubuisse focos.  
non fuit exuviis tantis Cornelia damnum:  
quin et erat magnae pars imitanda domus. (4.11.41-44)

That I never caused the censor's law to be relaxed  
and that our hearth never blushed for any sin of mine.  
Upon the lustre of such grand trophies Cornelia brought no tarnish:  
rather was something to be imitated in that noble house.<sup>151</sup>

In the fourth stanza, Cornelia asserts that her life was wholly without reproach, and that she lived honourably until the day she died. From birth, she proclaims, her bloodline demanded that she live in virtue, and they instilled a greater fear in her than the judges presiding before her provide:

nec mea mutatast aetas; sine crimine totast:  
viximus insignes inter utramque facem.  
mi natura dedit leges a sanguine ductas,  
nec possis melior iudicis esse metu. (4.11.45-48)

Nor did my life change; it was spent wholly free from accusation:  
I lived with honour between torch of marriage and torch of death.  
Nature gave me rules of conduct drawn from my blood,  
nor could one attain greater virtue through fear of a judge.

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<sup>151</sup> Trans. Goold 1990, adapted.

At this point, Cornelia reiterates the sentiments that no matter how harshly she is scrutinised, no woman would be ashamed to be at her side. She invokes her illustrious ancestors Claudia and Aemelia, as well as her mother Scribonia as testimony, and proclaims that even Caesar (Augustus), grieves for her passing, for he considered her a sister to his daughter too:

quamlibet austeras de me ferat urna tabellas,  
turpior assessu non erit ulla meo,  
vel tu, quae tardam movisti fune Cybeben,  
Claudia, turritae rara ministra deae,  
vel cui, sacra suos cum Vesta reposceret ignes,  
exhibuit vivos carbasus alba focos.

nec te, dulce caput, mater Scribonia, laesi:  
in me mutatum quid nisi fata velis?  
maternis laudor lacrimis urbisque querelis,  
defensa et gemitu Caesaris ossa mea.  
ille sua nata dignam vixisse sororem  
increpat, et lacrimas vidimus ire deo. (4.11.49-60)

However exacting the scrutiny of me carried by the jurors' urn,  
no woman will be shamed by sitting at my side,  
whether you, Claudia, peerless servant of the tower-crowned goddess,  
who took hold of the cable and moved the stranded Cybele,  
or you to whom, when Vesta inviolate claimed her fires,  
the white robe showed that the hearth was still alive.

Nor, dear heart, have I injured you, mother Scribonia:  
what in me would you wish otherwise except this my death?  
I am praised by a mother's tears and a city's lamentations,  
and my bones are vindicated by Caesar's sighs.



He grieves that in me died one worthy of being  
his daughter's sister, and we saw a god's tears flow.

Following this she proclaims that she earned the robe of honour for bearing children and fulfilled her matronly role. She successfully raised three to adulthood, and takes particular comfort that her husband and children will live on:

et tamen emerui generosae vestis honores,  
nec mea de sterili facta rapina domo.  
et bene habet: numquam mater lugubria sumpsi;  
venit in exsequias tota caterva meas.  
tu, Lepide, et tu, Paulle, meum post fata levamen,  
condita sunt vestro lumina nostra sinu. (4.11.63-8)

Yet I lived long enough to earn the matron's robe of honour,  
nor was I snatched away from a childless house.  
So all is well: never as a mother did I put on mourning garb;  
all my children came to my funeral.  
You, Lepidus, and you, Paullus, my consolations after death,  
in your embrace were my eyelids closed.

Here, Cornelia turns to her daughter whom she proclaims, was born to be an example of her father and the ways in which she was raised. Importantly we see here that Cornelia directs her daughter to imitate her and match her own exemplary ways. She establishes herself as a model for her to emulate so she might be equally praised:

filia, tu specimen censurae nata paternae,  
fac teneas unum nos imitata virum.  
haec est feminei merces extrema triumphii,

laudat ubi emeritum libera fama torum. (4.11.69-72)

Daughter, born to be the example [*specimen*] of your father's censorship,  
do you, like me, hold fast to a single husband.

This is the highest tribute in a woman's glory,  
when candid opinion praises the full course of her married life.<sup>152</sup>

For the remainder of the poem, Cornelia continues to advise Paulus and her children what to do. First, she asks Paulus to take care of their children, for he is both their father and mother too. Then she asks that he not mourn her excessively and conceal his grief as much as he can.<sup>153</sup> To her children, Cornelia suggests however, that their father might find another partner, and that they should accept her with open arms. She also recommends that they win her over with their conduct, and not to praise their mother too excessively, for it might cause offence:

seu tamen adversum mutarit ianua lectum,  
sederit et nostro cauta noverca toro,  
coniugium, pueri, laudate et ferte paternum:  
capta dabit vestris moribus illa manus;  
nec matrem laudate nimis: collata priori  
vertet in offensas libera verba suas. (4.11.85-90)

If, though, the house-door gets a new wedding-bed facing it,  
and a wary stepmother sits on the couch that was mine,  
then, my children, do you praise and accept your father's marriage:  
won over by your conduct she will surrender.

Nor praise your mother overmuch: when compared to her predecessor,  
she will turn your unguarded speech into slights against herself.

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<sup>152</sup> Trans. Goold 1990, adapted.

<sup>153</sup> 4.11.73-84.

To conclude she expresses her wishes that her husband live a long and happy life. She also suggests that she will be content to move on into the afterlife, with her legacy in place.<sup>154</sup> Finally, Cornelia proclaims that her defensive speech is over and that she has proven her point. She suggests that she will be permitted into heaven, and take her rightful place at her ancestor's side:

causa peroratast. flentes me surgite, testes,  
dum pretium vitae grata rependit humus.  
moribus et caelum patuit: sim digna merendo,  
cuius honoratis ossa vehantur avis. (4.11.99-102)

My speech is ended. Arise, ye witnesses that weep my loss,  
while a grateful earth awards the verdict that my life has earned.  
To virtue heaven itself has opened its gates: may my merits  
secure my shade conveyance to its illustrious ancestors.

In her defensive speech we see that Cornelia is established as an *exemplum* in various ways. Not only does she delineate the actions that she considers imitable, but she directs certain individuals to replicate the actions or behaviours she maintained. First and foremost, as we see, Cornelia considers herself exemplary because she married one man alone. As she proclaims it will be recorded upon her tombstone that she was a *univira* and kept only one marital home. With this succinct statement however, Cornelia might also be communicating further information about her character simultaneously. In highlighting the longevity of her marriage to Paullus, she speaks to such qualities as uxorial fidelity, devotion to her husband,

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<sup>154</sup> 4.11.91-96.

and perhaps even her amiability in maintaining a successful marriage for such a length of time.

Though Cornelia's marital status is delineated as the defining feature of her *exemplum* in being identified explicitly as the imitable element for her daughter to observe, throughout her speech we see that further exemplary actions and character traits simultaneously emerge. Firstly, Cornelia places a certain premium on her reproductive success. She not only highlights that she received the matron's robes for producing three children, but she also insinuates that in raising them to adulthood, her life was somewhat blessed. While Cornelia implicitly broadens the scope of her model beyond simply being Paullus' wife, we see later that she considers herself equally imitable for the way she lived her life. As we see in lines 41-44, Cornelia emphasizes that she maintained a virtuous reputation and lived a life entirely without crime. Indeed, the notion gains further emphasis as she anticipates the evaluations of her ancestors: proclaiming that she did nothing to offend them, and they would not be ashamed to sit by her side. Importantly it seems that Cornelia's virtuous comportment was a conscious part she played. Holding her personal and familial *fama* in highest regard, she suggests that an aristocratic woman with illustrious ancestry is exemplary if a virtuous reputation is maintained.

However, in many ways Cornelia's *exemplum* is more than just a sum of these imitable traits, as she continues to display other virtues beyond the grave. As scholars have argued, through the speech, Cornelia emerges as a model of a devoted mother and wife. Lowrie observes that she embodies an ideally selfless character in not only showing care for Paulus's and her children's emotional wellbeing, but more particularly for her suggestion

that he get on with his life and take another wife.<sup>155</sup> However, the messages communicated by *exempla* are often subject to interpretation, as scholars often claim and as Roller himself has highlighted, *exempla* are contestable and thus unstable in their production of specific aims. When exposed to commemorative *monumenta*, as we the readers of Propertius' elegies are, we might agree with the evaluations of the *auctor* or commemorator, or produce divergent interpretations. Hallett for instance has previously argued that an alternative and less positive picture develops of Cornelia throughout the text. She expresses her incredulity that Cornelia fails to include how much she loves her family in her narrative, and sees certain passages as particularly cold and aloof.<sup>156</sup> Yet, perhaps this is a conscious decision by Propertius to reveal Cornelia's other exemplary traits. While Hallett might once have criticised her apathetic response to the situation and visible lack of compassion, one might read her reactions more positively and argue that she displays the qualities of wisdom in her acceptance of fate, and temperance in her requirements for her husband and family to limit their grief. Effectively, while Cornelia might be viewed in both of these different ways, I rather believe that Propertius' has endowed her with these, ostensibly Stoic sensibilities to expand her overall *exemplum*. I believe that he is making a statement there that Cornelia is not only a devoted wife and mother, but she is also wise and regulates her emotions. She is a positive influence on her husband and children, advising them to see the futility in excessive grief and acceptance of tragic events that happen.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Lowrie 2008: 172.

<sup>156</sup> Hallett 1973: 119.

<sup>157</sup> It is interesting that within this elegy, Propertius can be seen to invert traditional gender roles. In this case, we see that Cornelia exhibits the qualities expected of the ideal Roman male, in full control of her emotions, and her husband is implicitly feminised for not fully controlling his own. Hallett 1973: 103; 108, argues that this is a strategy that Propertius' adopts throughout his elegies as a whole. She also suggests that it is something of an elegiac trope.

However we might interpret the behaviour that Cornelia displays, it is clear that the elegy seeks to promote her exemplary potential in a variety of ways. Of course, this is framed as means of persuading the judges that preside over her infernal case, yet when read with a view to determine the effectiveness of Roller's model to explain the processes and outcomes of exemplary discourse, we see that Roller's four operations have clearly taken place. If we overlook momentarily, that the speech is a fabrication of Propertius' mind, we see that Cornelia establishes herself as an *exemplum* first and foremost by evaluating and commemorating how she lived her life. Firstly, she evaluates her actions in accordance with wider social norms. Then, having determined that her behaviour was indicative of contemporary values and approved behaviours, she endows them with ethical import. As scholars like Judith Hallett, Micaela Janan and Maria Wyke suggest, Cornelia in many ways reflects the moral of the time. She is the realisation and embodiment of Augustus' recent social and moral legislation that aimed to curb the immorality of the aristocracy during his reign.<sup>158</sup> Alongside imposing her own evaluations however, we also see that Cornelia includes the evaluations of other, third parties within her speech. She suggests that she is vindicated by Augustus and her ancestors, and that her mother would also be proud of how she conducted her life. In some regards we see that Cornelia's family members set the standard for Cornelia to aspire towards themselves. While she might not have replicated their deeds, the way she lived her life was because she strived to be their equal in virtue as well.

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<sup>158</sup> Hallett 2019, has recently argued that Propertius uses Cornelia to illustrate the limitations placed on aristocratic women during this time. She highlights in particular that women were limited in their emotional existence and available modes of self-expression. See also Richardson 1977: 481. Janan 2001: 147, similarly suggests that the elegy awards Propertius the opportunity to articulate the various codes that govern Roman matronal life, and both Stahl 1985:162, and Wyke 1987: 171-2, argue that the elegy shows Propertius' capitulation to Augustan ideals pertaining to marriage and the family.

In terms of commemoration, we find within the elegy, the presence of multiple commemorative modes. The first is the tombstone that records her *univira* status and that Cornelia invokes. The second and perhaps even a third, is the speech and/or elegy itself. Both are forms of commemorative media that expose her actions and evaluations to the judges and her family in the context of the situation, but also Propertius' readers as well. Finally, in all of this, Cornelia initiates the fourth and final stage. She participates in norm-setting by perpetuating Augustan values pertaining to morality, social roles and female excellence both by identifying the various behaviours that should be replicated, and by introducing the evaluations of other third parties to validate her own determinations.

While we might discern that all operations take place, we do not necessarily see linear progression between the various stages. As I have outlined earlier, in Roller's model the four characteristic operations of exemplary discourse: action, evaluation, commemoration and imitation are proposed to advance sequentially through each and every stage. Action precedes evaluation, commemoration and imitation in teleological fashion, without any deviation taking place. Yet if we believe that Propertius creates a broader *exemplum* beyond that which Cornelia outlines herself as scholars and I suggest, then in this situation Cornelia's *exemplum* is established effectively, in Roller's terms, post-commemoration – i.e. after the speech has been delivered. It is not so simply the case that Propertius' has observed Cornelia performing these 'actions', evaluated it against wider social norms and then commemorated it in elegy for others to behold. Her actions are the product of the poet's imagination and do not necessarily materialise until the commemorative process has been resolved.

The situation here, as I suggested earlier, is rather more complex. The fact that Cornelia's *exemplum*, in all its potential facets, is entirely the product of Propertius'

imagination (confusingly expounded through first-person interlocution), complicates matters. Though Roller rightly highlights that action, evaluation and commemoration are central characteristics of the exemplarizing process, not *all* actions identified in this case necessarily precede evaluation and then commemoration as Roller outlines within his explanation of the model. In some circumstances, like this one, the sequence of these processes is seemingly reversed: it is only by commemorating her life that we see Cornelia's other exemplary character traits emerge.

Actions then, while they are undoubtedly central to exemplary discourse, need not always be performed *before* commemoration can take place. Moreover, I would argue further that when they are performed, they need not necessarily take place before a third-party audience or witness. As I have outlined in the previous section on Roller's model, Roller posits that all actions must be performed in public before an audience that can evaluate them, commemorate them, and then determine if they can replicate them. However, if we forget for a moment that this is product of Propertius' mind, in this case it is Cornelia, the originator of the action, that is not only supplying the action for evaluation, but is in fact fulfilling the evaluative stage, referencing and creating her own commemorative monuments (her tombstone and the speech itself respectively) and delineating her potential imitators as well. Of course, in this situation, it is actually Propertius that is evaluating Cornelia's life and behaviour in reality and determining that she might be an *exemplum* for her these others to observe, yet the fact that he chooses to do so through first-person interlocution nevertheless highlights the potential for that self-evaluation, self-commemoration and even perhaps self-imitation might occur.

Though *Elegy* 4.11 supports Roller's assertion that exemplary discourse often comprises these four characteristic operations, it also reveals that the model requires



adaptation to allow for the *auctor* of the action to participate all four stages. It conflicts with Roller's stipulation that there must be another, third party to evaluate an individual's actions and determine their exemplary status, commemorate them via one or more monuments and even imitate themselves. Perhaps the issue with Roller's model therefore is not necessarily the categories but rather the explication of the processes involved. Perhaps it is just semantics, for if Roller did not supply the various caveats that preclude the subject to fulfil these roles, the issue would be solved.

A final issue with Roller's model that the elegy clearly reveals concerns the fourth and final stage. Specifically, the reductionist assertion that beyond norm setting there are only two other binary outcomes that might take place. As I have outlined earlier, in Roller's narrative explanation the audience will either adopt the model wholesale or actively avoid it. However, I believe that the model should be modified to allow for such things as selective application and non-engagement, as other possible outcomes. Conspicuously as we see within the elegy, Cornelia only directs her daughter to imitate her ways. Though she might expand this invitation to Propertius's other readers in the section where she proclaims that her life was entirely without crime, she does not direct her other male children to observe the way that she behaves. In Roller's model it would be determined that her male children would actively avoid her *exemplum* or reject the pattern that she provides. But if her sons accept Cornelia's evaluation and identification that she might posit a model for how to live and behave, they could equally opt not to engage, or not participate, instead of actively avoiding it.<sup>159</sup> As I have suggested earlier, I believe that exemplary discourse has other outcomes beyond the binary imitate/avoid. In this instance it might be better as non-

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<sup>159</sup> Interestingly as we see within the poem, exemplarity in Propertius is ostensibly tailored along gendered lines, with women emulated only by other women, and not by other men.

engagement, as in reality much of her imitable 'actions' do not necessarily apply to them in their own circumstances. They do not have to actively avoid her *exemplum* but rather disengage. They can appreciate and acknowledge that she constitutes a model but not necessarily participate.

While Propertius' elegy might confirm Roller's suggestion that these four processes are central to exemplary discourse, and that the nature of the discourse is heavily reliant on individual interpretation, it has also confirmed several of the issues that we have raised. Firstly, as we have seen, it highlights how the exemplarizing process is far from a simple linear progression between these four stages. Second, as we have seen, it clearly illustrates a failing on Roller's part to acknowledge the potential for the first-person, the auctorial self, to self-evaluate and self-commemorate which in turn negates any notion that the presence of an eye-witness audience is always required. Finally, by establishing Cornelia as an *exemplum*, Propertius has not only created further actions that augment the dimensions of her exemplarity but he has also created a complex web of other *exempla*, audiences and monuments.

### Zagzebski's 'Exemplarist Virtue Theory'

As I have mentioned above, a second theoretical model for understanding the exemplarizing process is Zagzebski's 'Exemplarist Virtue Theory' (2010, revised in 2013). Zagzebski posits that basic moral concepts are anchored in exemplars of moral goodness and that moral learning is performed principally through a process of direct reference and imitation.<sup>160</sup> Exemplarist Virtue Theory proposes that an exemplar is both a paradigmatically good

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<sup>160</sup> Zagzebski 2010: 51; 2013: 199.

person, and a person most imitable,<sup>161</sup> yet exemplars are only most imitable because they are most admired.<sup>162</sup> According to Zagzebski, the whole practice of what she terms ‘exemplarism’ is grounded in the emotion of admiration.<sup>163</sup> The process of selecting and adopting exemplars is not only reliant on identification *of* approbatory qualities or actions, but also on a positive identification *with* those that embody them.<sup>164</sup> As she explains: ‘the practice of picking out such persons are already embedded in our moral practices. We learn through narratives of fictional and nonfictional persons that some people are admirable and worth imitating...’<sup>165</sup> For Zagzebski such a process is something of an eternal norm. While her theory is expounded in a modern context, both her evidentiary base and her discussion imply that it is effectively unconstrained by time or place.<sup>166</sup>

Upon first inspection, Zagzebski’s basic premises seem logical. Exemplars, as we might conceive of them in modern English vernacular, *are* often considered to be paradigmatically good persons endowed with moral integrity, and in many cases, admiration *does* account for both the selection and adoption of individuals as exemplars.<sup>167</sup> However to postulate that ‘good persons’ are the only persons worthy of exemplarism, or that selecting and adopting exemplars is *solely* predicated on admiration is frankly flawed, especially when considered in a Roman context. As the evidence, there are innumerable reasons for selection beyond simple admiration (social or political bias for instance), and there may be other impetus behind imitation outside of admiration (social pressures; political agenda or cultural practices). Moreover, when imitation is observed, one might also question its

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<sup>161</sup> Zagzebski 2013: 200.

<sup>162</sup> Explicitly, see: Zagzebski 2013: 198.

<sup>163</sup> Zagzebski 2013: 202.

<sup>164</sup> Insinuated on page 51. See Zagzebski 2010: 51.

<sup>165</sup> Zagzebski 2010: 51.

<sup>166</sup> A prime example can be seen in her inclusion of ancient Greek philosophical views on virtue. See Zagzebski 2013: 202-3.

<sup>167</sup> O.E.D. s.v. ‘exemplar’.

veracity. Is imitation always genuine? Can it not be disingenuous: feigned for social acceptance, prestige or the acquisition of political power? In Roman Imperial literature for instance, many of the emperors who succeeded Augustus were often characterised as feigning his modest example to ensure popular support.<sup>168</sup>

So far then, there are issues with both Zagzebski's reasoning for the selection of exemplars and her implicit acceptance that imitation is always genuine. Alongside these, the greatest problem with 'Exemplarist Virtue Theory' is that, for this work at least, it is far too limited. In the Roman context, as I have outlined earlier, there is a diverse spectrum to what might constitute an *exemplum*. The term encompasses not only positive, paradigmatic figures (exemplars of virtue), but also actions and events (precedents), and negative characters (exemplars of vice). Zagzebski's hypothesis that the process of exemplification relies exclusively on selecting and imitating admired 'good persons', not only negates the possibility that events and precedents might participate in exemplary discourse, but also neglects the potential for 'exemplarism' to proffer paradigms of negative behaviour. In effect, her suppositions prevent the application of her theory to a Roman context whereby the proffering of *exempla* could be and often were, explicitly 'bad people' or events, highlighted for cautionary effect. Admittedly Zagzebski does attempt to justify her specificity in this regard by appealing to the notion that it is commonplace when constructing moral theories, to focus on the positive rather than the negative.<sup>169</sup> Yet the negative, in both the general, and the specifically Roman context, is fundamental to both exemplary discourse and its place in the process of moral edification.

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<sup>168</sup> Tacitus *Annals* 1.77.3.

<sup>169</sup> Zagzebski 2010: 45.

Despite certain fundamental flaws, Zagzebski's theory does raise several interesting questions that we might consider when examining exemplars in the Roman period. First, there is the question of authorial agenda and the motivations for selection and adoption raised above: how far does admiration factor? If imitation is observed, is it genuine? Alongside these, Zagzebski's discussion also raises an issue concerning the primacy of virtues vs persons. During her narrative of the processes involved in exemplarizing individuals, for instance, Zagzebski observes that 'exemplarism does not make the virtues primary, but it does make the virtuous persons primary.'<sup>170</sup> Does this apply to the Roman context? While it is true that, throughout history, *exempla* have often been proffered as the symbolic embodiment of specific characteristics (typically virtues or vices), and that across the various media in which they are invoked, it *is* often the individual or the actions themselves that are foregrounded, not the qualities they often grow to symbolise, when we look at closer at the various media in which they are invoked, there is a certain degree of differentiation. If, for instance, we look at historiography, and examine the narratives of exemplary figures like Lucretia in Livy or Ovid's works, then evidence suggests that it *is* the virtuous persons and not the virtues themselves that are made primary. Conversely, if we consider the presence of such figures in Valerius Maximus' *Dicta et Facta Memorabilia*, both the author's agenda and thematic arrangement seems rather to subvert the dynamic proposed.<sup>171</sup> The practice of collating *exempla* stories therefore, typified by works like the *Dicta et Facta*, directs us to question whether authors truly exemplify the virtuous person and not the virtue, as Zagzebski suggests, and how different genres and, or media affect the dynamic proposed.

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<sup>170</sup> Zagzebski 2010: 55.

<sup>171</sup> In Valerius' work, stories are collated and arranged thematically. They are organised in terms of the relationship to specific virtues.

In addition to these, Zagzebski also raises interesting questions concerning our conception of imitation and its limitations.<sup>172</sup> By highlighting how personal circumstances affect the propriety for direct, absolute imitation of acts or behaviours, not only does she suggest that there is potential for partial imitation, but also that there are visible levels/stages to appropriation. Perhaps person y may not imitate x exactly, but might imitate a part of their behaviour. Perhaps they might only adopt a likewise mentality towards something, or behave in a similar fashion as the original exemplar would have, if they were in the same situation.<sup>173</sup> As referenced with regard to Roller's shortcomings, Zagzebski's discussion reminds us that imitation, as a practice, should not be reduced to such binary opposites as imitation or avoidance in absolute terms. As imitation may be partial, one must also consider the degree to which person y has imitated x, as well as how individual, socio-political circumstances can affect the potency and applicability of the model proffered.

In summary, the questions raised by Zagzebski's theory include: what are the reasons for proposing, or adopting certain *exempla*? Is it admiration? Or something else? To what degree can we see imitation of original models? Is it direct, exact imitation or partial imitation, consciously selecting certain aspects but not the whole? And finally, how does personal circumstance negate the possibility of imitation?

Having discussed those theories that relate directly to exemplarity and the processes involved. We shall now examine the wider, sociological theories of Bandura (1977) and Merton (1957), to see how they might shed further light on the *exemplum* and its application.

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<sup>172</sup> The issue is somewhat raised by Roller too, see Roller 2004: 5.

<sup>173</sup> Zagzebski 2013: 201-2. Also, Zagzebski 2010: 55-6.

## Bandura's 'Social Learning Theory'

The first theory to be discussed here is Bandura's Social Learning theory (1977).<sup>174</sup> In many ways, as we will see, it relates to the adopted strategies of edification through observation of others as *exempla*. Bandura performed a series of experiments in the 1960s examining how humans, especially children, might be influenced by observing others' behaviour. In the most famous of these, the Bobo Doll experiment, Bandura observed that children, exposed to adults exhibiting specific kinds of behaviour towards an inflatable bobo doll, adopted similar behaviour in their own interaction. When those in the first group had witnessed adults behaving aggressively towards the bobo doll and saw that they were either rewarded or unpunished for doing so, they too behaved aggressively towards it. Conversely, when the children in the second group witnessed the adults being reprimanded for violent behaviour, the children in this group exhibited significantly less aggressive behaviour towards the bobo doll. As a result of this and other findings, Bandura (1977) concluded that, contrary to prior behaviourist theories suggesting that behaviour is learned solely by reward or punishment, (e.g. Skinner and Pavlov), most human behaviour is *actually* learned by the combination of both observing others and how their behaviour is reinforced.<sup>175</sup> According to Bandura 'others' have the capacity to constitute effective models for the transmission of information and, through vicarious reinforcement, humans choose whether to adopt or reject them.<sup>176</sup>

In relation to our topic, Bandura's theory is important. It suggests that the transmission of information through *exempla* is not necessarily a practice limited to a Roman, Greco-Roman or any other historical/geographical context. In many ways, it is something of an eternal human norm, outside of any specific time or place. Secondly, as we

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<sup>174</sup> Later 'Social Cognitive Theory.'

<sup>175</sup> McCabe and Milosevic 2015: 46.

<sup>176</sup> This perhaps highlights further the issue of determinism in Roller's model.

might see analogous parallels between Rome's culture of praise and blame and the vicarious reinforcement that Bandura highlighted, it leads us to consider/appreciate further how central such a cultural practice was in exemplary discourse, vicariously reinforcing socially accepted, or derided actions and behaviours.

Considering the Roman context further, Bandura's theory perhaps leads us to question the extent to which a moralistic *exemplum* might differ from a pragmatic *exemplum*, and whether certain cultural practices truly engage in exemplary discourse. Do, for instance, the *contubernium* and *tirocinium fori* institutions truly rely on exemplarity? Is the elder mentor always a moralistic model? Or is he a role model in a more practical sense? Is it not simply a pragmatic means by which the younger mentee 'learns the ropes'?

### Merton's 'Role-Set Theory'

In recent years, the Roman *exemplum* has become increasingly identified with the modern term: a role model. However, while a role model may bear appreciable similarities to the Latin *exemplum*, there are important differences to consider.<sup>177</sup> In this section I will to examine the term and its applicability to the Roman context.

The term 'role model' is a relatively new addition to our cultural lexicon.<sup>178</sup> First coined in 1957 by the sociologist Robert Merton, it was created following a series of studies on social groups and social roles. And while it is decidedly American in origin, as Sinclair Bell observes, it is analogous with other pre-existing concepts, like the French *modèle* or German *Vorbild*.<sup>179</sup> According to Merton, a person does not possess a single status in society's structure. As society comprises of a series of interrelated statuses and roles,

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<sup>177</sup> Bell 2008: 4.

<sup>178</sup> Calhoun 2010: 11; Holton 2003: 515.

<sup>179</sup> Bell 2008: 3.



individuals might have multiple statuses and, correspondingly, roles relating to each.<sup>180</sup>

Where status may be explained in terms of one's position; a role is the behaviour expected of those occupying a particular status.<sup>181</sup> Merton theorised therefore that individuals have a status to which certain roles or patterns of behaviour are attached and that such are expected by his or her respective reference groups. As individuals often compare themselves to reference groups of others who occupy the social role to which they might aspire, the behaviours exhibited by the occupants of said reference group in their respective 'role' becomes a comparative frame of reference for self-evaluation.<sup>182</sup>

In Merton's terms therefore, a role model refers specifically to a model for particular behaviours relating to an individual's role. It may be distinguished from the similarly conceived 'reference individual', by its characteristically limited application. While a 'reference individual' might comprise a range of behaviours or social values more generally, a role model is identified in a rather restricted sense. It essentially encompasses only one or two roles selected for emulation.<sup>183</sup>

The concept of a role model then, has appreciable similarities to the Latin *exemplum*. As Bell has recently noted, both are often used in a restricted sense, are normative in character, and can function as agents of social cohesion.<sup>184</sup> In other ways however, one cannot say that it is entirely analogous as a role model carries an inherently positive connotation which ultimately precludes it from embracing the fuller spectrum of behaviours embodied by '*exemplum*'.<sup>185</sup> Where a role model signifies models of exemplary behaviour,

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<sup>180</sup> Bell 2008: 3.

<sup>181</sup> Bell 2008: 3.

<sup>182</sup> Holton 2003: 514.

<sup>183</sup> Bell 2008: 3.

<sup>184</sup> Bell 2008: 4.

<sup>185</sup> D'Ambra 1993: 104. Also, Bell 2008: 4.

an *exemplum*, as we have identified, labels both positive paradigm figures and examples of negative conduct. While role models are limited to individuals, *exempla* can be constituted from collective groups; and where role models are limited to actions, *exempla* can include events. The term might be useful for describing certain situations, yet has its limitations and should perhaps be used with caution.

### Conclusion

Though scholars might lament that the use of *exempla* in the Roman world remains under-theorised, there are nevertheless certain theoretical models proposed by both classical scholars and sociologists that help us to understand the various aspects, processes and the impetuses involved. However, while they might help to explain some of the *exemplum*'s facets, particularly in the moral-didactic mode, there are limitations within each theory, and they do not necessarily account for every situation alone. Matthew Roller's model of exemplary discourse is by far the most comprehensive and sheds important light on the way that exemplification works. Though in its consideration of the broader picture, it is in many ways limited to accounting for instances whereby historical or mythological *exempla* are presented by other third parties. Linda Zagzebski's exemplarist virtue theory, and Robert Merton's Role-Set theory are similarly limited in what they explain. While they might be useful and relevant as a methodology for us to consider the use of *exempla* in the Roman context, their models should be used with caution as they only account for the positive and moralistic connotations of the term.

## Chapter 4. Cicero: Female *Exempla* and Exemplary *Feminae*

### Introduction

In this chapter, we will look to the earliest and most prolific of our chosen authors, Marcus Tullius Cicero. For our purposes, Cicero is important. Not only did he contribute to the development of rhetorical theory in documenting his thoughts on the nature and functions of examples, but he also presents us with the opportunity to compare theory against practice by examining the various *exempla* that feature throughout his works. Unfortunately for our purposes however, as scholars have observed, women tend to occupy far less space in Cicero's works than men do.<sup>186</sup> And while there is evidence from his letters and other sources to indicate that he maintained close relationships with several women, and interacted with numerous others in his everyday life, there is a persistent androcentric focus within his literary output, and a discernible disparity between male and female representation.<sup>187</sup> With regard to his use of *exempla* in particular, the sense of disproportion in this regard is particularly prominent. Across the entirety of his works, we find that only a handful of women are either designated as *exempla* or invoked to fulfil their conventionally associated functions.<sup>188</sup> In his legal speeches we find only three: Quinta Claudia and Claudia the Vestal Virgin in the *Pro Caelio*, and Caecilia Metella Balerica in the

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<sup>186</sup> See for example, L'Hoir 1992: 29.

<sup>187</sup> Beyond his wife Terentia, and the other women in his family, we know for example that Cicero developed a close friendship with Caerellia. His letters reveal that they shared a common love of philosophy (*Epistulae ad Atticum* 13.21a.2.); that they looked after each other's interest (*Epistulae ad Familiares* 13.72.1-2, c.f. *Ad Atticum* 7.51.3) and that he very much admired her (*Ad Atticum* 14.19). Cicero and Caerellia's friendship was clearly public. Dio Cassius *History* 46.18.4, even suggest that the pair were rumoured to be having an affair, though this is presumably invective created by his enemies. While Cicero's relationship with Caerella was seemingly exceptional, there are several other women that he seems to have interacted with regularly. See further, Wieand 1917; Austin 1946; Culver 1950.

<sup>188</sup> In many ways the androcentric bias that we see with Cicero might be due in large to the nature of his work and world, and the disparity in representation perhaps increased by the loss of certain works. We know for example that Cicero once represented a woman in court. While this is unlikely to tip the balance to any significant degree it would certainly have been interesting to see if such lost works contained more female figures.

*Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino*.<sup>189</sup> In his treatises we find two in the *De Inventione*: Tertia and Caecilia Metella; two in the *Brutus*: Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi, and Laelia; one in his treatise on the laws *De Legibus*): the Vestal Virgins, and three in his *Tusculan Disputations*: the elderly *aniculae*, Spartan women, and the women of India. In his letters there are seemingly none.<sup>190</sup>

Considering the breadth of his literary corpus, and the frequency with which Cicero employs examples within his various works, the dearth of female figures is rather disappointing. However, as I will show within this chapter, though we might not find any women deployed as *exempla* in a conventional sense within his letters, there are several occasions where he elevates individual women to a quasi-exemplary status. This, as we will see, is achieved by a variety of means, though most often by identifying them explicitly as a model for others to behold, or by characterising them in such a way as to suggest that they are a superlative amongst their peers and representative of certain virtues. Some notable examples that I will discuss here include Tertulla, the wife of Marcus Crassus (*Ad Fam.* 5.8.2); Pompeia, the wife of Publius Vatinius, *Ad Fam.* 5.11) and Junia, the wife of Marcellus

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<sup>189</sup> Santoro L’Hoir 1992: 35, has suggested that a further *exemplum* might be found in Julia, the sister of Lucius Caesar, who features in Cicero’s fourth speech against Cataline. L’Hoir argues that Cicero introduces Julia as an *exemplum* to be emulated: representing one who will sacrifice her dearest for the *Res Publica* in its hour of need. However, while any individual mentioned and commemorated has the potential to be adopted by the audience or reader, in theory, I would question the extent to which we might consider this Cicero’s intended objective. While it is clear that Cicero does apply complimentary language to describe Julia here, given the brevity of his treatment, and his patent focus on Lucius within the passage, I would argue that Julia might be better counted among the exemplary *feminae* that I will discuss in part two of this chapter, than she would an *exemplum* proper: *nisi vero cuiquam L. Caesar, vir fortissimus et amantissimus rei publicae, crudelior nudius tertius visus est, cum sororis suae, feminae lectissimae, virum praesentem et audientem vita privandum esse dixit, cum avum suum iussu consulis interfectum filiumque eius impuberem legatum a patre missum in carcere necatum esse dixit. Quorum quod simile factum, quod initum delendae rei publicae consilium?* (‘At least, this is the case unless it be thought that the courageous patriot, Lucius Caesar, was too cruel the day before yesterday when he said in the presence and hearing of the husband of that estimable lady, his sister, that he deserved to be put to death, and recalled that his own grandfather had been killed at a consul’s command and that his son, although he was only a youth and had been sent by his father to act as an intermediary, had been executed in prison. What deed had those men done, what plan to destroy the Republic had they made as terrible as the plots of these conspirators?’) *In Catilinam* 4.13. Trans. Ramsey 2013.

<sup>190</sup> One potential exception to this might be Cicero’s mother Helvia who is arguably presented as a pragmatic *exemplum* for Tiro in a letter that Cicero’s brother Quintus writes (*Ad Familiares* 16.26).

(*Ad Fam.* 15.7; 15.8), although we might include Cicero's own wife Terentia, and his daughter Tullia within this list also. While in many ways we see that these women are presented as *exempla* using conventional techniques for exemplification, I believe that they are not necessarily intended to function as actual *exempla*. Often when we consider Cicero's statements and the contexts of the work further, we see that their invocation and subsequent elevation has little moral-didactic or rhetorical value, and is superfluous to the author's ostensible purpose. As I will argue below however, this is important for our broader understanding of exemplarity as a discourse in Roman culture. Not only does it reveal that Cicero applies the language of the discourse for purposes beyond the typically cited moral and rhetorical modes, but it also shows more precisely that he exploits the discourse to serve another, more socio-political agenda. Effectively in these cases it seems that Cicero exploits exemplification strategically and intentionally to manage relationships and consolidate alliances: a dimension not formally recognised in the author's own theoretical discussions, nor fully explored in modern scholarly research.<sup>191</sup>

In this chapter then, we shall divide our attention between these two ostensible categories to discuss both those women who feature as *exempla* in conventional ways, and those who we might consider to be quasi-*exempla*. Here I will argue that while the various

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<sup>191</sup> To my knowledge, such an investigation has not been undertaken. As I have outlined in the previous chapter, while many have examined Cicero's use of *exempla*, and there are numerous studies on his treatment of individual female figures within his works, few have looked more broadly at how he uses women as examples, and even less have discussed how he utilises the exemplification of women linked to his correspondents to fulfil other, more patently social and political, purposes. The scholarship on Cicero's use of examples is extensive however some notable examples include, van der Blom 2010; 2011; 2020; Urban 2011; Morgan 2009; Langlands 2006; 2011; Robinson 1986; Brinton 1988; David 1980; Price 1975; Kornhardt 1936, and Litchfield 1914. For general studies on women in Cicero's world and works see, Treggari 2007; Viden 1993; Best 1970, and Culver 1950. Santoro L'Hoir 1992, and Adams 1972, have shed important light on women in Cicero, having examined his use of gendered terminology. For Cicero's portrayal of individual women within his works see, Skinner 1983; 2011; Peterkin 2010; Geffcken 1973; Myers 2003; Ige 2003; Leen 2000; Griffith 1996; Baltussen 2009; Späth 2010; Wilcox 2005; Dorey 1958, and Austin 1946. With regard to those who have looked at the social and political dimensions of Ciceronian *exempla*, van der Blom 2010, reveals how Cicero used personal and political *exempla* to achieve his political ambitions, and both Kraus 2005, and Langlands 2011, have discussed how he promoted himself as an *exemplum* in a similar vein. See also, Lowrie 2007.

historical women that feature within his works function largely in line with conventional though on the purpose of examples, when Cicero exemplifies his contemporaries, we see a very different set of functions. In presenting them as exemplary beings, or identifying them as exemplars of virtue, Cicero can be seen to actively employ exemplification as a means of consolidating friendships, negotiating alliances and perhaps even augmenting his public persona.

### Female *Exempla* in the Speeches and Treatises

As we have seen during our introductory survey of the *exemplum* and its functions, Cicero conceives of *exempla* primarily as a rhetorical device. Across his various definitions and explications, he suggests that they are useful to illustrate, clarify or justify a speaker's point; to embellish or decorate a speech; or to increase the speaker's credibility by citing some person or event as an authority.<sup>192</sup> Given his repeated focus on the *exemplum*'s rhetorical utility within his theoretical works, and his proclivity to frame its functions in the context of forensic and deliberative oratory, it is unsurprising that the majority (if not entirety) of female *exempla* that feature are found within his speeches and treatises and are deployed to fulfil a rhetorical function.

On some occasions, for example, women are invoked as a means of illustration. They are used to provide an example of the thing at hand, or a representative example. In his essay on divination for instance (the *De Divinatione*) Cicero presents Tertia's prophetic statements and Caecilia Metella's dreams as illustrative examples of what constitutes an omen.<sup>193</sup> More often however, while some are used straightforwardly, to illustrate a thing

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<sup>192</sup> See *Topica* 190.45; *De Oratore* 2.168; *De Inventione* 1.49.

<sup>193</sup> *De Divinatione* 1.103.46: *atque ego exempla ominum nota proferam: L. Paulus consul iterum, cum ei bellum ut cum rege Perse gereret obtigisset, ut ea ipsa die domum ad vesperum rediit, filiolam suam Tertiam, quae*

or type, the majority of women that feature within his works are used as part of an argument. Many of those within the list above are invoked to support Cicero's various points. Rather than simply illustrate a thing or type, they comprise a persuasive dimension in bolstering his claims, and ultimately convince his audience or reader that what he says is true.<sup>194</sup> A prime example of this can be seen in his *Brutus*, a treatise on oratory. In chapter 58, during a discussion Curio's talent for eloquent speaking, Cicero proposes that Curio must have developed his oratorical ability during his formative years, by observing the example of others within his home (*domestica exempla*). As Curio was known to have had no formal training, Cicero claims, it is most likely his parents and other attendants that inculcated his later talent for eloquence.<sup>195</sup> To support his argument, Cicero asserts that one's parents and other attendants within the household have a powerful impact on their development. He

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*tum erat admodum parva, osculans animum advertit tristiculam. "quid est," inquit, "mea Tertia? quid tristis es?" "mi pater," inquit, "Persa periit." tum ille arctius puellam complexus, "accipio," inquit, "mea filia, omen." erat autem mortuus catellus eo nomine. L. Flaccum, flaminem Martialem, ego audivi, cum diceret Caeciliam Metelli, cum vellet sororis suae filiam in matrimonium collocare, exisse in quoddam sacellum ominis capiendi causa, quod fieri more veterum solebat. cum virgo staret et Caecilia in sella sederet neque diu ulla vox exstitisset, puellam defatigatam petisse a matertera, ut sibi concederet, paulisper ut in eius sella requiesceret: illam autem dixisse: "vero, mea puella, tibi concedo meas sedes." quod omen res consecuta est; ipsa enim brevi mortua est, virgo autem nupsit, cui Caecilia nupta fuerat. ('Now let me provide some well-known examples of omens. When Lucius Paulus was consul for the second time and had been chosen to wage war against King Perses, upon returning home on the evening of the day on which he had been appointed, he noticed, as he kissed his little daughter Tertia (at that time a very small child), that she was rather sad. "What is the matter, Tertia, my dear? Why are you sad?" "Oh! father, Persa is dead." Paulus clasped the child in a closer embrace and said, "Daughter, I accept that as an omen." Now 'Persa' was the name of a little dog that had died. I heard Lucius Flaccus, the high priest of Mars, relate the following story: Metellus' daughter, Caecilia, who was desirous of arranging a marriage for her sister's daughter, went, according to the ancient custom, to a small chapel to receive an omen. A long time passed while the maiden stood and Caecilia was seated on a chair without any word being spoken. Finally, the former grew weary and said to her aunt: 'Let me sit awhile on your chair.' 'Certainly, my child,' said Caecilia, 'you may have my place.' And this was an omen of what came to pass, for in a short time Caecilia died and the girl married her aunt's husband.') Trans. Falconer 1927. Caecilia is also mentioned earlier at §1.44.99, when Cicero reports how she restored the temple of Juno Sospita.*

<sup>194</sup> As Michele Lowrie has commented, while the literature might not always state this explicitly, *exempla* almost always serve some persuasive end. See Lowrie 2007: 350.

<sup>195</sup> Cicero, *Brutus*, 210: *erant tamen, quibus videretur illius aetatis tertius Curio, quia splendidioribus fortasse verbis utebatur et quia Latine non pessume loquebatur usu credo aliquo domestico. nam litterarum admodum nihil sciebat; sed magni interest quos quisque audiat co tidie domi, quibuscum loquatur a puero, quem ad modum patres paedagogi matres etiam loquantur.*

then invokes Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, as a confirmatory example, along with her descendants:

...sed magni interest quos quisque audiat cotidie domi, quibuscum loquatur a puero, quem ad modum patres paedagogi matres etiam loquantur. legimus epistulas Corneliae matris Gracchorum; apparet filios non tam in gremio educatos quam in sermone matris. auditus est nobis Laeliae C. f. saepe sermo; ergo illam patris elegantia tinctam vidimus et filias eius Mucias ambas, quarum sermo mihi fuit notus, et neptes Licinias, quas nos quidem ambas, hanc vero Scipionis etiam tu, Brute, credo, aliquando audisti loquentem. (*Brutus* 210-11)

...It does certainly make a great difference what sort of speakers one is daily associated with at home, with whom one has been in the habit of talking from childhood, how one's father, one's attendant, one's mother too speaks. We have read the letters of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; they make it plain that her sons were nursed not less by their mother's speech than at her breast. It was my good fortune more than once to hear Laelia, the daughter of Gaius, speak, and it was apparent that her careful usage was coloured by her father's habit, and the same was true of her two daughters Muciae, with both of whom I have talked, and of her granddaughters the Liciniae, both of whom I have heard; one, the wife of Scipio, I imagine that you too, Brutus, have sometimes heard speak.<sup>196</sup>

As we can see, Cicero offers Cornelia, her son and granddaughters as a kind of proof. With her renown for eloquent speaking and taking an active role in the education of her sons, she is invoked alongside her descendants not only to confirm that parents and others can foster

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<sup>196</sup> Trans. Shackelton Bailey 2002. Cornelia is also mentioned in the *De Inventione* as part of Cicero's illustration of a far-fetched argument, although she is a character in Cicero's hypothetical scenario rather than an actual *exemplum* here. See *De Inventione*, 1.91: *remotum est quod ultra quam satis est petitur, huiusmodi: "quodsi non P. Scipio Corneliā filiam Ti. Graccho collocasset atque ex ea duos Gracchos procreasset, tantae seditiones natae non essent; quare hoc incommodum Scipioni ascribendum videtur"* ('A far-fetched argument is one derived from circumstances too remote, as in this case: "If Publius Scipio had not given his daughter Cornelia in marriage to Tiberius Gracchus, and if he had not had by her the two Gracchi, so great civil strife would not have arisen. Therefore this disaster seems attributable to Scipio.") Trans. Hubbell 1949.



talents and behaviours in their offspring by their own *exemplum*, but also in turn, to persuade the characters in his fictional dialogue that Curio most likely developed his talent for speaking from domestic role models.<sup>197</sup>

With our next set of examples, the four collective groups of women found in the *Tusculan Disputations*, we see a similar set of rhetorical functions. In Book 1, a discourse on death, Cicero cites the women of Sparta (*Lacena*) to support his notion that it is virtuous to meet death with contempt:

qualis tandem Lacena? quae cum filium in proelium misisset et interfectum audisset, "idcirco", inquit, "genueram, ut esset qui pro patria mortem non dubitaret occumbere." (*Tusculan Disputations* 1.102)

How great was that Lacedaemonian woman, who had sent her son to battle, and when she heard that he was slain, said, "I bore him for that purpose, so that you might have a man who would die for his country."<sup>198</sup>

In Book 2, a discourse on pain, Cicero invokes them once more, though this time in his bid to argue that repeated exposure to toil can strengthen the spirit to endure:

itaque illi, qui Graeciae formam rerum publicarum dederunt, corpora iuvenum firmari labore voluerunt; quod Spartiatae etiam in feminas transtulerunt, quae ceteris in urbibus mollissimo cultu "parietum umbris occuluntur." illi autem voluerunt nihil horum simile esse apud Lacaenas virgines, quibus magis palaestra, Eurota, sol, pulvis, labor militiae studio est quam fertilitas barbara. ergo his laboriosis exercitationibus et dolor intercurrit non numquam: impelluntur, feriuntur, abiiciuntur, cadunt, et ipse labor quasi callum quoddam obducit dolori. (*Tusculan Disputations* 2.36)

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<sup>197</sup> For more on Cornelia and her position as an *exemplum* see Roller 2018: 197-232, and Dixon 2007.

<sup>198</sup> Trans. King 1960, adapted.

Accordingly, those who gave to Greece the specific form of her governments were in favour of having young men's bodies strengthened by toil; the citizens of Sparta applied the same rule to women, who in all other cities lead a luxurious mode of life and are "sequestered behind the shadow of walls." The Spartans, however, wished for nothing of that sort in Spartan maids, whose cares are wrestling, sun, Eurotas, dust and toil, of drill far more than barbarous fecundity. It follows that pain sometimes intervenes in these toilsome exercises: the victims are driven on, struck, flung aside or fall, and toil of itself brings a certain callousness to pain.<sup>199</sup>

At §2.40, while discussing the power of habit (*consuetudinis*), Cicero invokes elderly women (*aniculae*) as a collective example of how one might achieve restraint through repeated practice:

sed adhuc de consuetudine exercitationis loquor, nondum de ratione et sapientia. aniculae saepe in diem biduum aut triduum ferunt: subduc cibum unum diem athletae, Iovem Olympium, eum ipsum, cui se exercebit, implorabit, ferre non posse se clamabit. consuetudinis magna vis est. (*Tusculan Disputations* 2.40)

But so far, I am dealing with the habit which comes from training, and not as yet with reason and wisdom. Old women often endure going without food for two or three days: take away an athlete's food for a single day; he will entreat Olympian Jove, the great god in whose honour he is in training; he will cry out that he cannot endure it. The force of habit is great.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Trans. King 1960.

<sup>200</sup> Trans. King 1960, adapted.

And finally, in Book 5, while Cicero discusses pain and its effect on virtue, he presents the women of India (alongside others) to show that fear of pain does not necessarily impede virtuous behaviour:

... dolor esse videtur acerrimus virtutis adversarius, is ardentem faciem intemptat, is fortitudinem, magnitudinem animi, patientiam se debilitaturum minatur. huic igitur succumbet virtus, huic beata sapientis et constantis viri vita cedit? ... quae barbaria India vastior aut agrestior? in ea tamen gente primum ei, qui sapientes habentur, nudi aetatem agunt et Caucasi nives hiemalemque vim perferunt sine dolore, cumque ad flammam se applicaverunt, sine gemitu aduruntur; mulieres vero in India, cum est cuius earum vir mortuus, in certamen iudiciumque veniunt quam plurimum ille dilexerit—plures enim singulis solent esse nuptae—quae est victrix, ea laeta prosequentibus suis una cum viro in rogam imponitur, illa victa maesta discedit. (*Tusculan Disputations* 5.76-78)

... pain seems to be the most active antagonist of virtue; it points its fiery darts, it threatens to undermine fortitude, greatness of soul and patience. Will virtue then have to give way to pain, will the happy life of the wise and steadfast man yield to it? ... What barbarous country more vast and wild than India? Yet amongst its people those, to begin with, who are reckoned sages pass their lives unclad and endure without show of pain the snows of the Hindu Kush and the rigour of winter, and when they throw themselves voluntarily into the flames they let themselves be burnt without a moan; whilst the women in India, when the husband of any of them dies, compete with one another to decide whom the husband loved best (for each man usually has more than one wife): and she who is victorious, accompanied by her relatives, goes joyfully to join her husband on the funeral pyre; the conquered rival sadly quits the field.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Trans King 1960, adapted. For more on the *Tusculan Disputations* see Görler 2004; Graver 2002; Seng 1998; White 1995, and Douglas 1995; 1994; 1990.

While on one level the women that feature might illustrate Cicero's various points, they are not simply representing a kind or type. Unlike Cecilia or Tertia, their invocation has a persuasive purpose in that they are intended to support the author's arguments and ultimately to convince his reader. In the case of the women in the *Tusculan Disputations*, it might be argued that they not only function to support the individual points in which they feature, but also engage with Cicero's broader themes. For example, a prominent theme that emerges within the work, is Roman moral weakness. Through Cicero's repeated references to *mollitia* (literally *softness*, but often indicating sense of moral or intellectual weakness), alongside his insinuations that the modern Roman has lost many of the morals and *mores* that underpinned their cultural superiority, Cicero suggests that Roman morality has more recently deteriorated, and that its citizens are now more prone to vice than virtue. Though he deals with this more explicitly through the *exemplum* of Gaius Marius (§2.52-4), it is perhaps no coincidence that, throughout his work, Cicero opts to source examples of virtuous behaviour from those that were stereotypically considered to be weaker or inferior to the superior Roman male: women and foreign peoples. Indeed, in the case of the women from India and Sparta, he highlights the conventional perception that they are considered to be barbarous and uncultured when he proclaims: *quae barbaria India vastior aut agrestior?* ('What barbarous country more vast and wild than India?') With his choice of these *exempla* it seems that Cicero is strategically exploiting and inverting two culturally indoctrinated stereotypes to amplify their potency as an *exemplum virtutis*. Moreover, he is also using the technique of presenting unequal comparisons to support both his individual points, and cumulatively, his greater message. By repeatedly opting to select examples of virtuous behaviour from those considered to be culturally inferior, or 'soft', he is subtly reinforcing

Roman moral shortcomings by comparison.<sup>202</sup> It is no coincidence that these three ostensible groups of women exhibit not only virtuous behaviour, but more importantly, virtues that are repeatedly required of the elite Roman male: courage, constancy, and self-control. Two of the three, as we can see, display behaviour that is broadly related to the maintenance of mental and emotional equilibrium. The elderly *aniculae* do not give into immediate desires but demonstrate self-restraint through habit and the women of Sparta demonstrate emotional control in displaying no fear of death accepting loss without grief. Even the women of India, while their practice of competing over who will follow their husband into death is not necessarily something Cicero suggests should be emulated, display courage in the face of death, through cultural programming, and channel their efforts into other things. By repeatedly selecting women and ‘barbarians’, Cicero is not only amplifying the potency of their example at the level of each individual point, he is also supporting his greater argument in subtly suggesting that the expected moral hierarchies and traditional orders have been inverted. While these women and barbarians exhibit the ideals expected of Roman men, Roman men are acting rather like women and barbarians.<sup>203</sup>

With their potential engagement with wider themes and their ability to communicate further messages beyond the various points in which they are invoked it seems that while

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<sup>202</sup> The concept is most clearly outlined by Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 5.11.10, as we have already seen: *ad exhortationem vero praecipue valent imparia. admirabilior in femina quam in viro virtus. quare, si ad fortiter faciendum accendatur aliquis, non tantum adferent momenti Horatius et Torquatus quantum illa mulier cuius manu Pyrrhus est interfectus, et ad moriendum non tam Cato et Scipio quam Lucretia...* (‘Arguments from unequal things are most useful in exhortation. Courage is more remarkable in a woman than in a man. Therefore, if we wish to kindle someone’s ambition to the performance of heroic deeds, we shall find that parallels drawn from the cases of Horatius and Torquatus will carry less weight than that of the woman by whose hand Pyrrhus was slain, and if we wish to urge a man to meet death, the cases of Cato and Scipio will carry less weight than that of Lucretia...’) Trans. Russel 1920, adapted. Interestingly, in the next section (5.11.11) Quintilian cites Cicero’s *Pro Murena* as an illustrative example of this concept.

<sup>203</sup> It may also be worth noting here that, at the time of writing the *Disputations*, Cicero was grieving for his daughter. Perhaps he had exemplary women on his mind during this time. For a further discussion of this theme see Altman 2009.

the women that feature within the *Tusculan Disputations* are primarily intended to serve rhetorical purposes, they are not without both moral and didactic dimensions. Indeed, given his engagement with moral-ethical codes and edifying objective within the treatise itself, the moral and rhetorical are almost inextricably intertwined. If we return to Cicero's *Brutus*, one might present a similar argument. Cicero's invocation of Cornelia supports his supposition that domestic *exempla* have a powerful impact on an individual's development, and that Curio most likely learned to speak well from observing others within the home. It also simultaneously reinforces the importance of observational learning, as both an educational tool and socio-cultural phenomenon in the minds of Cicero's readers as well as of course, bolstering Cornelia's position in the Roman collective consciousness, as a perpetual example of good parenting.<sup>204</sup>

So far, we have examined how Cicero uses women within his treatises as *exempla*, but there are also three rather prominent figures that feature prominently within his speeches. In the speeches we see that the women he cites fulfil much more nuanced functions. While they are once more invoked to serve a broadly rhetorical purpose, they seemingly fulfil a wider spectrum of functions that Cicero delineates in his theoretical discussions. In the next section we will look in more detail at two works in particular. First, we will examine his *Pro Caelio*, a speech in defence of Marcus Caelius Rufus, and then we will discuss his *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino*: where he advocates for Roscius' defence.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> C.f. Cicero's comments in the *Pro Murena* 65-66.

<sup>205</sup> Chronologically, the *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* is the earlier of these two speeches. However, as Cicero's treatment of Caecilia in many ways foreshadows how he elevates and uses the various exemplary *feminae* that feature within his letters, I will examine these two speeches in reverse chronological order.

## The *Pro Caelio*

In Cicero's speech on behalf of Caelius, we find two famous female *exempla*: Quinta Claudia and Claudia Pulchra, the Vestal Virgin. They feature at the speeches mid-way point, where Cicero invokes other members of Clodia Metella's family. However, to gain a sense of why he invokes them, and what purpose they serve within the speech, we must first consider the wider context of the trial, and Cicero's overall aims.

According to our sources, in 56 B.C.E., Caelius had been charged with political violence (*vis*).<sup>206</sup> The prosecutors Lucius Sempronius Atratinus, Publius Clodius (Pulcher) and Lucius Herennius Balbus had accused Caelius of committing several crimes, from inciting civil disturbances in Naples, to assaulting the Alexandrians at Puteoli and damaging the property of Palla (§23).<sup>207</sup> Alongside these primary charges however, there were also allegations that he procured gold for the murder of Dio of Alexandria, and that he attempted to poison Clodia Metella: his purported ex-mistress, and the woman from whom the gold was taken. (§18;30-32;51-53). As the final speaker in Caelius' defence, Cicero focuses his speech on these latter allegations. While he rebuffs a series of subordinate criticisms in the opening sections, pertaining to Caelius' lifestyle and recent behaviour, he devotes particular attention to the issues of gold and poisoning, and hones in on the prosecution's chief witness, Clodia Metella. As he proclaims throughout the speech, much of evidence against Caelius relies upon her testimony:

res est omnis in hac causa nobis, iudices, cum Clodia, muliere non solum nobili,  
sed etiam nota; de qua ego nihil dicam nisi depellendi criminis causa. Sed  
intellegis pro tua praestanti prudentia, Cn. Domiti, cum hac sola rem esse nobis.

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<sup>206</sup> See further, Dyck 2013: 2-4.

<sup>207</sup> For the debate over whether this Publius Clodius was Publius Clodius Pulcher see Berry 2000: 124, who suggests that it was more likely a freedman or relative of Pulcher.

quae si se aurum Caelio commodasse non dicit, si venenum ab hoc sibi paratum esse non arguit, petulanter facimus, si matrem familias secus, quam matronarum sanctitas postulat, nominamus. sin ista muliere remota nec crimen ullum nec opes ad oppugnandum Caelium illis relinquuntur, quid est aliud quod nos patroni facere debeamus, nisi ut eos, qui insectantur, repellamus? quod quidem facerem vehementius, nisi intercederent mihi inimicitiae cum istius mulieris viro—fratre volui dicere; semper hic erro. nunc agam modice nec longius progrediar quam me mea fides et causa ipsa coget. neque enim muliebres umquam inimicitias mihi gerendas putavi, praesertim cum ea quam omnes semper amicam omnium potius quam cuiusquam inimicam putaverunt. (*Pro Caelio* 13)

In this case, gentlemen, we are concerned entirely with Clodia, a woman not only of noble birth, but also of notoriety, of whom I will say no more than what is necessary to repel the charge. But you, with your great wisdom, Gnaeus Domitius, understand that it is with this woman alone that we have to deal. If she denies that she lent Caelius gold, if she does not allege that he tried to poison her, we are behaving disgracefully in using a matron's name otherwise than as a matron's virtue demands. But if with this woman removed from the case, our enemies have no accusation left nor means to attack Caelius, what other course is open to us who are his counsel than to refute those who attack him? And that I should do with all the more vehemence, were I not hindered by my personal enmity to that woman's husband—I meant to say brother; I always make that slip. As it is, I will act with moderation, and go no farther than my duty to my client and the case itself compel me. For indeed I never thought that I should have to engage in quarrels with women, still less with a woman whom everyone has always thought to be everyone's friend rather than anyone's enemy.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> All translations for the *Pro Caelio* will be taken from Gardner 1958, unless otherwise stated.



With Clodia's testimony playing such a central role in the prosecution's defence, Cicero attempts to undermine their case by damaging her credibility.<sup>209</sup> He casts aspersions on her character and questions her intentions, presenting her as a vindictive immoral *meretrix*: the 'Medea of the Palatine'.<sup>210</sup> Ultimately it seems, Cicero strives to show that Clodia fabricated these accusations. He claims that Clodia is still bitter from their breakup and uses Caelius' current situation as an opportunity to enact revenge:

...Medea animo aegra, amore saevo saucia. sic enim, iudices, reperietis, quod, cum ad id loci venero, ostendam, hanc Palatinam Medeam migrationemque hanc adulescenti causam sive malorum omnium sive potius sermonum fuisse. (*Pro Caelio* 8)

...Medea, sick at heart, wounded by cruel love. Thus, gentlemen, you will learn what I will show when I have reached that point in my speech, that this Medea of the Palatine and his change of residence have been for a young man the cause of all his misfortunes, or rather of all the gossip.<sup>211</sup>

Cicero's defensive strategy then is founded predominantly upon invective. Through his disparaging remarks and vituperative statements, he aims to cast Clodia in a negative light to undermine the credibility of her testimony, and thus in turn, the prosecution's case. However, while his various explicit jibes and slanderous accusations seem to form the basis of his approach, we also see within the speech that he exploits the power of *exempla* to advance his admonitory aims. At the speech's mid-way point, we see that Cicero changes tactic. He invokes one of Clodia's own ancestors, Appius Claudius Caecus, in a scathing

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<sup>209</sup> For an argument against Clodia's centrality within the case, despite Cicero's proclamations, see Dorey 1958: 175.

<sup>210</sup> See *Pro Caelio* 20.

<sup>211</sup> According to the Loeb translator, Robert Gardner, Cicero is reciting the beginning of the *Medea exsul* of Ennius, adapted from Euripides play.

*prosopopoeia* designed to 'deal with her' instead. While the passage is quite lengthy, it is worth quoting in full here:

“...ex ipsa quaeram prius utrum me secum severe et graviter et prisce agere malit an remisse et leniter et urbane. si illo austero more ac modo, aliquis mihi ab inferis excitandus est ex barbatis illis non hac barbula, qua ista delectatur, sed illa horrida, quam in statuis antiquis atque imaginibus videmus, qui obiurget mulierem et pro me loquatur, ne mihi ista forte suscenseat. existat igitur ex hac ipsa familia aliquis ac potissimum Caecus ille; minimum enim dolorem capiet, qui istam non videbit. qui profecto, si exstiterit, sic aget ac sic loquetur: “mulier, quid tibi cum Caelio, quid cum homine adolescentulo, quid cum alieno? cur aut tam familiaris huic fuisti, ut aurum commodares, aut tam inimica, ut venenum timeres? non patrem tuum videras, non patruum, non avum, non proavum, non abavum, non atavum audieras consules fuisse; non denique modo te Q. Metelli matrimonium tenuisse sciebas, clarissimi ac fortissimi viri patriaeque amantissimi, qui simul ac pedem limine extulerat, omnes prope cives virtute, gloria, dignitate superabat? cum ex amplissimo genere in familiam clarissimam nupsisses, cur tibi Caelius tam coniunctus fuit? cognatus, adfinis, viri tui familiaris? nihil eorum. quid igitur fuit nisi quaedam temeritas ac libido? nonne te, si nostrae imagines viriles non commovebant, ne progenies quidem mea, Q. illa Claudia, aemulam domesticae laudis in gloria muliebri esse admonebat, non virgo illa Vestalis Claudia, quae patrem complexa triumphantem ab inimico tribuno plebei de curru detrahi passa non est? cur te fraterna vitia potius quam bona paterna et avita et usque a nobis cum in viris tum etiam in feminis repetita moverunt? ideone ego pacem Pyrrhi diremi, ut tu amorum turpissimorum cotidie foedera ferires, ideo aquam adduxi, ut ea tu incestu uterere, ideo viam munivi, ut eam tu alienis viris comitata celebrares?” (*Pro Caelio* 14)

“... I will first inquire of herself, whether she prefers me to deal with her severely, solemnly, and in an old-fashioned manner, or mildly, gently, and in a modern way. If in the old grim mode and method, then I must call up from the dead one of those full-bearded men of old —not with a trim modern beardlet that she

delights in, but a rough one, like those we see on old statues and busts—to rebuke the woman and speak instead of me, so that she may not perhaps be angered with me. Let me therefore call up some member of this very family, above all Appius Claudius the Blind, for he will feel the least sorrow since he will not be able to see her. If he appears, this assuredly is how he will plead, this is how he will speak: “Woman, what hast thou to do with Caelius, with a stripling, with a stranger? Why hast thou been either so intimate with him as to lend him gold, or such an enemy as to fear poison? Hadst thou not seen that thy father, hadst thou not heard that thy uncle, thy grandfather, thy great-grand-father, thy great-great-grandfather and his father were consuls? Lastly, didst thou not know that lately thou hadst in marriage Quintus Metellus, a most illustrious and most courageous man, most devoted to his country, who had only to step outside his own door to surpass nearly all his fellow citizens in courage, in glory and in prestige? When thou hadst passed, by marriage, from a family of high nobility into a most illustrious house, why was Caelius so closely connected with thee? Kinsman? Relative by marriage? Friend of thine husband? None of these. What then was thy reason, if it was not some reckless passion? If the images of the men of our family did not touch thine heart, did not even the famous Quinta Claudia, a daughter of my own race, rouse thee to show thyself a rival of those virtuous women who have brought glory upon our house? Wast thou not roused by Claudia, that famous Vestal who, at her father’s triumph, held him in her embrace and did not suffer him to be dragged down from his chariot by a hostile tribune of the commons? Why did thy brother’s vices move thee rather than the virtues of thy father and of thine ancestors, kept alive since my time not only by the men but also by the women of our family? Was it for this that I tore up the peace with Pyrrhus, that thou might daily strike bargains about thine infamous amours? Was it for this that I brought water to Rome, that thou might use it after thy incestuous debauches? Was it for this that I built up a road, that thou might frequent it with a train of other women’s husbands?”

As we can see, Caecus' prosopopoeia serves quite clearly to reinforce Cicero's earlier aspersions and vilify Clodia further. Intended explicitly to rebuke her, it not only openly criticises her behaviour and challenges her chastity by questioning the reason for her involvement with Caelius, but it also introduces notions that she falls short of expectations and destroys the family legacy. Such notions, as we can see, are communicated not only through Caecus, the primary *exemplum*, but also through the cast of subordinate *exempla* that Caecus invokes in turn. By mentioning Clodia's other exemplary ancestors, particularly the two female figures: Quinta Claudia and Claudia the Vestal Virgin, Cicero is able to highlight the disparity between their virtuous actions and Clodia's immoral behaviour and amplify her moral failings by comparison.<sup>212</sup>

Invoking exemplary individuals as a comparative standard, as we have seen, is a strategy that Cicero has used before. Not only does he use it in his *Tusculan Disputations* (c. 45 B.C.E.) to reveal the moral failings of the contemporary Roman male, but he employs it rather consciously in his earlier speeches against Verres (c.70 B.C.E). At §2.4.73, for instance, Cicero recalls the deeds of Publius Scipio. He makes it clear that the invocation of positive figures can illuminate another's vices antithetically and invites both the audience and the jurors to observe the difference:

... aliquot saeculis post P. Scipio bello Punico tertio Carthaginem cepit; qua in victoria—videte hominis virtutem et diligentiam, ut et domesticis praeclarissimae virtutis exemplis gaudeatis et eo maiore odio dignam istius incredibilem audaciam iudicetis... (*In Verrem* 2.4.73)

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<sup>212</sup> For an interesting discussion of how Cicero uses the *prosopopoeia* to denigrate Clodia further, see Brunn 1997. Brunn argues that Cicero emphasizes Clodia's immoral use of water throughout the work, though particularly through the invocation of Caecus who was credited with constructing both the Via Appia and Aqua Appia, to further vilify her character.

... some time later, after the third Punic War, Publius Scipio captured Carthage. In the hour of victory—I would have you observe his scrupulous uprightness, that you may rejoice in the noble patterns of upright conduct that our countrymen afford to us, and may hold Verres' incredible lack of scruple the more detestable on that account...<sup>213</sup>

Alongside these two particular instances of practical application, we see this concept expounded frequently in rhetorical theory, and linked rather specifically to the rhetoric of praise and blame. Menander Rhetor for example, suggests that *synkrisis* (comparison) was particularly useful in panegyrics and invectives. He highlights how descriptions of character traits might be further amplified by presenting the subject as surpassing, or equally failing to match, the proverbially virtuous.<sup>214</sup> And Aristotle expresses a similar sentiment when he recommends comparing the subject with famous villains in order to make them look better.<sup>215</sup> Interestingly, in another of Cicero's own treatises on rhetoric, we even see this particular technique of invoking the dead to amplify the message, referenced. In his *Topica*, he states:

ficta etiam exempla similitudinis habent uim; sed ea oratoria magis sunt quam uestra, quamquam uti etiam uos soletis, sed hoc modo. finge mancipio aliquem dedisse id quod mancipio dari non potest. num idcirco id eius factum est qui accepit? aut num is qui mancipio dedit ob eam rem se ulla re obligauit? in hoc genere oratoribus et philosophis concessum est ut muta etiam loquantur, ut

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<sup>213</sup> Trans. Greenwood 1935, adapted.

<sup>214</sup> Menander Rhetor 372.21–5. See also, 376.31–377.9.

<sup>215</sup> See Aristotle, *Aphth. Prog.* 31.7–12 (Spengel 42.21–6). *Aphth. Prog.* 22.13–24.21 (Spengel 36.21–38.13) also provided a sample encomium of Thucydides which compared him favourably with Herodotus. See also heon, *Prog.* 112.20–113.24; *Herm. Prog.* 18.16–20.5 (Spengel 14.8–15.5). Eutropius 8.5.3 states that late Roman emperors were acclaimed in the Senate as 'more prosperous than Augustus, better than Trajan'. Libanius included three model *synk-rises* between individuals (Achilles and Diomedes; Ajax and Achilles; Demosthenes and Aeschines) in his *progymnasmata* – *Lib. Prog.* Comparisons 1–3. For more on *synkrisis* in classical literature, especially Plutarch, see Focke 1923; Clark 1957, particularly 198–9; Pelling 1986; Swain 1992; Duff 1999: 243–309, and Flowers 2013: 48.

mortui ab inferis excitentur, ut aliquid, quod fieri nullo modo possit, augendae rei gratia dicatur aut minuendae, quae υπερβολή dicitur. (*Topica* 45)

Even fictitious examples have all the force of real ones, but they belong rather to the orator than to you lawyers, although you also do use them sometimes, but in this way: ... in this kind of argument orators and philosophers are allowed to make even dumb things talk; so that the dead may be raised from the shades below, or that anything which intrinsically is absolutely impossible, may, for the sake of adding force to the argument, or diminishing, be spoken of as real: and that figure is called hyperbole.<sup>216</sup>

From this it seems clear that Cicero employs conventional techniques to advance his admonitory aims. While Caecus berates her openly, the *exempla* that he invokes in turn function as a standard for her evaluation, highlighting the disparity between approved and disapproved behaviour to compound the message. As Eleanor Leach has suggested, Cicero's audience would not have needed to be specialist in Clodia's family history to understand his reference to their pre-eminence, nor would they miss the point that Clodia is their antithesis.<sup>217</sup> It is clearly no coincidence that both of these women have a particular affinity with Clodia's primary failing: chastity. The first Claudia (Quinta) was celebrated in the Roman tradition as the embodiment of *pudicitia* and *castitas* in various sources, and the second Claudia (the Vestal Virgin) has obvious connections to *castitas* in being an *virgo Vestalis*.<sup>218</sup> With Quinta, interestingly, there is also an added element of irony beneath her

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<sup>216</sup> It is particularly interesting how he suggests that such a strategy is more appropriate for orators than lawyers. By exploiting a strategy that he preserves for orators, emphasizes the performative aspect of the speech. It seems that he intentionally transforms the scene into a spectacle.

<sup>217</sup> Leach 2007: 3.

<sup>218</sup> For Quinta's association with *pudicitia* see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.120-1; Livy *Ab Urbe Condita*, 29.14.12, and Ovid *Fasti* 4.343-4. For her association with *castitas* see *Fasti* 4.305-48; Cicero *De Haruspicum Responsis* 27. Interestingly, as Langlands (2006: 61, n. 74) comments, Cicero's passage that deals with Quinta in the text is not only addressed to Clodia's brother, Clodius, but it ends with a sarcastic reference to Clodia herself. For a further discussion of Quinta's portrayal in Roman literature see Langlands, 2006: 67-73; 301-2;

invocation. Quinta is not only an appropriate example to select because of her familial connection, she is also particularly apt because at one point, like Clodia, she too was accused of being unchaste. However, while Clodia might share this ostensible similarity in circumstance with her exemplary ancestor, the respective outcomes are very different. Where Quinta was vindicated by the testimony of one divine entity (the goddess Cybele), Clodia is effectively being condemned here by another, in Caecus, her ancestral shade.<sup>219</sup> Equally ironic, is the fact that Clodia's accusations against Caelius which brought him to this trial were delaying the very festival that celebrated her ancestor's famous deed: the *Megalenses Ludi*.<sup>220</sup>

While both of these women speak initially to Clodia's sexual morality, they also reflect further her neglect of her social and familial duties. In this regard, Claudia the Vestal is very much the *primum exemplum* here. Not only was she celebrated a paradigm of *pietas* in Roman culture, but Cicero makes clear, she was famous specifically for sacrificing herself to save her father's life during his triumph.<sup>221</sup> However, while Cicero might direct the audience towards Claudia's heroic deeds to emphasize her devotion to her family, it might be argued that she is further representative of this dutiful dimension in her position as a vestal virgin too. As Cicero suggests in his treatises on the laws (*de Legibus*), the Vestals do not only have a religious duty to serve the goddess, but they also have a more general social

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352-3, and Scheid, 2001: 23-33. For a discussion of the Claudii's association with chastity and virtue see Langlands 2006: 298-305.

<sup>219</sup> See Ovid *Fasti* 4.343-4: *Claudia praecedat laeto celeberrima vultu, credita vix tandem teste pudica dea* ('Claudia went on with a happy face, most celebrated, finally believed to be chaste by the goddess' testimony')

<sup>220</sup> See further Salzman 1982, who argues that Cicero emphasizes the fact that the trial is held during this festival as part of his invective against Clodia. c.f. Geffcken 1973, who suggests that the timing of the trial would have aided the comedic aspect of Cicero's performance and diminished the *gravitas* of Caelius's charges.

<sup>221</sup> According to Scheid (2001: 28), Claudia's image was depicted on the reverse side of coins issued by Gaius Claudius Vestalis, and Cicero's heroic depiction is mirrored in Valerius Maximus' account. See *Dicta et Facta Memorabilia* 5.46. However, as Langlands (2006: 353) comments, in the later account by Suetonius, (*Tiberius* 2.3) Claudia's deeds are framed more as an abuse of power.

duty, to serve as an example for other women. While he proclaims here that they should show others that by their nature, women have an inherent capacity for chastity, he nevertheless evinces a sense of duty when identifying this central role:

cumque Vesta quasi focum urbis, ut Graeco nomine est appellata, quod nos prope idem Graecum, non interpretatum nomen tenemus, complexa sit, ei colendae *virgines* praesint, ut advigiletur facilius ad custodiam ignis et sentiant mulieres in illis naturam feminarum omnem castitatem pati. (*De Legibus* 2.29)

Since Vesta, who gets her name from the Greek (for we preserve the Greek word almost exactly, instead of translating it), has embraced the city hearth under her protection, *virgins should have charge of her worship, so that the care and guardianship of the fire* may be more easily maintained, and so that other women might understand (by their example) that it is in the female nature to endure complete chastity.<sup>222</sup>

While Clodia was certainly not a vestal, scholars argue that as an aristocratic woman, she has a similar social obligation to provide a model for other women. Leen for instance highlights how Caecus' rhetorical questioning not only alludes to Clodia's unchaste behaviour, but it also highlights more particularly, the aristocratic status of her house (the Claudii and Metelli).<sup>223</sup> With such conspicuous references, to her social pedigree and family's consular history, while perhaps speaking to a further issue – that Clodia mixes with men of lower rank – it simultaneously reminds the jurors that as a member of the nobility, society demanded much higher standards of behaviour from Clodia than she currently displays.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Trans. Keyes 1961, adapted. For more on the Vestals, and their association with *castitas*, see Beard 1980.

<sup>223</sup> See further, Leen 2000: 150.

<sup>224</sup> Leen: 2000: 150. See also, Langlands 2006: 281-318, who discusses the display of sexual morality in Cicero's speeches.



Finally, while the two exemplary *Claudiae* amplify the notion that Clodia is unchaste and fails to live up to both the family name, and her wider social duty, they also highlight rather emphatically that Clodia lacks moral/ethical compass. As Caecus claims, the positive examples established by her ancestors that were expected to inspire her are ignored, she instead elects to follow the vices of her brother Clodius instead.

In the *Pro Caelio* then we see that the orator employs *exempla* to advance his principal aims. However, while the prosopopoeia might function most prominently to persuade his audience that Clodia's testimony must not be trusted, for all her moral failings, it also functions in ways beyond this persuasive dimension. As scholars have often observed, while Cicero might claim that he invokes these characters to deal with Clodia in sombre fashion and openly rebuke her, there is an overarching element of levity within the scene, and a visibly comedic dimension.<sup>225</sup> Not only does his invocation of Caecus allow for comic play-acting, but his introduction comprises of comedic quips on how he will deal with Clodia, and puns about Caecus' ability to see. Interestingly such a dimension seemingly aligns with Cicero's rhetorical parameters for the *exemplum* and its functions. While he does not explicitly identify comedy as a common function, in his theoretical discussions, he does suggest that *exempla* have a certain entertainment value.<sup>226</sup> In his treatise *De Partitione Oratoria*, for example, on two occasions, Cicero mentions the ability for *exempla* to move (*commovere*) and delight (*delectare*) and audience:

verisimilia autem partim singula movent suo pondere, partim etiamsi videntur esse exigua per se, multum tamen cum sunt coacervata proficiunt. atque in his verisimilibus insunt nonnumquam etiam certae rerum et propriae notae.

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<sup>225</sup> For example, Geffcken 1973:17-19, Leigh 2004, and Salzman 1982. For a fuller discussion of how Cicero uses comedy more generally in this speech see Geffcken 1973.

<sup>226</sup> See further, David 1980.

maximam autem facit fidem ad similitudinem veri, primum exemplum, deinde introducta rei similitudo; fabula etiam nonnumquam, etsi est incredibilis, tamen homines commovet. (*De Partitione Oratoria* 40)

As to probabilities, these in some cases carry their own weight intrinsically, and in others even if they seem to be slight in themselves nevertheless go a long way when combined together. Also among these probabilities there are sometimes also marks that are certain and peculiar to the things. But the greatest corroboration is supplied to a probable truth first by an example, next by the introduction of a parallel case; but also sometimes by an tale, even though it be incredible, nevertheless still moves men.<sup>227</sup>

rerum amplificatio sumitur eisdem ex locis omnibus quibus illa quae dicta sunt ad fidem; maximeque definitiones valent conglobatae et consequentium frequentatio et contrariarum et dissimilium et inter se pugnantium rerum conflictio, et causae, et ea quae sunt de causis orta, maximeque similitudines et exempla; fictae etiam personae, muta denique loquantur... (*De Partitione Oratoria* 16)

Amplification of the facts is obtained from all the same topics from which were taken the statements made to secure credence; and very effective are accumulations of definitions, recapitulation of consequences, juxtaposition of contrary, discrepant and contradictory statements, and statements of causes and their consequences, and especially analogies and examples; and also imaginary persons and even dumb objects must speak...<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Trans. Hubbell 1949.

<sup>228</sup> Trans. Rackham 1942. c.f. *De Oratore* 3.204-205: *morum ac uitae imitatio uel in personis uel sine illis, magnum quoddam ornamentum orationis et aptum ad animos conciliandos uel maxime, saepe autem etiam ad commouendos; personarum ficta inductio, uel grauissimum lumen augendi*. It is interesting that he mentions here how imaginary people and 'dumb objects' may speak to amplify a speaker's point. Also interesting is the fact that later, within this section of the *De Oratore*, Cicero also mentions how men are moved (*homines moventur*) by three sources: by one's affection for the gods, country or parents (*caritate ut decorum, ut patriae, ut parentum*), by the love (*amore*) one has for their brother, wife, children or family, and by a respect for virtue (*honestate ut virtutum*), and then goes on to state that summoning these exhortations rouse hatred in those who violate them and engender compassion for those who uphold them: *ex eis et*

And in both his invective against Verres and his treatise on oratory Cicero seems to associate *exempla* with pleasure, as well as reason:

...commemoratio autem antiquitatis exemplorumque prolatio summa cum delectatione et auctoritatem orationi affert et fidem. (*Orator* 34.120)

...the mention of antiquity and the citation of examples give the speech authority and credibility as well as affording the highest pleasure to the audience.

nam cum in causa tanta, cum in crimine maximo dici a defensore coeptum est factitatum esse aliquid, expectant ii qui audiunt exempla ex uetere memoria, ex monumentis ac litteris, plena dignitatis, plena antiquitatis; haec enim plurimum soient et auctoritatis habere ad probandum et iucunditatis ad audiendum. (*In Verrem* 2.3.209)

In so important a trial on so serious a charge, when the advocate for the defence begins to plead that something has “often been done,” his hearers expect to be told of precedents drawn from the annals of the past, recorded by the sculptor’s chisel and the historian’s pen, clothed with all the dignity of bygone days; for these, it is found, most delight our ears and most convince our judgements.<sup>229</sup>

While the contexts surrounding these might be very different, and the kind of pleasure that Cicero envisages here is derived decidedly from inspirational tales of the past, we see how this scene in the *Pro Caelio* has the potential to delight his audience through the various comedic elements aforementioned.

Comedy, however, is only one of the ways in which this prosopopoeia might delight the audience. Katherine Geffcken for instance, has discussed the notion of voyeurism within

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*cohortationes summuntur ad ea reinenda, et in eos a quibus ea violata sunt odia incitantur et miseratio nascitur.* Such, has obvious connections with this passage of the *Pro Caelio*.

<sup>229</sup> Trans. Greenwood 1935.

the speech and highlights how in many ways it might also satisfy the juror's prurient curiosity about the private life of a noblewoman.<sup>230</sup> As we can see throughout, there is a persistent focus on Clodia's sexual exploits, and Cicero seems to display his own prurient fascination with his close detailing of Clodia's deportment and other aspects of her lifestyle.<sup>231</sup> While certain elements within the speech more generally might gratify prurient voyeurism, there is also something perversely voyeuristic about the prosopopoeia in particular. Not only are Cicero's intentions perversely sadistic: seeking explicitly to rebuke her, but the fact that he seeks to do so spectacularly: establishing a scene in which she is verbally flogged in public by her ancestral patriarch and witnessed by both the real-life jurors and imaginary panel of ancestral on-lookers, adds an extra element of humiliation to Clodia's debasement. On my reading it seems quite clear that Cicero takes much pleasure in this; that he revels in her humiliation. Consequently, I would argue, while certain elements in the speech might evince prurience, the prosopopoeia more specifically, also pleases Cicero and others through *Schadenfreude*: a term which denotes the pleasure one derives from witnessing another's misfortunes or humiliation.

Cicero's deployment of *exempla* within the *Pro Caelio* then serves several functions simultaneously. On one level they support the orator's overall argumentative agenda: to undermine the prosecution's credibility by denigrating their chief witness, and on another, they work to entertain the audience through their participation in these comedic dimensions, and their ability to satisfy *Schadenfreude*. However, while ostensibly the entire cast of exemplary characters that feature seem to work collectively in these aspects, it is

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<sup>230</sup> Geffcken 1973: 27-43, especially 41-43. c.f. Leen 2000: 148 and Skinner 1983: 275.

<sup>231</sup> Interestingly, as Leen (2001:148) highlights, Cicero even goes so far as to blame Clodia herself for making this voyeurism inevitable by dragging her private affairs into public: *quae tu quoniam mente nescio qua effrenata atque praecipiti in forum defer iudiciumque voluisti. (Pro Caelio 35; cf. 47).*

important to note that there are a number of differences between the ways in which male and female *exempla* are used.

The first area in which we see differentiation for instance is with this comedic aspect. While it might be argued that all *exempla* play a part in providing entertainment value, it is only truly his invocation of the male Caecus, that facilitates this comedic dimension. The subsequent *exempla* that he invokes in turn under Caecus' guise, do little to advance this. They stand, as I have suggested earlier, to serve as the yardstick by which Cicero might evaluate Clodia's behaviour and highlight her moral failures, as well as functioning and as a secondary set of witness to substantiate Caecus' claims.

Alongside differences in terms of function, there are also several clear differences in terms of activity. The male Caecus, as we can see, is highly active. As Cicero's mouthpiece, he is given both voice and body to as judge and juror in presenting his imagined evaluations of Clodia's behaviour before the audience, and actively rebuke her. The subsequent cast of exemplary ancestors alternatively, are rather more passively paraded. They play no active role in criticising her, they only shame her implicitly by their presence and their virtuous reputation.

Beyond these fundamental differences in function and levels of activity, we also see differentiation along gendered lines. As we see within the speech, there is not only layering of *exempla*, but a visible division by gender, as Caecus, groups *exempla* not only by their relationship to Clodia: presenting immediate family and her husband before distant exemplary ancestors, but he also categorises them by sex: separating male from female *exempla*. The males are given not only sequential primacy but increased numerical weighting. And while Caecus does display a heightened sense of incredulity when he questions why Clodia did not emulate Quinta and Claudia Pulchra, there is no equivalent

mention of her other female relatives: no mention of her mother, aunts, sisters or grandmother, to counterbalance the men.

Finally, we see also differentiation through the ways in which these men and women are envisaged. In assuming the role of Caecus, Cicero's interlocutor is given voice and body to communicate Cicero's messages. But he is also awarded a level of consciousness, as Cicero considers how his thoughts, feelings and reactions to the situation. He is seemingly more tangible, more present and more three dimensional. The subsequent male *exempla* that Caecus invokes in turn are envisaged through tangible objects, specifically the wax *imagines*: the collection of ancestral funerary masks that frequented the atrium in aristocratic households and stood to remind the inhabitants of their familial achievements.<sup>232</sup> The two female *exempla*, alternatively, seem more ephemeral. They are imagined through their *facta* and through *fabulae* which, while undeniably still potent and important, seem much more fleeting and less permanent than the alternatives awarded to the males.<sup>233</sup>

While at first it seems that *exempla* work together to service Cicero's overall objectives, the concordance we see between them on a global scale overlooks subtle nuances in their respective functions, as well as their levels of participation, and issues of gender differentiation. While the instances might be subtle, they are nevertheless important for our understanding. They present a fuller picture of the ways that male and female *exempla* are seemingly used, at least, on this occasion.

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<sup>232</sup> Duffalo 2001, suggests that the prosopopoeia echoes the Roman funerary oration through his reference to the *imagines* alongside the overall motif of conjuring the dead *ab inferis*. However, I rather believe that this is not necessarily his intent here. His comments in his *Topica*, discussed above, suggest that the invocation of the dead is designed as a strategy for amplification of his message, more than mimic a funerary encomium.

<sup>233</sup> Perhaps also interesting that while these *exempla* are envisaged in different ways, they all share a connection with performative media. Caecus assumes the role of the comic actor, performing on the stage. Clodia's male family members envisaged through wax *imagines*, provide the backdrop like theatrical masks, and the women are invoked through *fabulae*.

In Cicero's *Pro Caelio* then, we see that the orator deploys these two female *exempla* in conventional and expected ways. While there might be subtle differentiation between them and their male counterparts, the women that he invokes fulfil a range of identified rhetorical functions, and also simultaneously comprise an ethical dimension in engaging within the wider framework of moral values, perpetuating certain social norms pertaining to the position of aristocratic women in Late Republican society and the requirement for them to maintain a moral reputation, as well as live up to their ancestral pedigree.

However, while this is important for our understanding of the discourse, particularly in terms of highlighting the levels of differentiation involved, it is important to note at this point that so far within his speeches, Cicero has largely deployed established canonical *exempla*, historical individuals or groups of peoples. In the next case study we will explore how the introduction of contemporary individuals, known personally by the author himself, seemingly transforms the nature of the discourse and the ways in which *exempla* might be used.

### *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino*

For our final case study, we will discuss one of the first women to feature as an *exemplum* in Cicero's speeches: Caecilia Metella (Balerica).<sup>234</sup> Caecilia features in Cicero's oratorical debut: the *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* c. 80 B.C.E., where Cicero strives to defend Sextus

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<sup>234</sup> Caecilia's identity is still the subject of some debate in modern scholarship. The most recent discussion is found in Kragelund 2001: 62- 63, who follows previous scholarship in suggesting that she was the daughter of Quintus Metellus Balearicus (consul in 123 B.C.E.) and the same Caecilia who Cicero reports had a vision of Juno Sospita at the onset of the Social Wars. (*De Divinatione* 1.4 and 99. c.f. Vasaly 1985, and Richlin 2014: 226.) Others however, like Gelzer (1969: 19 n. 17), believe that this Caecilia was the wife of Appius Claudius Pulcher (consul in 79 B.C.E.) and a mother of six children, including the infamous Clodia and Clodius. According to the Loeb editor, the manuscripts are inconsistent. However, as most scholars, including the Loeb editor, side with the first of these two interpretations, the text has been altered to reflect the description of her as "Balearici filia, Nepotis soror" seen in §147 on both occasions in which she is mentioned within the speech. (See Freese 1930: 255 n. 'a'.)

Roscus Jr. against the charge of parricide.<sup>235</sup> Within the speech, Caecilia is mentioned twice. First, during the *exordium* (*Rosc.* 27), as he recalls the various events preceding the trial, and once more towards his conclusion (*Rosc.* 147), where he laments Roscius' continued plight, and casts aspersions on Chrysogonos: a freedman of the dictator Sulla who Cicero claims was intimately involved behind the scenes. On both of these occasions it seems that Caecilia is mentioned for her involvement in events preceding the trial, however, while she ostensibly features as part of Cicero's bid to narrate the surrounding circumstances, we quickly see that Cicero goes beyond the necessities of the *narratio* and makes a visible effort to present Caecilia as a moral *exemplum*. The first of these two instances, Caecilia's introduction, is most pronounced:

...de amicorum cognatorumque sententia Romam confugit et sese ad Caeciliam, Nepotis sororem, Balearici filiam, quam honoris causa nomino, contulit, qua pater usus erat plurimum; in qua muliere, iudices, etiam nunc, id quod omnes semper existimaverunt, quasi exempli causa vestigia antiqui officii remanent. ea Sex. Roscium inopem, eiectum domo atque expulsus ex suis bonis, fugientem latronum tela et minas recepit domum hospiti que oppresso iam desperatoque ab omnibus opitulata est. eius virtute, fide, diligentia factum est, ut hic potius vivus in reos quam occisus in proscriptos referretur. (*Pro Roscio* 27.10)

... on the advice of his friends and relatives my client took refuge in Rome, and fled to Caecilia, the sister of Nepos, the daughter of Balearicus (whose name I mention with respect), formerly an intimate friend of his father, a woman in whom, gentlemen, even today, as has always been the general opinion, there still survive, to serve as a model, traces of the old sense of duty. She took into her house Sextus Roscius, when he was destitute, driven out of his home and expelled from his property, fleeing from the daggers and threats of brigands, and

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<sup>235</sup> For a discussion of the speeches date, see Kinsey 1967: 61-67. c.f. Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 15. 28.



assisted her friend, now overwhelmed with misfortune, whose safety was despaired of by all. Thanks to her courage, loyalty, and vigilance, his name was entered while he was alive in the list of the accused, instead of in the list of the proscribed after his death.<sup>236</sup>

While Caecilia is mentioned as part of Cicero's narrative bid to set the scene, the orator does much more than simply recall her involvement in events. Following her extended and formal introduction, he immediately establishes the notion of her exemplarity, alluding to her established reputation for virtue, and declaring her potential to act as a model of *officium*: *in qua mulier, iudices, etiam nunc, id quod omnes semper existimaverunt, quasi exempli causa vestigial antiqui officii remanent*. Alongside this, Cicero exemplarizes Caecilia further with a series of laudatory statements that applaud Caecilia's actions and highlights her other virtues. He augments the facets of her model, and somewhat justifies his proclamation, by suggesting that Caecilia displayed *virtus*, *fides* and *diligentia* in supporting her family friend.

In Caecilia's first mention, Cicero presents her as the embodiment of certain virtues. Yet the virtues that Caecilia displays warrant further discussion in themselves. Caecilia's primary virtue, *officium*, for instance was particularly important in Roman culture, especially amongst elites. Denoting a service, a kindness, a courtesy, or (as here) a sense of duty, it was seen as integral to society from the successful maintenance of social, political and familial relationships to, the successful running of the state.<sup>237</sup> *Fides* (loyalty) and *diligentia* (diligence in care), too were also highly prized in elite Roman culture, particularly by Cicero. Not only are they both virtues that he often claims for himself, but he also praises countless

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<sup>236</sup> All translations of the *Pro Roscio Amerino* will be taken from Freese 1930, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>237</sup> c.f. Seneca *De Beneficiis* 3.18.1; *Dig.* 37.6.6; Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 4.61.

others throughout his works, including several members of his own family.<sup>238</sup> At one point in his *De Oratore*, Cicero even proclaims that diligence is the one virtue on which all others rely upon: *diligentia, qua una virtute omnes virtutes reliquae continentur*, revealing its centrality and importance in Cicero's mind.<sup>239</sup> According to Cicero, *fides* (and at times *diligentia* too) were particularly important in maintaining friendships (*amicitia*). Like *officium*, *fides* consolidates the bonds between two or more parties, and reveals whether they are true. His comments in the *De Amicitia*, seem particularly relevant here. Not only does Cicero argue that true friends are hard to come by, quoting Ennius' famous line that when times are tough the true friend is found, but he also proclaims that those who are unswerving and constant in friendship belong to a rare class of men, if not the divine:

haec ut omittam, quam graves, quam difficiles plerisque videntur calamitatum societates, ad quas non est facile inventu qui descendant. quamquam Ennius recte: amicus certus in re incerta cernitur; tamen haec duo levitatis et infirmitatis plerosque convincunt, aut si in bonis rebus contemnunt aut in malis deserunt. qui igitur utraque in re gravem constantem stabilem se in amicitia praestiterit, hunc ex maxime raro genere hominum iudicare debemus et paene divino. firmamentum autem stabilitatis constantiaeque est eius quam in amicitia quaerimus fides est; nihil est enim stabile, quod infidum est. simplicem praeterea et communem et consentientem, id est, qui rebus isdem moveatur, elegi par est;

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<sup>238</sup> For claims of his own loyalty and diligence within the *Pro Roscio* see: 28.1: *nam postquam isti intellexerunt summa diligentia vitam Sex. Rosci custodiri neque sibi ullam caedis faciendae...* In the *Pro Roscio Comoedo* 14.2, he describes himself as diligent and loyal: *quo praesente? quis spondisse me dicit? nemo. hic, ego si finem faciam dicendi, satis fidei et diligentiae meae, satis causae et controversiae, satis formulae et sponsioni.* And in the *Pro Caecina* 5.3, he quotes *fidem* and *diligentia* as two of his foremost qualifications as a defendant: *qua in re si mihi esset unius A. Caecinae causa agenda, profiterer satis idoneum esse me defensorem, propterea quod fidem meam diligentiamque praestarem, quae quum sunt in actore causae, nihil est in re praesertim aperta ac simplici quod excellens ingenium requiratur.* ('Now if in this trial I had to maintain the cause of Aulus Calcina and of no one else, I should profess myself sufficiently qualified to defend it as guaranteeing loyalty and effort on my part: given these qualities in counsel, there is no cause for exceptional ability, especially in so plain and simple a matter.') Trans. Freese 1930, adapted. See also, *Pro Quintio* 4.3; 55.5; 61.4; 93.9.

<sup>239</sup> Cicero *De Oratore* 2.150.

quae omnia pertinent ad fidelitatem. neque enim fidum potest esse multiplex ingenium et tortuosum, neque vero, qui non isdem rebus movetur naturaque consentit, aut fidus aut stabilis potest esse. (*De Amicitia* 65.17-18)

How grievous and how hard to most persons does association in another's misfortunes appear! Nor is it easy to find men who will go down to calamity's depths for a friend. Ennius, however, is right when he says: "When Fortune's fickle the faithful friend is found", yet it is on these two charges that most men are convicted of fickleness: they either hold a friend of little value when their own affairs are prosperous, or they abandon him when his are adverse.

Whoever, therefore, in either of these contingencies, has shown himself staunch, immovable, and firm in friendship ought to be considered to belong to that class of men which is exceedingly rare—aye, almost divine. Now the support and stay of that unswerving constancy, which we look for in friendship, is loyalty; for nothing is constant that is disloyal. Moreover, the right course is to choose for a friend one who is frank, sociable, and sympathetic—that is, one who is likely to be influenced by the same motives as yourself—since all these qualities conduce to loyalty; for it is impossible for a man to be loyal whose nature is full of twists and twinings; and, indeed, one who is untouched by the same influences as yourself and is naturally unsympathetic cannot be either loyal or steadfast.<sup>240</sup>

Given this information, Cicero's proclamation of Caecilia's exemplary potential seems both justified and further amplified. She is not merely supporting Roscius, and risking her own safety in doing so, out of bonds of friendships created between them personally, but she is effectively maintaining bonds of *amicitia* created between their respective fathers. He suggests that *officium* straddles generations, and that Caecilia, in her correct observance, maintains these bonds of obligation at an intergenerational level.

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<sup>240</sup> Trans. Falconer 1927.

The first three constituent elements of Caecilia's model then, *officium*, *fides* and *diligentia* gain further significance when we consider both wider cultural context and Cicero's usage elsewhere. However, the final virtue explicitly referenced - *virtus* - is perhaps most interesting of all. To a modern audience, Cicero's declaration that Caecilia demonstrated courage might seem unsurprising. Given the dangers that Roscius faced alongside the potential ramifications for Caecilia's own personal welfare in supporting him, it seems quite apt that he should consider her to be brave. However, as some scholars have argued, the attribution of *virtus* to women is potentially problematic. Given its etymological connections to masculinity and cultural connections to male identity, it creates a certain amount of friction for Roman ears and opens up the subject to criticism for transgressing gender boundaries.<sup>241</sup> Admittedly, it seems that there is a fine line, in elite male Roman discourse, between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in this regard. One need only look to Sallust's portrayal of Sempronia in his account of the Catilinarian conspiracy to see the kind of denigration a woman might receive when perceived to be transgressing gender boundaries and exhibiting masculine qualities.<sup>242</sup> However, as scholars have often observed,

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<sup>241</sup> McDonnell 2006, for example, states that from its usage, the word *virtus* clearly struck the ear of the ancient Roman as much as 'manliness' does that of an English speaker. (c.f. 1999: 4. n. 11) See also O'Hara 1996. Even Barbara Levick suggests that there are some linguistic difficulties, despite acknowledging the fact that women could possess the virtue. See Levick 2008: 133, c.f. Ige 2008. Williams 1999, has examined the gendered nature of the virtue, determining that *virtus* has an inherently gendered quality.

<sup>242</sup> Sallust *In Catalinam* 25: *sed in eis erat Sempronia, quae multa saepe virilis audaciae facinora commiserat. haec mulier genere atque forma, praeterea viro [atque] liberis satis fortunata fuit; litteris Graecis et Latinis docta, psallere [et] saltare elegantius, quam necesse est probae, multa alia, quae instrumenta luxuriae sunt. sed ei cariora semper omnia quam decus atque pudicitia fuit; pecuniae an famae minus parceret, haud facile discerneres; libido sic adensa, ut saepius peteret viros quam peteretur. sed ea saepe antehac fidem prodiderat, creditum abiuraverat, caedis conscia fuerat, luxuria atque inopia praeceps abierat. verum ingenium eius haud absurdum; posse versus facere, iocum movere, sermone uti vel modesto vel molli vel procaci; prorsus multae facetiae multusque lepos inerat.* ('Now among those women was Sempronia, who had often perpetrated many deeds of masculine daring. In birth and appearance, in her husband too and children, she was quite favored by fortune; she was well versed in Greek and Latin literature, at playing the lyre, at dancing more skilfully than a virtuous woman needed to, and in many other accomplishments which are instruments of wantonness. But there was nothing which she held so cheap as modesty and chastity; you could not easily decide whether she was less sparing of her money or her reputation; her lust was so heated that she pursued men more often than she was pursued. Even before the time of the conspiracy she had often broken her word, repudiated a debt, been an accessory to murder, rushed headlong to ruin as a result of extravagance and lack of

there are nevertheless numerous occasions in the corpus of Latin literature where *virtus* is applied to women, and in a wholly positive sense.<sup>243</sup> Quintilian for example, writing later in the 1st century C.E., though heavily influenced by Cicero, suggests that women can exhibit *virtus* in performing courageous deeds. Indeed, as we saw earlier, citing the examples of Lucretia and the various women who fought Phyrus of Epirus, he argues that courage is in fact more admirable in women than men and provides a more potent *exemplum*. While his argument is clearly grounded in culturally indoctrinated notions of female inferiority, it nevertheless reveals that females who exhibit *virtus* were not always perceived to be transgressive. On my reading, Cicero seemingly aligns. There are several occasions where he praises women for acting bravely. We have already seen earlier, in his *Tusculan Disputations*, that he treats the women of India and Sparta positively and endows them implicitly with *virtus*. But we also see that he praises other women within his own family, particularly his wife Terentia and daughter Tullia, more explicitly for exhibiting *virtus*. See for example a letter Cicero writes to his wife in 47 C.E.:

Tullia nostra venit ad me prid. Id. lun. cuius summa virtute et singulari humanitate graviore etiam sum dolore adfectus nostra factum esse negligentia ut longe alia in fortuna esset atque eius pietas ac dignitas postulabat. (*Ad Familiares* 14.11)

Our Tullia joined me on 12 June. She is so wonderfully brave and kind that it gives me even greater pain to think that through my carelessness she is placed far otherwise than befitted a girl of her station and so good a daughter.<sup>244</sup>

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means. Nevertheless, her intellect was by no means contemptible; she could compose verses, raise a laugh, use language that was modest, or tender, or wanton; in short, she possessed much wit and much charm.') Trans. Ramsey 2013.

<sup>243</sup> See for example, Balmadeca 2017: 18-19. n. 17; Sarsila, 2006: 48-9, or McDonnell 2006: 3-4, who highlights that *virtus* can be attributed to deities, animals, abstract ideals and inanimate objects.

<sup>244</sup> Trans. Shackelton Bailey 2001.

The ease and frequency with which he applies the virtue elsewhere, coupled with fact that in the *Pro Roscio Caecilia*'s portrait is wholly positive, suggests that there is no sense of friction or transgression here. In fact, I would argue that in many ways, Cicero seems determined to convey a sense of exceptionality through transcendence rather than transgression. Unlike Sempronia, whose involvement in male spheres and political affairs has her presented as exhibiting masculine *audacia* and transgressing gender boundaries, Caecilia is firmly situated on female side of the spectrum. We see this first during her introduction, as Cicero includes with her first mention an explicit reminder of her gender: *in qua muliere ...quasi exemplum*, but we see a similar subclause in section 147, when Caecilia is mentioned once more:

scis hunc nihil habere, nihil audere, nihil posses, nihil umquam contra rem tuam cogitasse, et tamen oppugnans eum...quem tu e patrimonio tamquam e naufragio nudum expulisti. quasi vero nescias hunc et ali et vestiri a Caecilia, [Balerici filia, Nepotis sorore], spectatissima femina, quae cum patrem clarissimum, amplissimos patruos, ornatissimum fratrem haberet, tamen, cum esset mulier, virtute perfecit, ut quanto honore ipsa ex illorum dignitate adficeretur, non minora illis ornamenta ex sua laude redderet. (*Pro Roscio* 147)

You know that my client has nothing, that he dares do nothing, can do nothing, that he has never intended anything against your [Chrysogonos] interests; and yet you still attack him ... the man whom you have driven out of his patrimony as naked as if he had suffered a shipwreck. As if indeed, you do not know that his food and clothing are supplied by Caecilia, [the daughter of Balearicus, the sister of Nepos], and a woman most esteemed, who although she had a most illustrious father, most distinguished uncles and a most decorated brother, and though she might be a woman, displayed such virtue that, great as is the honour which she

derives from their eminence is, she confers on them no lesser distinctions through her own merits.<sup>245</sup>

As we can see here, Cicero downplays any sense of transgression with a series of re-feminising strategies. Not only does he formally remind his audience that Caecilia is a *mulier*, but he also endows Caecilia with a maternal air in mentioning that she clothes and feeds Roscius, and makes it clear that she operates in traditional feminine sphere (the *domus*). This, as we can see when he continues, is pitched in direct contrast with the other male characters involved. While Caecilia cares for Roscius in her home, Cicero and Messala act more publicly, in the forum and the courts. Cicero's point here is clearly that Caecilia is all the more exceptional for transcending the perceived limitations of her sex. While the tone of the subordinate clause: *cum mulier esset*, is perhaps grounded in culturally indoctrinated misogyny, it nevertheless conveys the notion that Caecilia is extraordinary for performing these deeds 'despite the fact that she was a woman'. Given that Cicero concludes the section with the positive affirmation that Caecilia augments the reputation of her family, and more importantly that he pitching her actions as equivalent to the achievements of her male kinsmen, it seems unlikely that her attrition of the masculine *virtus* is a concealed attempt to criticise her behaviour, but to amplify this sense of her exceptionality.

On both occasions in which Caecilia is mentioned within the speech we see the orator make a visible effort to exemplify her behaviour. Through his evaluative digressions and laudatory statements, Cicero effectively transforms Caecilia from a simple character in his narrative, into a moral *exemplum*. However, while we have identified the ways in which this

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<sup>245</sup> Trans. Freese 1930, adapted.

is achieved, we have yet to discuss the reasons why. We have yet to considered what purpose this serves.

Ostensibly it seems, Caecilia's mention fulfils a rhetorical purpose. First, as a character in Cicero's narrative, her introduction features as part of his defensive strategy: to generate sympathy from audience and gain the jurors' support. As we see on both occasions, Caecilia features in sections of the speech that convey a sense of Roscius' plight. In section 10, Cicero reveals his desperation, isolation and lack of support. He also reveals the many dangers faced in getting the trial to court. With Caecilia's second mention, in section 147, Cicero emphasizes Roscius' vulnerability once more. He reiterates the notion that he is entirely reliant upon her aid, highlighting that she feeds, clothes and shelters Roscius within her home, and subtly disarms him in the eyes of the jurors. By highlighting Roscius' plight and the injustice of the situation, Caecilia serves as part of Cicero's bid to elicit a sympathetic response from the jurors for Roscius' cause.

Alongside this, as Ige argues, Cicero also uses Caecilia's social, political and personal profile as a weapon against Chrysogonos. According to Ige, Caecilia's presentation as a virtuous woman who has crossed the gender divide to exhibit purportedly masculine virtues, directly contrasts with Chrysogonos who is presented as a debased man. Her exceptional behaviour amplifies Chrysogonos' purported femininity and effectively defames him further.<sup>246</sup> In my view however, while Cicero might emphasize Caecilia's virtuousness as a means of denigrating Chrysogonos specifically within his speech, I believe that she is simultaneously used to shame others in a similar way. On my reading, Cicero's praise might be also intended to subtly shame Roscius' other friends who failed to support him. As we

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<sup>246</sup> Ige 2003: 192.



see throughout the speech, there is a persistent focus on Roscius' lack of support. He makes it clear that there was only Caecilia and indeed himself. While such notions, as I have suggested above, are perhaps intended to generate sympathy from the jurors, and somewhat disarm Roscius by presenting him as an innocent victim, they also implicitly criticise Roscius' other unnamed friends who failed to do their duty to support him throughout this episode.

However, while this is certainly possible, I believe that there are alternative readings for what takes place. On my reading, Caecilia's exemplification is effectively irrelevant. It does little to advance Cicero's defensive strategy, lacking in both persuasive force and authoritative weight. For the purpose of eliciting a sympathetic response from the jurors, it would be sufficient to recall the events themselves, without the inclusion of his exemplarizing digressions. They are superfluous and not required for Cicero's persuasive ends. Perhaps, one could argue that Caecilia's exemplification holds a different rhetorical purpose: that Cicero is bolstering Roscius's portrait by revealing his association with exemplary individuals. Perhaps he is conveying to his audience that Roscius is a moral man through Caecilia, reflectively, or emphasizing the despicability of how she has been treated by the true culprits in the case. While this might be much more likely, in my view, Caecilia's exemplification within the speech serves an alternative purpose more immediately: I would argue that there is a rather prominent socio-political dimension beneath Cicero's praise. As scholars have often observed, the orator's statements are highly complimentary.<sup>247</sup> Not only does he provide a wholly positive portrait, presenting her as the epitome of *officium*, but in section 147, he also characterises her with the polite and reverent appellation:

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<sup>247</sup> L'Hoir 1992: 29, and Adams 1972: 235, suggest that Cicero's reference to Caecilia as a *femina* also conveys a sense of respect.

*spectatissima femina*. Given the complimentary nature of his statements, and the fact that they are not necessary for the purposes of recalling past events, it seems to me that he is courting favour; that Cicero is using this opportunity to ingratiate himself further with Caecilia and her powerful family through flattery.<sup>248</sup> The notion is further supported by the fact that Cicero seems repeatedly concerned with displaying his deference and respect when mentioning Caecilia and the Metelli. If we recall her introduction for example: *Caeciliam, Nepotis sororem, Balearici filiam, quam honoris causa nomino (Rosc. 27)*, the orator's deferential caveat here effectively reiterates sentiments expressed earlier when he mentions Caecilia's wider family: *nam cum Metellis, Serviliis, Scipionibus erat ei non modo hospitium, verum etiam domesticus usus et consuetudo, quas, ut aequum est, familias honestatis amplitudinisque gratia nomino*. ('For he [Sextus Roscius Sr] not only enjoyed relations of hospitality with the Metelli, Servilii, and Scipios, but also private intercourse and intimacy with those families, whose names I mention with the respect due to their high character and dignity.')<sup>249</sup> While Cicero *might* present Caecilia as an *exemplum* to improve the audience's perception of Roscius' character by association, or to offer her up as an edifying *exemplum* for his audience's benefit, it seems that the more immediate purpose beneath his exemplifying digressions is to maintain the favour of this powerful woman and her wider family, and convey certain messages about himself. Through his emphatic if not exaggerated praise, we see an element of performative humility, and perhaps even virtue signalling as Cicero is able to present himself as a polite and respectful advocate and display his deference to those more powerful as well. In Cicero's oratorical debut not only do we

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<sup>248</sup> For a discussion of the notion that compliments might be used as a mark of refinement in Cicero's dialogues see, Becker 1938: 21; Leeman and Pinkster 1981: 82. On the social implications of compliments in various different societies see Pomerantz 1978; Barnlund and Araki 1985; Brown and Levinson 1987; and Holmes 1998.

<sup>249</sup> *Pro Roscio* 6.

see that Cicero elevates Caecilia to the status of a moral *exemplum* by conventional means – citing her deeds, highlighting her virtues and, in this case, explicitly alluding to her exemplary potential with his inclusion of the phrase ‘*quasi....exemplum*’ – but we also see that his exemplification comprises a prominent socio-political dimension in his strategic use of exemplary discourse to court favour, display his virtuous deference in a public forum, and ultimately maintain a positive relationship with Caecilia and her other family members. Effectively then, while Caecilia’s treatment might fulfil a rhetorical function, and comprise a moral-ethical dimension in Cicero’s evaluation of her character and deeds, and perpetuation of social norms pertaining to virtuous behaviour, we also see that Cicero uses exemplification as a strategy for other more personal and patently socio-political reasons as well.

In many ways Caecilia stands out from the other female *exempla* in that she is not an ancestral archetype of famous historical figure but a contemporary individual that Cicero personally knows. As I have outlined earlier, in my view, it is the introduction of this temporal variable that often enables us to see the socio-political dimension of exemplary discourse unfold. As we will see in the second half of this chapter, Cicero’s treatment of Caecilia in the *Pro Roscio* in many ways foreshadows the various females that he exemplifies within his letters. With these we find once more that Cicero employs similar strategies for exemplification and that these once more comprise a similarly socio-political dimension again.

#### Exemplary *Feminae* in Cicero’s Letters

As I have suggested in the introduction to this chapter, while Cicero might not invoke any women as *exempla* within his letters, there are a number of occasions where he elevates

certain women to a quasi-exemplary status. Similar to how he treats Caecilia Balerica in the *Pro Roscio*, he supplements their mention with superfluous mini characterisations that proclaim their exceptionality, uniqueness or moral superiority, and presents them as if they were ethical *exempla*. While I do not believe that Cicero necessarily intends to offer these women as *exempla* in a conventional sense, his repeated proclivity to include these brief yet effectively gratuitous characterisations is important for our purposes. As I will argue within this section, not only does it show that Cicero uses the kind of language employed in the creation and dissemination of exemplars - notably, the use of superlative adjectives and intensifiers - to evaluate character, but it also reveals, more importantly, that he exploits this language of exemplarity rather specifically to negotiate and cultivate certain personal and political relationships. To demonstrate this here, within this section, I will examine a number of his letters from the *Ad Familiares* collection.

That Cicero exemplifies certain women within his correspondence can be seen firstly in a letter that he writes to Marcus Crassus in 54 B.C.E.<sup>250</sup> Within the letter, while Cicero discusses recent events and the current state of their relationship, he mentions Crassus' wife and sons, describing them with particularly exemplifying language:

...itaque et praestantissima omnium feminarum, uxor tua, et eximia pietate,  
virtute, gratia tui Crassi meis consiliis monitis, studiis actionibusque nituntur ...  
(*Ad Familiares* 5.8.2)

...both your wife, the most distinguished of all women, and your two sons, who  
are exceptional in filial piety, virtue, and esteem, rely on my counsel, advice,  
support and activity...<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> For the dating of this letter see, Marinone 2004: 134.

<sup>251</sup> All translations for the *Ad Familiares* Collection will be provided by Shackelton Bailey 2001, unless otherwise stated.

Overlooking Cicero's self-promotion for a moment, while Crassus' wife and sons are not intended to function as *exempla* here, they are nevertheless presented as exemplary individuals. Cicero supplements their mention with digressive and descriptive asides that effectively evaluate their moral character and praise them for their virtues. Indeed, with Crassus' wife in particular – named Tertulla according to the biographer Suetonius, –not only is she presented as exceptional by his use of the superlative *praestantissima*, but in comparing her to other women here (*omnium feminarum*), Cicero also effectively presents her as a paragon of virtue among her sex.<sup>252</sup> As exemplars often are, Tertulla is proclaimed to be the epitome of all *feminae*.

While in many ways the letter to Crassus is exceptional, both in terms of its highly formal tone and Cicero's overall objectives, we find that Cicero often digresses into descriptive and superfluous asides in other letters and uses exemplifying language to describe the wives and other women that are connected to his recipients. A second example can be found in a pair of letters Cicero writes to [Gaius Claudius] Marcellus Junior and [Gaius Claudius] Marcellus Senior, in 50 B.C.E. On both occasions, not only does Cicero mention Marcellus' mother Junia, but he also includes digressive asides that present her as exemplary. In the first letter (*ad Fam.* 15.7), to Marcellus Junior, Cicero writes:

maxime sum laetitia affectus, cum audivi consulem te factum esse, eumque honorem tibi deos fortunare volo atque a te pro tuo parentisque tui dignitate administrari; nam cum te semper amavi dilexique, cum mei amantissimum cognovi in omni varietate rerum mearum, tum patris tui pluribus beneficiis vel defensibus tristibus temporibus vel ornatus secundis et sum totus vester et esse debeo, cum praesertim matris tuae, gravissimae atque optimae feminae, maiora erga salutem dignitatemque meam studia, quam erant a muliere postulanda,

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<sup>252</sup> For the identity of Crassus's wife see Suetonius *Julius* 50.

perspexerim. quapropter a te peto in maiorem modum, ut me absentem diligas atque defendas. (*Ad Familiares* 15.7)

I was most delighted, when I heard that you had been made consul, and I hope that the gods might bless this office for you, and that it may be administered by you in a manner worthy of your own and your father's position. For while I have always loved and regarded you, I also know you to be most loving towards me in all the course of my chequered fortunes. Moreover, having been both defended by several acts of kindness from your father in times of adversity, and honoured in times of prosperity, I am and ought to be, devoted to your whole family, especially since I have received from your mother, the best and most eminent of women, greater support with regard to my safety and dignity than were to be expected from a lady. Wherefore, I seek from you even more, to love me and defend me in my absence.

As we see here, through his use of exemplary language, Cicero seemingly elevates Marcellus' mother to a quasi-exemplary status. As with Tertulla in the letter to Crassus, he describes her with superlative adjectives *gravissimae atque optimae*, and conveys a sense of her exceptionality in society by comparing her to other *feminae*. Interestingly, in his second letter, to Marcellus Senior, we see that Cicero reiterates his exemplifying epithet. When he writes to Marcellus' mother and father, extending a similar message of congratulations, he compliments Junia once more by duplicating his earlier descriptive characterisation:

Marcellum tuum consulem factum teque ea laetitia adfectum esse quam maxime optasti mirandum in modum gaudeo, idque cum ipsius causa tum quod te omnibus secundissimis rebus dignissimum iudico, cuius erga me singularem benevolentiam vel in labore meo vel in honore perspexi, totam denique domum vestram vel salutis vel dignitatis meae studiosissimam cupidissimamque cognovi. qua re gratum mihi feceris si uxori tuae Iuniae, gravissimae atque optimae

feminae, meis verbis eris gratulatus. a se, id quod consuesti, peto me absentem diligas atque defendas. (*Ad Familiares* 15.8)

I am marvellously pleased to hear that your son Marcellus has been made Consul and that the joy you most longed for is indeed yours. My happiness is both for his own sake and because I consider you deserving of every possible good fortune. In my trials as in my successes you have always shown me conspicuous good will; indeed I have found your whole family most active and ardent for my welfare and my standing. I shall accordingly be grateful if you will convey my congratulations to that unparalleled and most excellent wife of yours, Junia. As for yourself, let me request you to continue to favour me in my absence with your regard and protection.<sup>253</sup>

For a final example, we will look to a letter Cicero writes to Publius Vatinius, in 45 B.C.E:

...quod mihi feminam primariam, Pompeiam, uxorem tuam, commendas, cum Sura nostro statim tuis litteris lectis locutus sum, ut ei meis verbis diceret, ut, quidquid opus esset, mihi denuntiaret; me omnia, quae ea vellet, summo studio curaque facturum. (*Ad Familiares* 5.11.2)

...You commend to me that most excellent lady, your wife Pompeia. I therefore spoke with Sura immediately on reading your letter, and bade him to tell her from me to let me know anything she wanted done, and to say that I would do it with the greatest zeal and care.

While Cicero's digression here is rather brief, we nevertheless see that he elevates Vatinius' wife to a kind of exemplary status by the way in which he describes her. He goes beyond mere mention, and supplements his invocation, by referring to her with the highly complimentary and superlative epithet: *feminam primariam*. Once more therefore, here we

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<sup>253</sup> Trans. Shackleton Bailey 2001, adapted.

have another wife, purportedly commended to Cicero, who is presented as superlative amongst her sex. Despite the fact that, unlike in the letters to Crassus and the Marcelli, the sense of her exceptionality here is not generated through explicit comparison with other women, it is nevertheless evinced implicitly, through his use of this rather unique adjective: *primaria*. Not only does *primaria* denote one who is 'excellent', 'eminent' or 'remarkable', it also inherently comprises an evaluative aspect in that it has connotations of primacy over others: it describes one who is 'first', or 'primary'.<sup>254</sup> Indeed, the notion of her remarkability is perhaps compounded further by the infrequency with which Cicero uses this adjective. Across the entirety of the Ciceronian corpus, there are only four occasions where Cicero uses the term *primaria* to describe women. Once here, within his letters, to characterise Vatinius' wife, and three times in his speeches against Verres: where he styles the mother of Annia, Servillia, and the unnamed wife of Cassius as *feminae primariae*. More often with Cicero and other Roman authors, the adjective is used in its masculine form. It is used to describe the moral character of men. A prime example can be seen in Servius Sulpicius' letter to Cicero (*ad Fam* 4.6) where, Sulpicius considers the kinds of men that Cicero's daughter might have married: *quae res, quae spes, quod animi solacium? ut cum aliquo adolescente primario coniuncta aetatem gereret?* ('What scope, what hope, what heart's solace? That she might spend her life with some young and distinguished husband?'); or in Cicero's Verrine speeches once again, where it is used frequently to describe several of the male characters involved.<sup>255</sup>

In these four letters then, while the various wives and women that Cicero mentions here do not necessarily function as *exempla*, they are nevertheless presented as exemplary

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<sup>254</sup> O.L.D. s.v. 'primarius'

<sup>255</sup> For a further discussion see L'Hoir 1992: 37.



*feminae*. Through his employment of exemplary language in ostensibly superfluous character evaluations, they are effectively elevated within these letters to a quasi-exemplary status. Now, it must be noted at this point that Cicero's application of exemplary language is both conscious and discriminate. Despite the picture we might develop from the evidence so far, it is not the case that every individual that is referenced within his letters and connected to his recipients is presented as an exemplary being. If we look to his letter to Metellus Celer (*ad Fam.* 5.2) in 62 B.C.E. for instance, or his letter to Servius Sulpicius Rufus (*ad Fam.* 4.2), written in 49 B.C.E, while Cicero might similarly invoke their respective wives or other female family members, we do not see this same tendency to supplement his mention with these exemplifying asides. On both occasions, Cicero refers to the various female individuals he mentions quite straightforwardly and without embellishment. He either mentions them by name or identifies them through their connection to his correspondent. Thus, in Cicero's letter to Metellus, his wife Clodia and sister Mucia are plainly and straightforwardly referred to as 'tua uxor et soror', and in his letter to Rufus, Cicero refers to Rufus' wife quite simply as 'tua Postumia'.<sup>256</sup>

It is also important to mention that Cicero's recurrent propensity to exploit exemplary language in superfluous digressions is not limited to women exclusively. We have already gained a glimpse of this with his description of Crassus' sons, but there are numerous occasions throughout the corpus of his letters where Cicero can be seen to supplement his mention of certain male individuals, including even the recipients of his letters themselves, with digressive statements that use exemplifying vocabulary to describe them. A prime example can be seen when Cicero writes to Dollabella in 44 B.C.E:

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<sup>256</sup> See *Ad Familiares* 5.2.6 and 4.2.1 respectively.

qua re quid est quod ego te hortor ut dignitati et gloriae servias? proponam tibi claros viros, quod facere solent qui hortantur? neminem habeo clariorem quam te ipsum. te imitere oportet, tecum ipse certes. ne licet quidem tibi iam tantis rebus gestis non tui similem esse. quod cum ita sit, hortatio non est necessaria, gratulatione magis utendum est. (*Ad Familiares* 9.14.6-7)

There is no need for me to urge you to cherish the high standing and glory you have won. Why should I, in hortatory fashion, remind you of famous names? I can quote none more famous than your own. You yourself should be your model, it is yourself you have to emulate. After such exploits you no longer have the *right* to fall below your own standard. Exhortation is therefore superfluous, felicitation rather is called for.<sup>257</sup>

Interestingly, as we see here, Cicero himself highlights the superfluity of providing such exemplifying characterisations. And, with this, the notion that his application is conscious and discriminate is reinforced. However, the greater point for now is that not only do these letters show that Cicero uses the language of exemplarity for purposes beyond exemplary discourse, but they also reveal, that he deliberately and conscientiously exploits it to cultivate and negotiate certain personal and political relationships. Consider once more, his letter to Crassus. From its inception and throughout we see that in his letter, Cicero is patently concerned with the cultivation and maintenance of their friendship. In the opening of the letter, not only does he detail how he recently spoke up for Crassus in the senate to defend his honour: *quantum [ad] meum studium extiterit dignitatis tuae vel tuendae vel etiam augendae, non dubito quin ad te omnes tui scripserint. non enim fuit aut mediocre aut*

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<sup>257</sup> The letter also attests to our earlier suggestions that Roller's model of exemplary discourse might be further amended to account for situations where the *auctor* or originator of the initial action(s) can participate in the various other stages of the discourse. In this case, while it is Cicero evaluating Dolabella's deeds and their exemplary potential and commemorating them through the medium of this epistolary exchange, he is suggesting that Dolabella could be his own evaluator, and own imitator in striving to replicate the standard he has set.

*obscurum aut eius modi quod silentio posset praeteriri* (5.8.1), but he also claims that in doing so – both most ardently and of his own volition - he went above and beyond the remits of their longstanding friendship: *nam et cum consulibus et cum multis consularibus tanta contentione decertavi quanta numquam antea ulla in causa suscepique mihi perpetuam propugnationem pro omnibus ornamentis tuis veterique nostrae necessitudini [iam diu debitum sed multa varietate temporum interruptum officium cumulate reddidi.*<sup>258</sup>

Following this, Cicero then proclaims that, despite their recent falling out, he has always desired to cultivate his friendship and contribute to his advancement: *neque mehercule umquam mihi tui aut colendi aut ornandi voluntas defuit...* (5.8.2) and he excuses the breakdown in relations by constructing the polite fiction that their friendship might have continued to flourish if other third parties had not gotten involved: *sed quaedam pestes hominum laude aliena dolentium et te non numquam a me alienarunt et me aliquando immutarunt tibi.*<sup>259</sup> Now, he claims, he can rejoice in the fact that he has the opportunity to prove (through his recent initiatives) that he is mindful of their mutual interests and loyal to their friendship: *sed exstitit tempus optatum mihi magis quam speratum, ut florentissimis tuis rebus mea perspici posset et memoria nostrae voluntatis et amicitiae fides.*<sup>260</sup>

At this point, Cicero asserts how he has succeeded in making his intentions clear; not only to the community at large but more particularly, to his wife and family. It is here that he mentions Crassus' wife and sons, and the section concludes with an emphatic statement that highlights how his all his services are perpetually at his disposal:

sum enim consecutus non modo ut domus tua tota sed ut cuncta civitas me tibi amicissimum esse cognosceret. itaque et praestantissima omnium feminarum,

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<sup>258</sup> *Ad Familiares* 5.8.1.

<sup>259</sup> *Ad Familiares* 5.8.2.

<sup>260</sup> *Ad Familiares* 5.8.2.

uxor tua et eximia pietate, virtute, gratia tui Crassi meis consiliis, monitis, studiis actionibusque nituntur et senatus populusque Romanus intellegit tibi absenti nihil esse tam promptum aut tam paratum quam in omnibus rebus quae ad te pertineant operam, curam, diligentiam, auctoritatem meam. (*Ad Familiares* 5.8.2)

Yes, I have succeeded in making plain, not only to your entire domestic circle but to the community at large, that I am your very good friend. Your wife, the paragon of her sex, and your two sons, whose filial affection, high character, and popularity do them honour, rely on my counsels and promptings and active support. And the Senate and People of Rome now know that in all matters affecting you during your absence my devoted and indefatigable service and the influence I command are absolutely and unreservedly at your disposal.

In the remainder of the letter Cicero reiterates many of his earlier claims. He repeats the sentiments that he has long-since desired Crassus's friendship and continually toiled for his benefit:

de me sic existimes ac tibi persuadeas vehementer velim, non me repentina aliqua voluntate aut fortuito ad tuam amplitudinem meis officiis amplectendam incidisse sed, ut primum forum attigerim, spectasse semper ut tibi possem quam maxime esse coniunctus. quo quidem ex tempore memoria teneo neque meam tibi observantiam neque mihi tuam summam benevolentiam ac liberalitatem defuisse (*Ad Familiares* 5.8.3)

As for me personally, I very much hope you will thoroughly persuade yourself that I have not happened to embrace your cause and work for your greatness through any accident or sudden whim, but have always made it my aim ever since my entry into public life to be on the closest terms with you. Since those days I recall no failure of attention on my part or of good will and generosity in the highest measure on yours. If certain infringements, surmised rather than

real, have occurred so as to affect our relations, these are mere figments of the imagination; let them be utterly eradicated from our memories and our lives.

Then he expresses his hope that their alliance and friendship might increase in strength, and he makes a promise that he will continue to provide every kind of service tending to his dignity and glory: *ego vero tibi profiteor atque polliceor eximium et singulare meum studium in omni genere officii quod ad honestatem et gloriam tuam spectet.*<sup>261</sup>

Finally, in his concluding paragraph, Cicero makes it clear that this is no ordinary letter, but one that has the force of a covenant: *has litteras velim existimes foederis habituras esse vim, non epistulae.*<sup>262</sup> He makes a further promise that the proclamations he has made will be most diligently and dutifully respected: *meaque ea quae tibi promitto ac recipio sanctissime esse observatum diligentissime esse facturum* (5.8.5), and reminds him once more of the fact that he has defended him publicly while abroad; maintaining that his actions were not only for the sake of their friendship, but also for the sake of his reputation as a man of constancy: *quae a me suscepta defensio est te absente dignitatis tuae, in ea iam ego non solum amicitiae nostrae sed etiam constantiae meae causa permanebo.*<sup>263</sup>

As we can see from this brief overview, Cicero strives to show to Crassus how he supports him and assert his unwavering loyalty. It is effectively, as Jon Hall has recently suggested, a means by which to consolidate his relationship with Crassus and provide a formal pledge of continued backing.<sup>264</sup> However, while the various proclamations as to his loyalty and recent initiatives might form the basis of his persuasive argument here, we can

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<sup>261</sup> *Ad Familiares* 5.8.4.

<sup>262</sup> *Ad Familiares* 5.8.5.

<sup>263</sup> *Ad Familiares* 5.8.5.

<sup>264</sup> Hall 2009: 71.

also see that his invocation and subsequent characterisation of Crassus' wife and sons plays an important part in servicing his overall objectives.

On a formal level, it functions as a kind of rhetorical affirmation. It substantiates his claims to be Crassus' most loving (*amantissimum*) friend, revealing that he not only supports him personally while he is away on campaign, but also his close family members who remain in Rome. As an extension of the man himself, Cicero's claim to support his recipient's wider family is an important and expected service. It is central to the bonds of *amicitia*.

Simultaneously however, the fact that Cicero seems keen to detail the various services he provides for them in his digression, suggests that in some ways, Cicero is exploiting his relationship with Crassus' family as a political bargaining tool with which to reassert a sense of his importance in their relationship. At this point, Crassus is at the height of his power.<sup>265</sup>

Not only was he consul in the previous year [55 B.C.E.] but, as a member of the first triumvirate, has significant sway over Roman politics. By detailing emphatically how he supports his family back in Rome while Crassus is away on campaign in Parthia, and emphasizing how significant a role he plays in doing so, Cicero effectively increases his own importance in their relationship. He reminds him of his utility as a political ally, revealing that he holds value not only defending his honour in the senate, but also by advising, supporting and generally acting in the interest of his other family members.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Hall 2009: 71.

<sup>266</sup> For a further sense of this see again, *Ad Familiares* 5.8.4: *ego vero tibi profiteor atque polliceor eximium et singulare meum studium in omni genere officii quod ad honestatem et gloriam tuam spectet. in quo etiam si multi mecum contendunt, tamen cum reliquis omnibus tum Crassis tuis iudicibus omnis facile superabo; quos quidem ego ambo unice diligo, sed in benevolentia pari hoc magis sum Publio deditus quod me, quamquam a pueritia sua semper, tamen hoc tempore maxime sicut alterum parentem et observat et diligit.* ('On my side, I profess and promise you my signal and exemplary devotion in every kind of service tending to your dignity and glory. Many may be my rivals, but by the verdict of every beholder, and of your sons above all, I shall comfortably win the race. For both young men I have a particular regard, but, while both have my good will equally, I am the more attached to Publius because ever since he was a boy, but especially at the present time, he pays me attention and regard as though to a second father.')

In many ways it seems, the support that Cicero claims he provides for Crassus' family is intended to hold a certain amount of rhetorical force, reminding Crassus of Cicero's importance. But his ostensibly exemplifying asides also carry their own social and political weight. On one level, the statements that Cicero makes about Crassus' wife and sons service the negotiation of their relationship further by presenting himself as a polite and respectful friend. As Jon Hall has recently argued, etiquette in epistolary communication, especially between two powerful individuals, demanded a certain sense of politeness and respect to be maintained.<sup>267</sup> And while Hall omits to comment on Cicero's treatment of the wife and sons, we can see quite clearly how his superfluous asides might work to function in this regard. Alongside this of course, the highly complimentary nature of his statements suggests that perhaps these digressive asides are not necessarily, or exclusively included for Crassus' benefit. While they might still strengthen his relationship with Crassus by providing reverent and respectful tributes to his family, his statements simultaneously seem directed towards the individuals themselves: to curry favour with them personally, through flattery, and to galvanise their continued support.<sup>268</sup>

On my reading therefore, it seems in his letter to Crassus, not only that Cicero uses exemplifying language to describe certain individuals, but also that he deliberately exploits this language as part of a wider visible strategy to negotiate his relationship with both Crassus – the primary recipient – and these other family members. Yet such a strategy is, as I have suggested above, equally visible in those other letters that I have presented as prime examples. In Cicero's letter to Vatinius for instance (*ad Fam* 5.11), not only do we see that Cicero is once more concerned with consolidating their relationship, littering his letter with

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<sup>267</sup> Hall 2009: 39.

<sup>268</sup> While they were clearly not present upon Crassus' reading, it seems that the letter was written in anticipation of their reaction alongside that of Crassus himself.

affectionate affirmations of continued reciprocal support, and promises of his assiduous care for the wife while he is absent on campaign, but we also see that he is deliberately exploiting complimentary and exemplifying language simultaneously to further his overall objectives. As with his letter to Crassus, through his exemplifying asides, on some level, Cicero once more presents himself as a polite and respectful correspondent to his correspondent and indirectly flatters his wife. Yet alongside this, as Peter White suggests in his analysis of the letter, we also see that Cicero's use of language works to maintain cordial relations by cleverly concealing any sense of negativity on his part.<sup>269</sup> As we see within the letter, Cicero is effectively responding to Vatinius' request to look after his wife while he is away. However, while he might paint a positive picture of relations between them and flatter the wife with his descriptive asides, he cleverly skirts his obligations. He rejects the notion of having to meet or engage with her face-to-face and enlists other individuals to deal with her on his behalf. In line with White's reading of the letter then, it seems to me that Cicero's use of exemplary language clearly features as part of his strategy for maintaining cordial relations. He supplies these asides, and employs the language that he does, to conceal any sense of contempt, and prevent both Vatinius and his wife herself, from seeing any offence.

With our other examples – the letters to Marcellus Junior and Senior – we find a similar dimension emerge. While Cicero might ostensibly seem less concerned with the cultivation of friendship in merely offering his congratulations, we nevertheless still see that he is actively striving to maintain cordial relations between them. As Hall has argued, celebrating and congratulating one's friend on their achievements is central to the duties of

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<sup>269</sup> White, 2010: 19-20.



*amicitia*. Like supporting one's family members, it is an important and expected service, required of participants in such social relationships.<sup>270</sup> With regard to his use of exemplary asides more particularly, once more this features as a strategy for maintaining if not, improving relations between them. As with his letter to Crassus, we see that on one level Cicero shows that he subscribes to epistolary etiquette: presenting himself as a polite and respectful correspondent through these reverent and complimentary asides, and on another level, he simultaneously seems to strive to flatter the mother personally, and express his gratitude for her support, presumably to ingratiate himself further with the family.

### Conclusion

Through this examination of Cicero's selected works we see that Cicero often uses female *exempla* in conventional and expected ways. In his treatises we see that they function both illustratively and injunctively as part of his arguments, to illustrate the matter at hand, or support the orator's claims. In his speeches we find similar persuasive utility, though they also function in other more nuanced ways. With our first case study, the *Pro Caelio*, Cicero cites two infamous historical individuals – Quinta and Claudia the Vestal – injunctively, to amplify the orator's vilifying aims. Though they themselves might posit an aspirational or replicable model for others to emulate, they more immediately provide in this context the standard from which Cicero, and others, might evaluate her behaviour and highlight Clodia's moral failings and inability to live up to the family reputation for virtue.

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<sup>270</sup> Hall 2009: 47. Hall also suggests here that subscribing to such social conventions also played a part in developing an individual's public persona. It played down any notions of *invidia* on the author's part.

As we have seen however, not all *exempla* are equal in their deployment, and there is an ostensible disparity in terms of use. As I have highlighted in my discussion above, there seems to be an increased sense of activity with the male *exempla* that he invokes as his interlocutor - Caecus - compared to the women that are more passively paraded. This is not to say that with Cicero, the functions of *exempla* are determined by gender, but that there is a certain androcentric bias that exists. Perhaps, as I have intimated, this is due to the sense of comedy and levity that Cicero desired to include, but I believe that alongside this, it was due in part to Cicero's own gender and not wishing to feminise himself by assuming a feminine persona too.

Importantly however, as I have argued within this chapter, there is a visible difference between the canonical, historical *exempla* and the contemporaries that he exemplifies, in terms of use. While figures like Quinta Claudia and Claudia the Vestal Virgin fulfil illustrative, injunctive and evaluative moral-ethical functions, with his contemporaries this is not so simply the case. With Caecilia Metella Balearica, for instance, the protagonist in the Roscius' trial, we see a set of different dimensions emerge. As I have argued above while she might be posited as an *exemplum* through conventional methods, his exemplifying digressions serve a socio-political purpose in that they are much more likely to function strategically as a means of courting favour, virtue signalling and ingratiating himself to a powerful family: the Metelli, rather than simply provide a model for others to behold.

As I have also argued, Caecilia foreshadows the many women that feature within his letters, and are exemplified by Cicero in a similar way. And with these, like Caecilia, we see that their elevation to the status of a moral *exemplum* is to serve the orator's own personal socio-political aims. With the women in his letters we see that Cicero uses exemplification as a socio-political tool: that he is using exemplarity and the language of exemplary

discourse more intentionally, to flatter his recipients and negotiate the dynamics of power within their relationship. We perhaps see this most clearly during his interaction with Marcus Crassus, where Cicero uses complementary language as a means of securing his support, but with his letters to Vatinius or the Marcelli we see a similar bid to negotiate his relationships through flattery and observing social conventions too.

As I have suggested in the introduction, such a patently transactional dimension is both revealed and facilitated by circumstance and time. It reaffirms that with the inclusion of this temporal variable, the socio-political dimensions are revealed, and the discourse is often transformed. Seemingly therefore, it is not the genre that accounts for this differentiation, but instead the circumstances surrounding their invocation and the nature of the relationship between these all those involved.

In many ways Cicero's exploitation of exemplary discourse and exemplification as a strategy for negotiating social and political relationships will be seen with other Roman authors as well. And as I will show in the remaining chapters, exemplification also features prominently amongst other authors as part of their various tactics for manipulating others and promoting themselves.

## Chapter 5. Ovid: *Exempla* and Exile

### Introduction

In this chapter we will explore the works of Ovid, to examine the various socio-political dimensions beneath the exemplification of contemporary women within Latin literary texts. Like Cicero, Ovid was a prolific author and used *exempla* extensively with his works. We find them in his amatory elegies – the *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris* – his collection of fictional verse letters (the *Heroides*); his account of the Roman calendar (the *Fasti*); his epic poem, the *Metamorphoses*, and finally, his exilic letter collections: the *Tristia*, the *Epistulae Ex Ponto* and the *Ibis*.<sup>271</sup> However, while Ovid’s penchant for examples might span the length and breadth of his literary corpus, it is his *Tristia* and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* – two works that Ovid produced during his exile from Rome – that we shall focus upon within this chapter now.<sup>272</sup> In both of these, not only do we find the typical citation of individuals from myth and history, but we also see a discernible bid to exemplify several of his contemporaries as well. A prime example, discussed in detail below, can be seen in Ovid’s presentation of his then wife, Fabia.<sup>273</sup> Not only is she portrayed positively across these two works, but she is also elevated to the status of a moral *exemplum* as Ovid frequently proclaims that Fabia is a model of the perfect wife. As I will argue in this chapter however, despite Fabia’s potential to feature as an *exemplum* for others to emulate or learn from – a

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<sup>271</sup> Ovid also wrote another didactic poem: the *Medicamina faciei*, of which only around 100 lines survive. As scholars have observed, Ovid displays a particular penchant for invoking figures from Greek and Roman myth, though he does mention contemporary and historical figures on a number of occasions. In his exilic works for instance, we find more than one hundred mythological female characters invoked, from Aerope, Alcestis and Andromache, to Penelope, Venus, Vesta, and Victoria. As Davisson 1993: 220, has highlighted, often these *exempla* feature in combination, with groups of three or more collated in each section.

<sup>272</sup> Admittedly, many of Ovid’s works would have fit the theme of this study. However, due to limitations in space, and the prominence of exemplars created from his contemporaries within these works, a fuller treatment of his poetry from Pontus would be more fruitful than an examination of his other works where his use of examples has already been much discussed.

<sup>273</sup> For a discussion of Ovid’s third wife and her family, including how we might identify her name, see Helzle 1989, or more recently, Lewis 2013.

typical outcome of exemplary citation in Roller's model of exemplary discourse – Ovid's bid to establish his spouse publicly as a paradigm of wifely virtues has little to do with offering a model for his audience's edification or emulation. In Fabia's presentation we see that the poet uses exemplification more immediately to service his broader socio-political objectives. While he might proclaim to use his works to commemorate his wife's loyalty and devotion, we see that he also uses her depiction in the poems as a means of controlling her behaviour; to manipulate the audience's response to his own character and situation, and a way to regain some semblance of control at a time when he is all but impotent to affect any kind of change to his personal circumstances.

Like Cicero then, Ovid's exilic works shed an important light on exemplarity as a discourse in Roman culture. Through the creation of exemplars from amongst his contemporaries, he demonstrates further how exemplification can comprise dimensions beyond the conventionally dichotomized moral and rhetorical modes and service certain other personal socio-political objectives. In this chapter therefore, we will look at how and why Ovid exemplifies his contemporaries within his exilic works. Using the presentation of his wife as our primary case study, I will highlight how Ovid's exemplification engages not only with the practice of commemoration but can also be read as a form of gift exchange, audience manipulation, and as a form of negotiation of personal relationships, or *amicitia*.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> The presentation of Ovid's wife within his works has been much discussed in modern scholarship. See Petersen 2015; Knifton 2014; Öhrman 2008; Henderson 2007; Hinds 1999; Ingleheart 1997; Johnson 1997; Helzle 1989, and Nagle 1980. However, while many of these have acknowledged his bid to exemplify his wife, few have sought to understand why in any detail, nor have they drawn wider conclusions from this as to what this tells us about the wider discourse of exemplarity.

### Constructing an Exemplary *Coniunx*

Across both the *Tristia* and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* we find that Ovid makes a conscious and strategic bid to present his wife as an exemplary *coniunx*. Not only does he praise her, in almost every mention, for her character and virtuous behaviour, but he explicitly proclaims on several occasions that she is an *exemplum coniugis bonae*: a model of the good wife. We first find Ovid's wife mentioned in *Tristia* 1.2, a poem in which Ovid details his journey into exile. Here, as he recalls the perils of his voyage, he thinks back momentarily to his wife at home, expressing his relief that he did not allow her to accompany him:

at pia nil aliud quam me dolet exule coniunx:  
hoc unum nostri scitque gemitque mali.  
nescit in inmenso iactari corpora ponto,  
nescit agi uentis, nescit adesse necem.  
o bene, quod non sum mecum conscendere passus,  
ne mihi mors misero bis patienda foret!  
at nunc ut peream, quoniam caret illa periclo,  
dimidia certe parte superstes ero. (*Tristia* 1.2.37-44)

But my loyal wife grieves only for my exile:  
it's the only ill of mine she knows, and groans at.  
She doesn't see me hurled through the vast seas,  
pursued by the winds, she doesn't see death nearing.  
It's good that I didn't allow her to ship with me,  
or I, poor wretch, would endure a double death!  
Now, though I die, since she is free from danger,  
at least the other half of me will survive.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> All translations henceforth will be taken from Kline 2003, unless otherwise stated.

While the focus of the poem is clearly placed upon Ovid's suffering, we see that from her very first mention, Ovid strives to shape a positive portrait for his wife. Not only does he introduce her here with the descriptive appellation: *pia coniunx*, establishing the notion that she is a loyal and devoted wife, but he subtly amplifies his promotion of her devotion by suggesting in line 41, that she wished to follow him into exile. Despite the brevity of her treatment here we see from the very beginning therefore that Ovid guides the reader's view. Opting not to simply name her, but rather characterise and praise her, he promotes a positive reception for his wife, and establishes the foundational virtue on which her exemplary portrait rests.<sup>276</sup>

As we will see throughout the remainder of his exilic elegies, his wife's loyalty and devotion is the is the mainstay of her exemplary behaviour. It is repeatedly referenced and praised at length. In the poem that follows for instance, *Tristia* 1.3, Ovid displays his wife's devotion in particularly stark relief. Here, as he recalls the night of his departure, he presents her as utterly devastated and struggling with her grief. In the first half of the poem, Ovid records how his house resembled a funeral scene. He recalls how his loving wife wept bitterly in his arms with tears falling down her undeserving cheeks: *uxor amans flentem flens acrius ipsa tenebat / imbre per indignas usque cadente genas.*<sup>277</sup> He reports how she cried out to the household gods more fervently than he did: *hac prece adoravi superos ego, pluribus uxor*, and recalls that she threw herself down in prayer with hair unbound, to kiss the cold ground with trembling lips: *illa etiam ante Lares passis adstrata capillis / contigit extinctos ore tremente focos.*<sup>278</sup> At this point, according to Ovid, his wife then cried out to

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<sup>276</sup> For a discussion of the poem's dramatic elements, political undertones and connections with other texts see Ingleheart 2006: 73-91.

<sup>277</sup> *Tristia* 1.3.18-19.

<sup>278</sup> *Tristia* 1.3.41; 43-44.

the Penates (*multaeque in auersos effudit uerba Penates*), and mourns the fact that they were no longer destined to help her husband: *pro deplorato non ualitura uiro*.<sup>279</sup>

While in the first half of the poem, Ovid's recollection of events clearly speaks to the love she has for her husband, revealing that his wife was truly devastated through his recollection of her *facta* and various poetic tropes pertaining to mourning and grief, in the second half, Ovid conveys a further sense of her devotion by revealing his wife's *dicta* during this time, recording a verbatim speech. In lines 79-88, Ovid reinforces his earlier suggestion in *Tristia* 1.2, that his wife wanted to follow him into exile and pleaded with him to let her go. Here he recalls that she cited her inability to survive without him, and that her sense of duty *pietas* demanded that she follow him:

tum uero coniunx umeris abeuntis inhaerens  
miscuit haec lacrimis tristia uerba suis:  
'non potes auelli: simul ah! simul ibimus', inquit,  
'te sequar et coniunx exulis exul ero.  
et mihi facta uia est, et me capit ultima tellus:  
accedam profugae sarcina parua rati.  
te iubet e patria discedere Caesaris ira,  
me pietas: pietas haec mihi Caesar erit.'  
talia temptabat, sicut temptauerat ante,  
uixque dedit uictas utilitate manus. (*Tristia* 1.3.79-88)

Then truly my wife, clinging to me at parting,  
mingled these sad words amongst my tears:  
I can't be separated. Together, we'll go together.  
I'll follow you and be an exile's wife in exile.  
There's a path for me too, the far-off land will take me:

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<sup>279</sup> *Tristia* 1.3.45-6.



my going will add little weight to your fleeing ship.  
Caesar's anger drives you to leave your country,  
loyalty orders me. Loyalty will be my Caesar.'  
So she tried, as she had tried before, and,  
with difficulty, ceased trying for my sake.

In the final lines, Ovid records the aftermath of his departure. He relays reports that his wife continued to mourn her loss and paints a particularly desperate scene. First, he claims that she was maddened by grief and overcome with darkness: *illa dolore amens tenebris narratur obortis*; and that she fell half-dead in the middle of the room: *semianimis media procubuisse domo*.<sup>280</sup> When she finally picked herself back up, he states, with hair dishevelled and full of dust, she continued to weep almost uncontrollably: *utque resurrexit foedatis puluere turpi / crinibus et gelida membra leuauit humo*; and beseeched the household gods once more: *se modo, desertos modo complorasse Penates*.<sup>281</sup> According to Ovid, she then called out to her husband: *nomen et erepti saepe uocasse uiri*, as if she had seen both her daughter and himself on the funeral pyre: *nec gemuisse minus, quam si nataeque meumque / uidisset structos corpus habere rogos*.<sup>282</sup> In the final lines he suggests that his wife became suddenly overwhelmed by her grief, and wanted to put an end to her feelings with death: *et uoluisse mali moriendo ponere sensum*.<sup>283</sup> Once more however, he claims that his wife carried on for her husband's sake: *respectuque tamen non potuisse mei*, and Ovid concludes by wishing that she may always live, so that she will be able to help him as well: *uiuat et absentem, quoniam sic fata tulerunt, uiuat ut auxilio subleuet usque suo*.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> *Tristia* 1.3.91-92.

<sup>281</sup> *Tristia* 1.3.93-5.

<sup>282</sup> *Tristia* 1.3.97-8.

<sup>283</sup> *Tristia* 1.3.99.

<sup>284</sup> *Tristia* 1.3.100-102. The full translation of this section (*Tristia* 1.3.91-102) is as follows: 'Maddened by grief they say she was overcome by darkness, and fell half dead in the midst of the room, and when she rose, hair

In recording the night of his departure and the reactions of his wife, Ovid conveys a clear sense of her devotion to her husband. We see it through her tears and through her prayers; through her soliloquy where she proclaims her willingness to follow him into exile without thought of cost or consequence; and in her cognisance that *pietas* demanded it. Finally, as the poem ends, we see it in her continued mourning, her lack of concern she shows for her appearance, and her collapse in the middle of the room. In the calling out of her husband's name, and her desire to end it all. However, while the presentation of her devastation leaves us with a sense of her love and dedication, it simultaneously reveals other positive qualities about his wife. First, with her acknowledgement that *pietas* requires her to follow him, Ovid reveals that Fabia understands and conforms to her uxorial duty. Second, though closely linked, in presenting two occasions where she obeys his wishes (that she remains at home, and that she remains alive so that she might continue to support him respectively) Ovid also conveys a sense of his wife's deference, and her obedience in acquiescing to both of his requests. While this might not be signposted as emphatically, it is subtly conveyed and supplanted in the minds of Ovid's reader.<sup>285</sup>

### Tristia 1.6

The next time that we meet Ovid's wife, in *Tristia 1.6*, we see that Ovid once more brings her love and loyalty to the fore. Although while he highlights these aspects of her character at first, he augments the facets of her exemplary portrait further in signposting the other

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fouled with filthy dust, and lifted her body from the cold ground, she wept for herself, and the deserted Penates, and often called her lost husband's name, groaning no less than if she'd seen the bodies of her daughter and me, on the stacked pyre, and wanted to die, to end those feelings by dying, yet out of care for me she did not die. May she live, and, since the fates have willed my absence, live so as always to help me with her aid.

<sup>285</sup> Öhrman 2014: 6, observes that Fabia's failure to follow her husband into exile is quite fitting as in Latin love elegy *pietas* between lovers is much celebrated but rarely enacted. C.f. Öhrman 2008: 63f and Conte 1989: 445.

virtuous qualities that she displays. In the opening of the poem, Ovid begins with a proclamation of his love. Picking up on notions established in *Tristia* 1.3, that his wife is undeserving of the distress caused by his punishment, he proclaims that his wife is more dear to him than Lyde was to Antimachus, or Bittis to Philetas, and that she deserves a husband less wretched than him.<sup>286</sup> As he continues, Ovid then declares that his wife is his sole source of support while in exile. He asserts that she is the only thing preventing his ruin and frames her continued support as a gift: *te mea supposita ueluti trave fulta ruina est: / siquid adhuc ego sum, muneris omne tui est.*<sup>287</sup> Expanding upon this further, Ovid then suggests that his wife fends off opportunists on the home front, who attempt to steal his wealth. He reports that his wife faced a number of violent attacks, though successfully defended his estates with the help of his friends:

tu facis, ut spoliū non sim, nec nuder ab illis,  
naufragii tabulas qui petiere mei.  
utque rapax stimulante fame cupidusque cruoris  
incustoditum captat ouile lupus,  
aut ut edax uultur corpus circumspicit ecquod  
sub nulla positum cernere possit humo,  
sic mea nescioquis, rebus male fidus acerbis  
in bona uenturus, si paterere, fuit.  
hunc tua per fortis uirtus summouit amicos,  
nulla quibus reddi gratia digna potest. (*Tristia* 1.6.7-16)

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<sup>286</sup> *Tristia* 1.6.1-4: *nec tantum Clario est Lyde dilecta poetae, nec tantum Coe Bittis amata suo est, pectoribus quantum tu nostris, uxor, inhaeres, digna minus misero, non meliore uiro.* ('Lyde was not so dear to Antimachus, nor Bittis so loved by her Philetas, as you are my wife, clinging to my heart, worthy of a happier, not truer husband.') Feeney 1992: 33-4, observes that while *Tristia* is in many ways very different to his earlier love-poetry, in his mapping of the subject and his lover to famous pairs from myth and history, Ovid seems to exploit similar strategies seen within the genre.

<sup>287</sup> *Tristia* 1.6.5-6: 'You're the support on which my ruins rest, if I am still anyone, it's all your gift.'

It is your doing that I'm not despoiled, stripped bare by those  
who sought the planks from my shipwreck.  
As a wolf raging with the goad of hunger,  
eager for blood, catches the fold unguarded,  
or as a greedy vulture peers around  
to see if it can find an unburied corpse,  
so someone, faithless, in my bitter trouble,  
would have come into my wealth, if you'd let them.  
Your courage, with our friends, drove them off, bravely,  
friends I can never thank as they deserve.

As we see here, while Ovid once more alludes to her loyalty in suggesting that she is the antithesis of faithlessness he highlights the courage (*virtus*) she displays more emphatically, in defending his estates. To amplify his statements, and emphasize his wife's virtuous response, Ovid seems to epicize her actions here. He conveys a heightened sense of danger in likening her aggressors to raging wolves and greedy vultures and conveys a sense of her vulnerability in implicitly casting her as the unguarded fold, or powerless corpse. With her success however, his wife is poetically transformed. She emerges as a brave protectress: a leader of the defensive effort and a formidable force against such foes.<sup>288</sup>

In the section that follows, Ovid continues to praise his wife, though he pivots from *virtus* to her other character traits. First, he applauds her *probitas* (moral goodness, honesty or integrity) proclaiming emphatically that she is superior to both Andromache and Laodamia for the probity she displays: *nec probitate tua prior est aut Hectoris uxor, aut*

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<sup>288</sup> Perhaps Ovid's emphasis on her successful defence is also simultaneously a pre-emptive attempt to dissuade further opportunists. Disseminating the news that his estates are heavily protected might be a way of putting others off.

*comes extincto Laodamia uiro.*<sup>289</sup> As Larosa has recently commented, it is interesting that Ovid compares his wife to Andromache and Laodamia for moral rectitude and not *pietas* for which they are more typically known. However, they are still relevant to the poet's wife as both Fabia and these legendary female heroines have had to endure the pain of separation from their spouses; the uncertainty of their return; and have also had to do everything within their power to safeguard their husbands while away from their wife and home.<sup>290</sup> Whilst the comparison is intended to highlight her probity, they still speak to Fabia's unwavering devotion to Ovid implicitly as well. Although in the case of Laodamia it might even communicate how Fabia balances the pain of separation and the need to follow her husband with her duty to remain itself.

Following Andromache and Laodamia, Ovid then compares his wife to Penelope, and discusses her right to eternal fame. As he proclaims, she displays more *pietas* than Penelope and deserves a husband like Homer who can immortalise her name:

tu si Maeonium uatem sortita fuisses,  
 Penelopes esset fama secunda tuae:  
 siue tibi hoc debes, nullo pia facta magistro,  
 cumque noua mores sunt tibi luce dati. (*Tristia* 1.6.19-24)

If you'd been assigned to Homer, the Maonian bard,  
 Penelope's fame would be second to yours:  
 either you owe it to your own self, not being taught loyalty by  
 some teacher, or through the character granted you at birth.

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<sup>289</sup> *Tristia* 1.6.19-20: 'Neither Andromache, the wife of Hector, nor Laodamia, companion of her husband in death, exceeds you in probity.'

<sup>290</sup> Larosa 2014: 373. Andromache was portrayed as the perfect wife in the *Iliad*, particularly *Iliad* 22, where she prepares for Hector's return from battle, and in *Iliad* 6.490-2 where she displays her obedience in carrying out her husband's orders. And Laodamia was the embodiment of wifely devotion, particularly in Hyginus' *Fabulae* (104), for throwing herself onto the pyre that her father created to destroy the effigy of her husband Protesilaus.

If we consider Penelope's presentation in his earlier *Heroides*, Ovid's choice of the legendary *coniunx* is particularly apt. Throughout the poetic epistle, Penelope proclaims her loyalty and devotion to her husband Odysseus, and emphasizes her piety and uxorial role. Moreover there is a similar sense that she is not only defined by her husband but is tempered by his control:

tua sum, tua dicar oportet;  
Penelope coniunx semper Ulixis ero.  
ille tamen pietate mea precibusque pudicis,  
frangitur et vires temperat ipse suas. (*Heroides* 83-86)

I am yours, I should be spoken of as yours:  
I'll be Penelope, wife to Ulysses, always.  
Yet he weakens knowing my piety, and my chaste prayers,  
and he moderates the force of it himself.

However, if we are to compare the two on other accounts, Fabia is not only superior to Penelope in terms of piety, but also bravery as well. While in the *Heroides* Penelope claims to have no strength to drive away potential enemies from the house and return quickly, Ovid makes it clear that his wife valiantly protects his wealth and estates.<sup>291</sup>

To return to *Tristia* 1.6, by invoking these three famous mythological *exempla* Ovid amplifies his various evaluations of her character and strengthens his earlier claims. He consolidates the portrait of Fabia's devotion and loyalty to her husband through association and comparison with women that were known for *pietas* and uxorial devotion to their husbands and suggests that she is superior to all of them in the way that she behaves.

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<sup>291</sup> See *Heroides* 109-110: *nec mihi sunt vires inimicos pellere tectis. / tu citius venias, portus et ara tuis!*

Interestingly, in discussing his wife's right to fame and celebration, Ovid feels the need to convey to his audience that Fabia has displayed such virtues from birth. While the notion that his wife's character developed naturally is communicated here firstly, it is something that Ovid explores on several occasions within his works. In a letter that he writes to his wife on her birthday for instance (*Tristia* 5.5) Ovid proclaims in laudatory fashion that it is on this day that chastity, courage, moral goodness and loyalty were born: *nata pudicitia est, virtus probitasque, fidesque*.<sup>292</sup> However, while the notion is given emphasis both here and in *Tristia* 1.6, in the latter we see almost immediately that Ovid undermines his statement with a brief digression into the influence of the emperor's wife Livia. Despite his initial claim that Fabia required no teacher, Ovid then suggests that it was Livia who taught his *coniunx* to be a model wife:

femina seu princeps omnes tibi culta per annos  
te docet exemplum coniugis esse bonae,  
adsimilemque sui longa adsuetudine fecit,  
grandia si paruis adsimilare licet. (*Tristia* 1.6.25-28)

The first lady, honoured by you all those years,  
teaches you to be the model of a good wife,  
becoming like her, through long-acquired habit,  
if it's allowed to compare the small and great.

As scholars often comment, Ovid's digression into Livia's influence might be a later addition to the poem pre-publication. Not only does it somewhat contradict his earlier statement,

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<sup>292</sup> *Ex Ponto* 5.5.35-38. Also present is the notion that Fabia is comparable to other legendary female heroines. In the lines that precede his statements of her virtues, Ovid once more compares his wife to Andromache and Penelope, to claim that her *mores* are equal to theirs: *edidit haec mores illis heroisin aequos, / quis erat Eetion Icarisusque pater. Ex Ponto* 5.5.33-34.

but it also disrupts the flow of his broader argument.<sup>293</sup> When Ovid continues, we see that he swiftly returns to the *sanctas heroidas* invoked before. Bemoaning the impotence of his poetry again, he proclaims that Fabia should be given primacy amongst them once more:

ei mihi, non magnas quod habent mea carmina uires,  
nostraque sunt meritis ora minora tuis,  
siquid et in nobis uiui fuit ante uigoris,  
extinctum longis occidit omne malis!  
prima locum sanctas heroidas inter haberes,  
prima bonis animi conspicerere tui.  
quantumcumque tamen praeconia nostra ualebunt,  
carminibus uiues tempus in omne meis. (*Tristia* 1.6.25-36)

Alas, my poetry has no great powers,  
my lips are inadequate to sing your worth!  
if I had any inborn vigour long ago,  
it's extinct, quenched by enduring sorrows!  
or you'd be first among the sacred heroines,  
seen to be first, for the virtues of your heart.  
Yet in so far as my praise has any power,  
you will still live, for all time, in my verse.

While some scholars have argued that the passage on Livia is artistically disastrous – sitting ill with the rest of the elegy in terms of structure and logic – others more recently have focused on its importance within Ovid's narrative.<sup>294</sup> Hinds for example suggests that Ovid

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<sup>293</sup> Kenney 1965: 41, for instance argues that the passage is awkwardly parenthetical to an argument that otherwise runs smoothly. He also notes Ovid's polite downgrading of his wife with the introduction to Livia and how it undermines the whole basis beneath his complimentary statements. Luck 1967: 77, concurs: suggesting that lines 33-4 should follow 19-22 directly.

<sup>294</sup> See once more the arguments presented by Kenney 1965; Luck 1967, and Hinds 1999.



might be engaging with notions of hierarchy.<sup>295</sup> As we see within the narrative, while he argues that his wife should be seen as *prima*, she is still subordinated to the empress Livia as her moral protege.<sup>296</sup> In this it seems that Ovid is being careful not to place Fabia too high on the pecking order. Given that Ovid frequently presents both Livia and her husband Augustus as divine within the *Tristia* – likening them to Juno and Jupiter respectively – it seems as if he is unwilling to cross the metaphorical and metaphysical line and elevate Fabia to divine status by implication. In implicitly reinforcing Fabia’s subordination to Livia he firmly situates his wife in the realm of legendary, yet mortal women, like Penelope, Bittis and Andromache. He maintains the hierarchical status quo, conforming to contemporary ideology pertaining to the position of the emperor and his spouse as both the pinnacle of society and as *prima exempla*, he respectfully acknowledges their superlative status.<sup>297</sup>

Though Ovid is clearly careful not to position his wife above Livia in terms of status, we clearly see in all of this that he simultaneously establishes Fabia as an *exemplum*. Not only is she compared with, and found to be better than, these other exemplary female heroines, but in proclaiming that she learned to be an *exemplum coniugis bonae* from Livia, he effectively reveals that she exists as a model in her own right. As I will discuss later, though the section is clearly designed to flatter Livia, and through this gain her favour, Ovid’s brief digression effectively transforms his wife once more, from a wife that is praised for her spousal support, to a moral-didactic model for his audience’s consideration.

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<sup>295</sup> Hinds 1999: 140.

<sup>296</sup> During the latter years of Augustus’ reign, Livia was often promoted as a model of matronly virtue and a teacher for other women in Augustan ideology and iconography. See Barrett 2002. Johnson 1997: 408, highlights that Livia’s characterisation as model wife is not unique to Ovid’s exilic poems. She features twice within his *Fasti* (5.155-158).

<sup>297</sup> For more on this see Hinds 1999: 140.

### Tristia 3.3

So far, in book 1 of Ovid's *Tristia* we have seen that the mainstay of Fabia's purported model lies in her loyalty, love and devotion. While Ovid reveals and praises his wife's other virtues, such as her courage, and probity, it is her uxorial love and devotion that are highlighted most frequently of all. When we next meet her again, in *Tristia* 3.3, we see this aspect emerge once more. Though the poem revolves around revealing Ovid's suffering, he brings this aspect to the fore. In the opening of the poem, Ovid begins with his typical lamentations. After reporting that he is sick, and perhaps even nearing death, he once more complains about the location of his relegation, professing his hatred for the place.<sup>298</sup> In line 15 however, Ovid turns to address his wife. Declaring that she occupies his thoughts most of all, he proclaims that he is miserable without her:

omnia cum subeant, uincis tamen omnia, coniunx,  
et plus in nostro pectore parte tenes.  
te loquor absentem, te uox mea nominat unam;  
nulla uenit sine te nox mihi, nulla dies. (*Tristia* 3.3.15-18)

Though I think of everything, still you above all, wife,  
it's you who occupy most of my thoughts.  
Absent, I speak to you: you alone my voice names:  
there is no night for me without you, and no day.

Next, following a proclamation that only in his wife's presence would he renew his vigour, Ovid begins to wonder how she feels about him now.<sup>299</sup> He considers whether she forgets

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<sup>298</sup> *Tristia* 3.1.1-14.

<sup>299</sup> *Tristia* 3.3.21-24: *si iam deficiam, subpressaue lingua palato uix instillato restituenda mero, nuntiet huc aliquis dominam uenisse, resurgam, spesque tui nobis causa uigoris erit.* ('If I were failing now, and my tongue stuck to my palate could barely be revived by a little wine, let someone say my lady's come, I'll rise, hope of you the reason for my vigour.')

him with so much time having passed, although he immediately dismisses the thought, proclaiming that he knows she misses him equally: *ergo sum dubius uitae, tu... carissima... sine me non nisi triste tibi.*<sup>300</sup> From here he considers whether this is the end, and laments the situation. He complains that he will die alone, without his wife and friends to say goodbye: *...depositum nec me qui fleat, ullus erit; / nec dominae lacrimis in nostra cadentibus ora...* ('at my death there will be no-one there to weep / nor will my lady's tears be falling upon my lips...')<sup>301</sup> In line 47, Ovid addresses Fabia directly. He suggests that his *carissima coniunx*, should already consider him dead. After playing out the scenario, he considers his wife's reaction to emphasize her loyalty once more:

ecquid, ubi audieris, tota turbabere mente,  
et feries puida pectora fida manu?  
ecquid, in has frustra tendens tua brachia partes,  
clamabis miseri nomen inane uiri?  
parce tamen lacerare genas, nec scinde capillos:  
non tibi nunc primum, lux mea, raptus ero.  
cum patriam amisi, tunc me periisse putato:  
et prior et grauior mors fuit illa mihi.  
nunc, si forte potes (sed non potes, optima coniunx)  
finitis gaude tot mihi morte malis. (*Tristia* 3.3.47-56)

Hearing this won't your whole heart be shaken,  
won't you strike your faithful breast with trembling hand?  
Won't you stretch your arms in vain in my direction,  
and call on your wretched husband's empty name?  
Don't lacerate your cheeks or tear your hair,  
it's not now, for a first time, I'm taken from you, *mea lux*.

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<sup>300</sup> *Tristia* 3.3.25-28.

<sup>301</sup> *Tristia* 3.3.40-41.

Think that I perished when I lost my native land:  
that was an earlier and a deeper death.  
Now if you can – but you can't, best of wives –  
be glad that so many of my ills end with my death.

Following a digression into how Ovid wants to be remembered, he returns to Fabia in the final lines. He asks her to adorn his gravesite with gifts of wreaths soaked in her tears, suggesting that his ashes will know her faithful duty:

tu tamen extincto feralia munera semper  
deque tuis lacrimis umida serta dato.  
quamuis in cineres corpus mutauerit ignis  
sentiet officium maesta fauilla pium. (*Tristia* 3.3.77-84)

But you, forever, bring funeral gifts to the dead  
and wreaths that are soaked with your tears.  
Though the fire transforms my body to ash,  
the sorrowing dust will know your faithful duty.<sup>302</sup>

As we see here, while the focus of the poem is primarily about Ovid himself, the poet emphasizes his wife's loyalty at every opportunity. Not only does he personify her *pectora* with the descriptive *fida*, but he also alludes to her faithful duty (*pium officium*), while he imagines his wife at the site of his grave. It is perhaps significant that Fabia's *pium officium* is

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<sup>302</sup> In many ways, Ovid's ashes here might act as a synecdoche for the wider audience, for it is in his own equivalent act of commemoration – the creation of an exemplary portrait for her within his works – that the audience will also come to know of Fabia's exemplary behaviour. Interestingly, to compound his overall portrait, Ovid employs the familiar strategy of revealing Fabia's loyalty through portraying her devastation. Upon the news of Ovid's death, he suggests she would be devastated. While he advises her not to do so, he believes that she would lacerate her cheeks and tear at her hair – both traditional means of grieving. Later in Ovid's morbid fantasy – he suggests that it is in her laying of a tear-soaked wreath – another expression of grief and an act of commemoration – that he would come to see her faithful duty. And while Ovid presents an intimate imaginary scene, given his previous statements about literary immortality which introduce Ovid's wider readers, it is not only his ashes that come to learn of these traits, but also his audience as a whole.

the only trait his ashes will know. Despite the fact that Ovid has highlighted Fabia's range of virtues, he focuses exclusively on her loyalty at this point. In this, Ovid clearly strives to reinforce the centrality of this virtue in Fabia's overall presentation. However, it is important to note that Ovid has employed a range of terms to communicate her loyalty. Not only is she *pia* here and in *Tristia* 1.2, but he has suggested that she displays *pietas*, *fides*, and understands *officium*. In doing so, Ovid not only avoids desensitisation and the inevitable monotony of repetition but also suggests that Fabia fulfils the fuller spectrum of connotations and associated synonyms: Fabia is not bound by the respective limitations of each aspect in isolation, she is the embodiment of them all.

In *Tristia* 3.3, Ovid confirms that loyalty is his wife's pre-eminent virtue. He signposts it explicitly on two occasions and compounds the notions through the familiar strategy of conveying her devotion through her devastation, though the scene is clearly fabricated, as a product of Ovid's own mind. Alongside this we also see that Ovid subtly exemplifies his wife once more. He reiterates notions of her superlative status and echoes the sentiments expressed in *Tristia* 1.6, that Fabia should be seen as *prima* when compared to others, in referring to his *lux* as the best of all wives (*optima uxor*). Importantly however with this, Ovid seemingly broadens her jurisdiction. By implicitly comparing her to other *uxores*, he suggests here that she is the best of all earthly wives. She therefore straddles both realms, according to Ovid, being superlative to both her contemporaries and legendary heroines.

### *Tristia* 4.3

When we next see Ovid's wife mentioned, in *Tristia* 4.3, Ovid applies familiar strategies to exemplify his wife once more. Not only does he reinforce her foundational virtues, referencing her loyalty and love, but he also highlights her probity and her exemplary status

too. Interestingly as we will see, while he suggests that she is an *exemplum coniugis bonae*, he uses exemplary status as a means of encouragement for her to continue.

In the first half of *Tristia* 4.3. Ovid thinks back to his wife at home, praying to the constellations of Ursa to give him insight into how she feels.<sup>303</sup> Then, in a fashion similar to *Tristia* 3.3, he once more interrupts his own internal monologue, rhetorically questioning why his faith in her should ever waiver, for she has shown nothing but devotion to him:

ei mihi, cur nimium quae sunt manifesta, requiro?  
cur iacet ambiguo spes mea mixta metu?  
crede quod est et vis, ac desine tuta vereri,  
deque fide certa sit tibi certa fides,  
quodque polo fixae nequeunt tibi dicere flammae,  
non mentitura tu tibi voce refer,  
esse tui memorem, de qua tibi maxima cura est,  
quodque potest, secum nomen habere tuum. (*Tristia* 4.3.11-18)

Ah, why should I fear? I seek what is clearly known.  
Why should my hope be mixed with anxious dread?  
Believe in what's as you wish, cease to doubt what's true,  
and have firm faith in that faith that's firm,  
and what the pole of the fixed fires cannot tell you,  
say to yourself in a voice that does not lie,  
she who's your greatest care, thinks of you,  
having with her all she has of you, your name.

Once more we see the idea that Fabia's devotion is fixed and firm, and Ovid conveys a sense that their relationship is built on mutual love and affection. As the poem continues, he

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<sup>303</sup> *Tristia* 4.3.11-18.

develops this further. Imagining his wife in their marital bed alone at night, pining over him, he writes:

vultibus illa tuis tamquam praesentis inhaeret,  
    ~teque remota procul~ si modo vivit, amat.  
ecquid, ubi incubuit iusto mens aegra dolori,  
    lenis ab admonito pectore somnus abit?  
tunc subeunt curae, dum te lectus locusque  
    tangit et oblitam non sinit esse mei,  
et veniunt aestus, et nox immensa videtur,  
    fessaque iactati corporis ossa dolent? (*Tristia* 4.3.19-26)

She clings to your features as if you were there,  
    and if she lives, she loves you, though far away.  
So, when her weary mind broods on her just grievance,  
    does soft sleep leave her caring heart?  
Do cares rise, while you touch my place in the bed,  
    that does not allow you to forget me,  
does anguish come, and the night seem endless,  
    do the weary bones ache in your troubled body?

Ovid creates an intimate scene. Not only does he present his wife in their private chamber, but he also gives the reader access to her private thoughts and feelings, albeit imagined. From here he switches to address her personally. He asks whether she is sad, and regrets that he might be the cause: *indignor quod sim tibi causa doloris*.<sup>304</sup> He then advises her to feel the pain of loss and release her pent-up emotions, and calls her his *mitissima coniunx*:

tu vero tua damna dole, mitissima coniunx,

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<sup>304</sup> *Tristia* 4.3.33.

tempus et a nostris exige triste malis,  
fleque meos casus: est quaedam flere voluptas;  
expletur lacrimis egeriturque dolor. (*Tristia* 4.3.45-48)

Grieve truly for your loss, sweetest of wives,  
endure the sad season of our misfortune,  
weep for my fate: there's a release in weeping,  
grief is worked through, and relieved by tears.

In the final part of the poem, Ovid questions whether she is ashamed to be his wife.<sup>305</sup> He argues that she need not be, alluding to her probity, and reminds her of how she felt before. From here he argues that while she might grieve for their situation, she should not regret their marriage:

utque probae dignum est, omni tibi dote placebam:  
addebat veris multa faventis amor.  
nec, quem praeferres – ita res tibi magna videbar –  
quemque tuum malles esse, vir alter erat.  
nunc quoque ne pudeat, quod sis mihi nupta, tuusque  
non debet dolor hinc, debet abesse pudor. (*Tristia* 4.3.57-62)

In accordance with your probity, you were pleased with my every gift,  
and your fond love added others to the real ones.  
There were none you preferred – I seemed so great to you –  
no other man you wished for as a husband.  
Don't be ashamed even now, that you married me:  
it should bring you grief, but never shame.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> *Tristia* 4.3.39-56.

<sup>306</sup> c.f. *Tristia* 5.14.1-46 and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* 3.1.105-166, where Evadne is presented as a paragon on loyalty and love. In *Ex Ponto* 1.2.1-52 we find the sisters of Phaethon are also invoked and for Semele see *Tristia* 2.361-420; 4.3.49-84; 5.1-58; *Ibis* 251-319 and *Ibis* 465-540.



To strengthen his argument, and persuade his wife further, Ovid then deploys a series of supportive *exempla*. He introduces Evadne, who threw herself onto her husband's pyre; the sisters of Phaethon, who were turned into poplar trees by the River Po and were happy to lose their sense of feeling; and Semele, the mother of Bacchus, to remind Fabia how these exemplary women stood by their husband's and brothers with pride:

cum cecidit Capaneus subito temerarius ictu,  
num legis Euadnen erubuisse viro?  
nec quia rex mundi compescuit ignibus ignes,  
ipse suis Phaethon infitiandus erat.  
nec Semele Cadmo facta est aliena parenti,  
quod precibus periit ambitiosa suis. (*Tristia* 4.3.63-68)

When reckless Capaneus died, at that sudden blow,  
did you read that Evadne blushed for her husband?  
Phaethon was not abandoned by his sisters,  
because the king of the world quelled fire with fire.  
Semele was not born of some other father than Cadmus,  
because she was destroyed through her rash request.

Following this, he then instructs his wife not to be ashamed but rather rise up in her faithfulness and reveal her exemplary character to the world:

nec tibi, quod saevis ego sum Iovis ignibus ictus,  
purpureus molli fiat in ore pudor.  
sed magis in curam nostri consurge tuendi,  
exemplumque mihi coniugis esto bonae,  
materiamque tuis tristem virtutibus imple:  
ardua per praeceps gloria vadit iter. (*Tristia* 4.3.69-74)

Don't let the blush of shame redden your cheeks,  
because I've been struck by Jupiter's fierce lightning.  
But rise, in your faithfulness, to my defence, instead,  
be the example of a noble wife to me,  
and drown a sad theme with your virtues:  
glory climbs the heights by dangerous paths.

With this we see not only a further mention of her dedication and a further example of her exemplification, but there is also a doubling of the exemplary structure and a layering of exemplary dimensions based on temporal lines. While Ovid suggests here that his wife *should be (esto) an exemplum coniugis bonae*, i.e., in the future, the audience understands that Ovid means that she should continue to act as she has. Given both his reference to her faithfulness here, and his previous statements in *Tristia* 1.6, Fabia has acted in an exemplary manner in the past and thus is already an *exemplum*. Her continuation to do so will strengthen her position as a moral-didactic guide.

Finally, to conclude and drive the message home, Ovid reminds his wife of the precept that virtue is developed and revealed in times of adversity. Putting a positive spin on the situation, he declares that this offers her the opportunity to display her loyalty and achieve glory for her actions:

quae latet inque bonis cessat non cognita rebus,  
apparet virtus arguiturque malis.  
dat tibi nostra locum tituli fortuna, caputque  
conspicuum pietas qua tua tollat, habet.  
utere temporibus, quorum nunc munere facta est  
et patet in laudes area magna tuas. (*Tristia* 4.3.79-84)

The virtue that's hidden and remains unknown in good times,

appears, asserts itself, in adversity.

My fate grants you the opportunity for fame:  
now the loyalty you bear me can lift its head.  
Use this time, in which the chance is given,  
and the widest field lies open to your glory.

The sentiments expressed, and the strategies employed as part of Ovid's persuasive argument here are repeated on several occasions when engaging with his wife. In *Tristia* 5.5 for example, the letter he writes to his wife on her birthday, we see that Ovid not only reverts to his earlier claims that virtue is displayed through adversity, but also introduces inspirational mythological *exempla* to justify his argument:

scilicet aduersis probitas exercita rebus  
tristi materiam tempore laudis habet.  
si nihil infesti durus uidisset Vlixes,  
Penelope felix sed sine laude foret.  
Victor Echionias si uir penetrasset in arces,  
forsitan Euadnen uix sua nosset humus.  
cum Pelia genitae tot sint, cur nobilis una est?  
Nempe fuit misero nupta quod una uiro.  
effice ut Iliacas tangat prior alter harenas,  
Laudamia nihil cur referatur erit.  
et tua, quod malles, pietas ignota maneret,  
implerent uenti si mea uela sui. (*Tristia* 5.5.49-60)

Truly virtue schooled in adversity offers a theme  
for praise in the saddest times.  
If tough Ulysses had seen no misfortunes  
Penelope would have been happy not famous.  
If her husband, Capaneus, had entered Thebes in triumph,

Perhaps Evadne would have been unknown in her land.  
Though Pelias had many daughters, why's Alcestis well-known?  
Surely because she married the ill-starred Admetus.  
Let another have touched the sands of Troy first  
and there'd be no reason to remember Laodamia.  
And your loyalty would be hidden, as you'd wish,  
if favourable winds failed my sails.

What is particularly interesting here however, as I will discuss further below, is that with *Tristia* 4.3 it seems that Ovid not only uses individual *exempla*, like Semele and Evadne, to inspire his wife, but exemplary status itself. In suggesting that she has the opportunity to display her virtues and reveal herself to be an exemplary wife, Ovid is effectively offering exemplary status as a prize to be sought after, and a reward for virtuous behaviour. As we see on both occasions, he reinforces the persuasive aspect with potent reminders of the fame that these legendary heroines achieved for their deeds. Not only does he speak of how they are remembered but also subtly reminds her that immortalisation is achieved by the poets, like himself.

#### *Tristia* 5.14

In the final poem of the *Tristia*, we see that the notion that one might achieve immortality features as a central theme. Although once again in discussing this with his wife, Ovid augments the already positive portrait and alludes to her exemplary potential. In the opening lines of 5.14, Ovid reflects on his work as a whole and how his wife has been portrayed within them. He considers the portrait he has created for her retrospectively, and proclaims that he has established a monument that will make her glorious in the eyes of his reader:

quanta tibi dederim nostris monumenta libellis,  
o mihi me coniunx carior, ipsa uides.  
detrahat auctori multum fortuna licebit,  
tu tamen ingenio clara ferere meo. (*Tristia* 5.14.1-4)

You see how great a monument I've reared to you in my books,  
wife dearer to me than myself.  
Though Fortune might detract from their author,  
you'll still be made glorious by my art.

Following this proclamation, Ovid then considers how his wife further benefits from his presentation. He claims that while his works are read, the audience will know her virtue; that they provide a literary testimony that will ensure her fame throughout the ages and prevent her fading into history:

dumque legar, mecum pariter tua fama legetur,  
nec potes in maestos omnis abire rogos;  
cumque uiri casu possis miseranda uideri,  
inuenies aliquas, quae, quod es, esse uelint,  
quae te, nostrorum cum sis in parte malorum,  
felicem dicant inuideantque tibi. (*Tristia* 5.14.5-10)

As long as I'm read, your virtue will be read,  
nor can you vanish utterly in the mournful pyre.  
Though your husband's fate might make you seem one to be pitied,  
you'll find those who'd wish to be what you are,  
who'd call you happy and envy you  
in that you share in our misfortunes.

With this, Ovid claims, he could not have bestowed upon her a greater gift. Not only do earthly riches pale in comparison, but they are useless after death. Literary immortality however is perpetual, and he suggests that she should be proud of how she is portrayed:

non ego diuitias dando tibi plura dedissem:  
nil feret ad Manes diuitis umbra suos.  
perpetui fructum donauit nominis idque,  
quo dare nil potui munere maius, habes.  
adde quod, ut rerum sola es tutela mearum,  
ad te non parui uenit honoris onus,  
quod numquam uox est de te mea muta tuique  
indiciis debes esse superba uiri. (*Tristia* 5.14.11-18)

I'd not have given you more by giving you wealth:  
the rich take nothing to the ancestral shades.  
I've given you the fruits of immortal fame,  
and you possess a gift, the greatest I could give.  
Add that you're the sole custodian of my estate,  
a burden to you that comes with no little honour:  
that my voice is never silent about you,  
and you should be proud of your husband's testimony.

To strengthen his argument, Ovid once again introduces a sequence of familiar female exemplars. He asks his wife to observe Penelope, Alcestis, Evadne and Laodamia, and consider how they achieved eternal fame their loyalty and the support they gave to their husbands:

aspicis ut longo teneat laudabilis aevo  
nomen inextinctum Penelopea fides?  
cernis ut Admeti cantetur et Hectoris uxor

ausaque in accensos Iphias ire rogos?  
ut uiuat fama coniunx Phylaceia, cuius  
Iliacam celeri uir pede pressit humum? (*Tristia* 5.14.35-40)

Do you see how Penelope's loyalty is praised  
through distant ages, with undying fame?  
Do you see how Alcestis, Admetus's wife, is sung:  
Hector's Andromache: Evadne who dared the burning pyre?  
How Laodamia's name lives, wife to Phylacos' grandson Protesilaus,  
whose swift foot first touched the Trojan shore?

Finally, to conclude, Ovid reminds his wife of her duty, and how valuable she is to him. He asserts that she would be of no use to him if she were dead, and that her love and her loyalty are invaluable to him. Interestingly, at this point, Ovid feels the need to make it clear that his poem should not be seen as any kind of reproach. He is rather trying to provide supportive encouragement for her to continue doing what she does so well:

morte nihil opus est pro me, sed amore fideque:  
non ex difficili fama petenda tibi est.  
nec te credideris, quia non facis, ista moneri:  
uela damus, quamuis remige puppis eat.  
qui monet ut facias, quod iam facis, ille monendo  
laudat et hortatu comprobatur acta suo. (*Tristia* 5.14.41-46)

You'd be no help to me dead, rather loving and loyal,  
here: you don't need to search for fame through suffering.  
And don't think I'm admonishing you, for inaction:  
I'm raising sail on a ship that's already under oars.  
Who tells you to do what you're already doing,  
praises your actions, in telling, and approves them by his urging.

In these closing lines of *Tristia* 5.14 we see that Ovid concludes by picking up on several central themes. Not only does he reiterate his wife's most prominent virtues: *fides* (loyalty) and *amor* (love), but he also reiterates the need for her to survive. As we have seen, Ovid often interweaves the notion of her value to him throughout his poems, and he frequently suggests that it is his wife's duty to remain loyal, as part of her marital vows. Although he is also careful, as we see here, to put a positive spin on the situation. As part of his bid to ensure her continued loyalty, he argues that their tragic circumstances award her the opportunity to display her virtue to the world, and solidify her name in perpetuity, as an *exemplum* for other wives and women.

In the first of his exilic works, the *Tristia*, Ovid employs a variety of strategies to present his wife as an *exemplum*. First, he reveals her virtuous behaviour through his use of positive epithets and praise, signposting her various virtues like loyalty and devotion, love and support, her sense of duty, her obedience, her courage and probity, chastity and timidity. Then he makes several explicit allusions to his wife's exemplary potential. As we have seen, Ovid proclaims explicitly on two separate occasions that Fabia is an *exemplum bonae coniugis* (a model of the good wife). Though with the second we see that there is a doubling of exemplary structure and a layering of exemplary dimensions based on time as Ovid not only suggests that she is an *exemplum* at this moment, but that she should continue to be one in the future as well. Importantly here we also see that Ovid not only strives to establish his wife as an *exemplum* for others but inspires reminds her that exemplary status is itself a prize. And as we will see later, in the *Ex Ponto*, he frequently pitches exemplarity as a reward for virtuous behaviour, and reminds his wife that literary immortality is within his power to provide.



Alongside these two strategies for exemplification however, Ovid also compares his wife with other canonical and mythological *exempla*, both for emphasis and poetic effect. While he amplifies the pathos of their separation evinced earlier, by associating them with famous lovers from history that were also separated by circumstance, he later compares her personally with Andromache, Laodamia and Penelope, proclaiming that she is better and more deserving of fame than all of them for how she behaves. This, as I have suggested, consolidates the portrait that Ovid develops of his wife. By introducing these exemplary women as a standard by which to evaluate her actions, he not only elevates Fabia to the realms of legendary female heroines from Graeco-Roman mythology, but effectively casts her as the new archetype of the perfect wife. On other occasions, these third-party *exempla* function differently, as a consolatory and exhortatory guide. As we have seen in *Tristia* 4.3, he introduces Evadne, the sisters of Phaethon and Semele to support the notion that she should metaphorically stand by proudly by her husband side.<sup>307</sup>

In many ways we see that Fabia is exemplified conventionally, in line with both ancient definitions and scholarly models alike. Ovid establishes his wife as an *exemplum* by recalling her *dicta et facta* and evaluating these against a wider fund of other established *exempla* and broader societal norms. He endows them with moral-ethical meaning by associating them with certain virtues and determines that she provides a model of the perfect wife for the deeds that she performs. However, as I will argue later, while Ovid might posit his wife as an *exemplum* for others within his works, the reasons for her exemplification and subsequent elevation to the status of a moral *exemplum* has little to do

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<sup>307</sup> It is perhaps important to note here that Fabia is not only established as an *exemplum* for others, but also an imitator of other *exempla* herself. Within the poem he identifies that Livia taught her how to be an exemplary *uxor*, though as we have seen, he undermines his own statements with his various proclamations that she required no teacher and that her virtues were developed from birth.

with providing an edifying model for his audience to behold. On my reading, Ovid uses exemplification strategically for several reasons, but firstly to manipulate his wife. He uses it as both the carrot and the stick to influence her behaviour and ensure that she remains steadfastly by his side. Alongside this, as I will argue, Ovid also establishes his wife as an uxorial archetype, to manipulate public perceptions of himself. By establishing that his spouse and others around him are morally upright and virtuous, he communicates information about his own character and morality, by proxy as well.

### *Epistulae Ex Ponto*

In the second of his exilic works, the *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, we see much of the same treatment and strategies deployed. Though his wife here features far less frequently, in the letters in which she is either mentioned or addressed personally, Ovid consolidates the portrait he has established in the *Tristia* with similar points of praise, allusions to her exemplary potential and comparison with other legendary heroines.

In *Ex Ponto* 1.4 for example, a letter addressed to his wife herself, Ovid brings attention to her loyalty once more. While he laments the difficulties he faces in exile, he refers to her as his *fidissima coniunx*, highlighting how she is supreme: *durius est igitur nostrum, fidissima coniunx, / illo quod subiit Aesone natus opus* ('Thus, my labour is harder my loyal wife, than that which Jason undertook').<sup>308</sup> In another letter, *Ex Ponto* 2.1, a letter to Ovid reinforces the notion of her probity. While he writes his wife's uncle Rufus, he not

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<sup>308</sup> *Ex Ponto* 1.4.45-46. One could argue simultaneously that with his use of the superlative, Ovid also subtly echoes the sentiments expressed in *Tristia* 1.6, that she should be considered *prima*. Though here it is specifically in terms of loyalty that she is thought to be supreme, his use of this epithet here relies upon comparison to other women and establishes an implicit hierarchy.

only thanks him for his support, but takes the opportunity to applaud her virtuous character:

sponte quidem per seque mea est laudabilis uxor,  
admonitu melior fit tamen illa tuo.  
namque, quod Hermionae Castor fuit, Hector Iuli,  
hoc ego te laetor coniugis esse meae.  
quae, ne dissimilis tibi sit probitate, laborat  
seque tui uita sanguinis esse probat. (*Ex Ponto* 3.1.13-18)

My wife's to be praised spontaneously, for herself,  
yet she's the better for your advice.  
And the sort of uncle that Castor was to Hermione, Hector to Iulus,  
I'm pleased to say is what you are to my wife.  
She tries to be not unlike you in honesty,  
and proves by her life that she's of your blood.

Though the virtue of his wife is clearly intended to compliment his recipient above all, expressing not only how he has been central in her development, but also how she reflects well upon him personally, it simultaneously consolidates the portrait that Ovid develops of Fabia herself. Engaging with previous themes, it reiterates her general moral goodness (*probitas*), and also expresses the notion that her virtue is innate – as per *Tristia* 1.6. Simultaneously, alongside both of these facets, we see that Ovid once more aligns his wife implicitly within the pantheon of legendary characters. In likening Rufus to the role assumed by Castor or Hector here, Ovid correspondingly casts his wife as Hermione or Iulus. He amplifies the virtue in their respective actions, and in turn, elevate them to legendary status with his poetic associations.

While the letter clearly engages with both previous exemplifying strategies, and individual points of praise, his praise here seems different from the other letters in that they focus more upon her broader character, and less upon her virtues as a wife. Here, as we have seen, it is her *probitas* that is specifically signposted (her moral goodness, integrity or honesty in Kline's translation). And while Ovid has highlighted his wife's probity before, particularly in his statement that she is more *proba* than Andromache and Laodamia, it is rarely praised in isolation and is almost never disassociated from her uxorial status as we see here. A prime example of what Ovid does typically can be seen in *Ex Ponto* 3.7, where he praises his wife's probity alongside her timidity and unassertiveness exclusively in relation to how she interacts with him her husband: *nec grauis uxori dicar, quae scilicet in me / quam proba tam timida est experiensque parum*,<sup>309</sup> or in *Ex Ponto* 3.1, where Ovid states that will only appease Marcia if she is praised as a wife: *cuncta licet facias, nisi eris laudabilis uxor, / non poterit credi Marcia culta tibi*.<sup>310</sup> On both occasions we see that Ovid focuses on Fabia's behaviour as a *coniunx / uxor*, effectively evaluating her uxorial performance and not her virtue as a *femina / mulier* more broadly, outside of her marital role.

It is also important to note at this point that while Ovid might be seen to praise and exemplarize his wife on almost every occasion, there are at least two instances within his letters where Ovid is not entirely positive. If we return to his letter to Rufus for instance, *Ex Ponto* 2.1, following Ovid's glowing report, he explains to Rufus how his wife benefits from his instruction. Here he proposes how his wife is like a spirited horse, claiming that while

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<sup>309</sup> *Ex Ponto* 3.7.11-12: 'Nor will I be considered a burden on my wife: who is as honest to me, truly, as she's timid and unassertive.'

<sup>310</sup> *Ex Ponto* 3.1.77-78: 'Do what you will, unless you're praised as a wife, you won't be thought to have brought honour to Marcia.'

she would have done these things without encouragement, she runs more strongly by being urged on:

ergo, quod fuerat stimulis factura sine ullis,  
plenius auctorem te quoque nancta facit.  
acer et ad palmae per se cursurus honores,  
si tamen horteris, fortius ibit equus. (*Ex Ponto* 2.1.19-22)

So that which she would have done without urging  
she completes more fully with you as sponsor also.  
The spirited horse which races for the prize, itself,  
runs more strongly still if you urge it on.<sup>311</sup>

In another letter Ovid is explicitly critical of his wife and her behaviour. In contrast to the praise we see elsewhere, in *Ex Ponto* 3.1, Ovid openly chastises his wife. He laments her progress in securing further support for his cause, and questions the extent to which she still cares for him. Following his typical complaints about the location, and his pleas to be transferred to another place, in lines 31-32 Ovid proclaims that he is shocked with her lack of success, and at her ability to remain so unperturbed by the situation: *te magis est mirum non hoc euincere, coniunx, inque meis lacrimas posse tenere malis.*<sup>312</sup> Following this, Ovid then questions whether she has done all that she can, and proposes that she ask herself this question: *quid facias quaeris? quaeras hoc scilicet ipsum, / inuenies, uere si reperire uoles.*<sup>313</sup> As he states, if she truly cared for him, she would be racked with anxiety and unable to rest:

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<sup>311</sup> In my view, Ovid's statement here leaves a somewhat sour taste to his otherwise positive presentation. It seems derogatory and demeaning to provide such an analogy, and makes us question the authenticity of his portrait.

<sup>312</sup> *Ex Ponto* 3.1.31-32: 'Your lack of success, wife, is a greater wonder, and your ability to hold back tears at my troubles.'

<sup>313</sup> *Ex Ponto* 3.1.33-34: 'You ask what you should do? Ask yourself, surely: you'll find out, if you truly desire to know.'

*velle parum est: cupias ut re potiaris oportet / et faciat somnos haec tibi cura breues.*<sup>314</sup>

While these two instances do not necessarily detract from her otherwise virtuous presentation, they nevertheless leave a sour taste. In likening her to a horse that requires encouragement – a somewhat demeaning if not derogatory analogy - or in lashing out at his wife in frustration at his situation, Ovid subtly undermines the very notions that he has strove so hard to convey throughout, namely that her virtuous character is innate, and that her devotion is unwavering.

Despite his initial criticisms, in *Ex Ponto* 3.1. we find that Ovid continues to exemplify his wife. Not only does he make familiar allusions to her loyalty (§83-86), her courage (§90-94) and her probity (§93-94), but in his constant requests to continue as she has before, he pitches her as an *exemplum* of sorts:

sed tamen hoc factis adiunge prioribus unum,  
pro nostris ut sis ambitiosa malis,  
vt minus infesta iaceam regione labora,  
clauda nec officii pars erit ulla tui.  
magna peto, sed non tamen inuidiosa roganti,  
utque ea non teneas, tuta repulsa tua est.  
nec mihi suscense, totiens si carmine nostro  
quod facis ut facias teque imitere rogo.  
fortibus adsuevit tubicen prodesse suoque  
dux bene pugnantis incitat ore uiros.  
nota tua est probitas testataque tempus in omne:  
sit uirtus etiam non probitate minor. (*Ex Ponto* 3.1.83-94)

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<sup>314</sup> *Ex Ponto* 3.1.35-36: 'It's not enough to wish: you must long to achieve, and the anxiety should shorten your hours asleep.'

But add this one thing to your previous actions,  
     be assiduous in the matter of our misfortunes.  
 Work, so I might live in a less hostile region,  
     and then no aspect of your duty will be lacking.  
 I ask a lot, but nothing hateful is being asked,  
     if you don't succeed, the failure won't harm you.  
 And don't flare up because I ask you so often  
     to do what you're doing, and act as you are.  
 The brave have often been inspired by the trumpets,  
     and the general's words urge on troops fighting hard.  
 Your virtue is known and established for all time:  
     don't let your courage be less than your virtue.

While it does not necessarily come across so clearly in Kline's translation here, Ovid once more references her exemplary potential as he has before. In stating *ut facias teque imitere*, Ovid effectively uses the language of exemplary discourse (verbs pertaining to emulation and imitation) to suggest that her own previous *facta* provide her with an *exemplum* of sorts. A final instance of exemplification is found in lines 43-44. Here while Ovid reflects on how his wife is portrayed within his works, he echoes his earlier statement that Fabia is an *exemplum coniugis bonae*: the model of a good wife. Here however, in accordance with the wider frankness we observe within the letter, he admits that such a status is rather thrust upon her: *magna tibi inposita est nostris persona libellis: / coniugis exemplum diceris esse bonae*. ('The role imposed on you in my books is a great one: you're spoken of as the model of a good wife.')

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<sup>315</sup> *Ex Ponto* 3.1.43-44.

Across both the *Tristia* and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* therefore we see that Ovid constructs an exemplary portrait for his wife. Not only does he praise her on almost every occasion in which she is mentioned, highlighting her various virtues and establishing her superlative position amongst both legendary female heroines and earthly wives, but he even explicitly proclaims on three specific occasions that she constitutes an *exemplum bonae coniugis*: a model of the good wife. However, the fact that Ovid displays his awareness candidly of how he has presented his wife and how she will be received leads us to question both the veracity of the portrait and why he presents her in this way. What does Ovid hope to achieve with this? And what does it tell us about exemplary discourse?

### Fabia the *Exemplum*?

While we have seen the kinds of strategies employed for her exemplification, and highlighted the various aspects involved in her purported model, we have yet to consider the reasons why Ovid has chosen to present her in this way: why he strives to establish Fabia as an *exemplum*.

On my reading, Ovid's various invocations and subsequent exemplification of his wife within these poems serves several functions. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is to commemorate her love and unwavering devotion. As Ovid claims on several occasions, he hopes his works will immortalise her name, and award her perpetual fame. While he often feigns, in elegiac fashion, that he is unable to secure the level of fame she might deserve, he nevertheless considers his work to constitute a monument to her character and a literary testimony to her exceptional behaviour that will secure her place amongst the canon of other exemplary wives.



The notion that one might secure immortality through literature is not exclusive to Ovid's exilic works. Not only do we find this theme appear in the works of other Roman elegists, but it is also found in Ovid's own earlier, amatory elegies.<sup>316</sup> As Hinds (and others) have observed, Ovid's programmatic pledge that while his works are read, his wife will be remembered echoes the sentiments expressed in the *Amores*, where Ovid similarly suggests that his works will provide his *domina* with fame and solidify the everlasting connection between them: *nos quoque per totum pariter cantabimur orbem, / iunctaque semper erunt nomina nostra tuis*. ('We shall both be sung in similar manner across the globe, / and our names will forever be joined together.')<sup>317</sup> Where Ovid perhaps differs from both his earlier pledges and other comparable material however, is in his engagement with other social practices alongside commemoration. Beyond his ostensible objective of immortalising his wife's name, and commemorating her deeds, Ovid's bid to secure her fame also participates in the equally social process of gift exchange. On a number of occasions throughout these works, Ovid presents certain actions and initiatives as a kind of gift. In *Tristia* 1.3, he proclaims that his wife's support is a *munus* to him, and in *Tristia* 5.14, he makes it clear that the persona he has created for her is an equivalent gift to her. As he asserts, it is the greatest gift that he can give, more valuable than earthly riches: *perpetui fructum donavi nominis idque. / quo dare nil potui munere maius, habes...* ('I have given your name the fruits of immortality / you have a gift, the greatest that I could give...')<sup>318</sup> With the actions of both sides being presented as effective *munera* to each other, it seems that Ovid's bid to exemplify his wife not only aims to immortalise her deeds but also repays the gift that she

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<sup>316</sup> Hinds 1999: 123-128. See also, Ingleheart 2015, and Nagle 1980: 51f. For the notion of using poetry to secure literary immortality amongst the other elegists, see also Horace *Odes* 3.3 and Propertius *Elegies* 3.2.

<sup>317</sup> *Amores* 1.15.24-25. For a further discussion of *Elegy* 1.15 and the theme of literary immortality see Vessey 1981: 607-617.

<sup>318</sup> *Tristia* 5.14.13-14.

has given to him. He compensates his wife for her devotion and support throughout this trying time by constructing a positive portrait for posterity that will ensure her eternal fame. For Ovid then, literary immortalisation achieved through the creation of a positive persona has a certain amount of social currency. It is not only a vehicle for commemoration but has further real-world applications in that it is seemingly used to repay an individual for services rendered, or perhaps even create further debts of obligation between him and his wife.<sup>319</sup> While we see this dimension emerge most prominently during these interactions with Fabia, we see a similar sentiment in a letter Ovid writes to another, unnamed friend. In *Ex Ponto* 3.6, Ovid alludes to the need for repaying loyalty with commemoration and immortalisation. Though he does not explicitly frame this as a gift, he implies that he offered to repay his friend for his loyalty and support by preserving his name for posterity. As his friend preferred to remain anonymous however, for fear of repercussions, Ovid only highlighted his deeds.<sup>320</sup>

The construction of an exemplary portrait for his wife (and other selected friends) seemingly engages with the socio-cultural practices of commemoration and gift exchange, however the fact that Ovid is both patently aware and rather candid about constructing these *personae* intentionally, leads us to question both the veracity of the portrait created and what other objectives these might fulfil. As Johnson has suggested, a suitable methodology for reading Ovid's treatment of his wife can be found in Maria Wyke's important article on the *scripta puella*.<sup>321</sup> In her ground-breaking work on women in elegiac

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<sup>319</sup> Interestingly, as Helzle (1989: 188-89) observes, Ovid frequently uses the language of *amicitia* and patronage with his wife.

<sup>320</sup> See *Ex Ponto* 3.6. Particularly lines 1-6, and 51-60. For a further discussion of how literary immortality might engage in the process of gift exchange, see Murphy 1997. Interestingly, Oliensis 1997: 177, has commented that Ovid's withholding of identities is a theatrically pointed theme, particularly within his *Tristia*.

<sup>321</sup> Johnson 1997: 404, is referring to Wyke, M. 1987. 'Written Women: Propertius' *Scripta Puella*', *JRS* 77, 47-61. For a revised version of her original argument see Wyke 2002. For an argument to suggest that Wyke's methodology should not necessarily be applied to all women in Latin poetry see Stevenson 2005: 35-6.

poetry, Wyke argued that the various women that feature in the works of Propertius and others are constructed characters. While the works themselves might promote a reading of these individuals as real, and the statements of their author as genuine, she suggests that we should not necessarily take these *scriptae puellae* at face value, for they are essentially a character created by the author for his own social or poetic purposes.<sup>322</sup> While we are not necessarily attempting to recover the real Fabia from Ovid's texts within this study, nor are we debating her existence, we can certainly appreciate how she might also be considered an equally 'written woman'. Not only does Ovid openly admit within his works that he has created this persona and imposed it upon her, but he also makes it clear that he intends for this to secure her perpetual fame.<sup>323</sup> However, while scholars have often observed this connection, and have highlighted how the dynamics of their relationship comprises elegiac elements and relies on elegiac themes, Ovid's *scripta coniunx* here has its own specific set of objectives and socio-political aims, beyond that which Ovid proclaims.<sup>324</sup>

The first of these, I believe, is to support his broader argumentative agenda and convince the emperor to change his mind. As we see throughout his exilic works, Ovid strives at length to convince the emperor and the wider audience that he is innocent, and

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<sup>322</sup> See further Wyke 2007; 2002.

<sup>323</sup> With regards to the various elegiac elements within Ovid's exilic texts: Davisson 1984: 324-5, for example has highlighted how Ovid's wife sometimes resembles the pupil being taught his part by the *praeceptor amoris*, although her part differs in that she is to serve her instructor's needs rather than her own. At other times, he suggests, she resembles the *sola [puella]* (cf. Propertius 2.7.19) who can answer the lover's prayers, if only she responds to his praise. More recently, Sharrock 2012: 72, has observed that there is a prominent reiteration of elegiac tropes in Ovid's repeated lamentations that he has been excluded from his wife and Rome. Moreover, the role of the elegiac *puella* is now shared between his wife and Augustus within the poems, as both must be wooed, coaxed, and entreated to allow the poet in from the cold. c.f. Rosenmeyer 1997, on the *Heroides*. Ingleheart 2012: 235, also argues that Ovid's decisive break with erotic elegy is not as decisive as he might suggest, and Nagle 1980: 43, also believes that Ovid's wife is presented as a modified elegiac mistress. For a counter argument see Helzlsouer 1989: 183-193, who asserts that she is treated as equivalent to patrons and friends.

<sup>324</sup> Ingleheart 2012: 228, has also suggested that the women in Ovid's Latin exilic works have undergone a transformation in response to his change in circumstances, and the advertised changes in Ovid's poetic agenda. While she acknowledges the various characteristics and changes to the presentation of Ovid's wife, she focuses on another *puella*: Perilla, who features within his works.

that his punishment is too extreme. While he admits having made an error, he maintains that he has committed no crime, and often requests Augustus to reconsider the terms of his punishment, arguing that while many others wrote love poetry, none of them were ever reprimanded for their art.<sup>325</sup> As part of this wider bid to persuade Augustus it seems that Ovid appeals to the sympathies of the audience. Not only does he emphasize the direness of location, but he also emphasizes how he suffers and often laments the injustice of his plight. Oftentimes, as we have seen, this is amplified, if not achieved, by introduction of his wife. Not only does she feature in sections that emphasize the poet's suffering, but her invocation often allows Ovid to appeal to the reader's heartstrings, presenting himself as excluded from that which he loves.<sup>326</sup> In *Tristia* 3.8, for example, Ovid expresses his desire to escape from this place. He wishes he could fly away and see his homeland, his household, and his friends, though above all else, his wife's sweet face:

nunc ego iactandas optarem sumere pennas, ...  
... ut ... aspicerem patriae dulce repente solum,  
desertaeque domus uultu, memoresque soldales,  
caraque praecipue coniugis ora mea. (*Tristia* 3.8.5-10)

...Now I'd wish for wings to beat in flight...  
So ... I'd see my country's sweet earth,  
and the faces in the house I left, true friends,  
and above all my dear wife's features.

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<sup>325</sup> While we see this interspersed throughout, it is a particularly prominent topic in *Tristia* 2. c.f. *Tristia* 3.1; 3.5.49-5; 3.6.29-36; *Ex Ponto* 1.6.21-6. The nature of Ovid's mistake has been explored by Thibault 1964, and Green 1982.

<sup>326</sup> A prime example of his use of elegiac tropes.

In *Tristia* 3.11 he states *utque sit exiguum poenae, quod coniugue cara, / quod patria careo pignoribusque meis*: ('if it were some small punishment that I am deprived of my dear wife, / my homeland and those I care about...').<sup>327</sup> And in *Tristia* 4.6 he claims: *urbis abest facies, absunt, mea cura, sodales, / et, qua nulla mihi carior, uxor abest*. ('The sight of the city's absent, my dear friends, absent, / and my wife's absent, none dearer to me than her.')<sup>328</sup> Finally, in 4.10 he suggests that he would be overjoyed and fully restored, if his wife and country were returned to him: *nec mea sunt, fati uerba sed ista mei. / at mihi si cara patriam cum coniuge reddas* ('But if you restore me to my country, and my dear wife, / my face will be joyful, I'll be what I was.')<sup>329</sup>

Throughout the exilic works, the ability to persuade their readers over to Ovid's causes is a conscious concern. In *Ex Ponto* 3.1 for instance, the letter in which Ovid seems to criticise his wife, not only does he suggest that she should sway the emperor with her tears, but he later suggests that she approach Livia, and appeal to her sympathies with a masterful performance, to affect some sort of change:<sup>330</sup>

cum tibi contigerit uultum Iunonis adire,  
 fac sis personae quam tueare memor.  
 nec factum defende meum: mala causa silenda est.  
 nil nisi sollicitae sint tua uerba preces.  
 tum lacrimis demenda mora est submissaque terra  
 ad non mortalis brachia tende pedes.  
 tum pete nil aliud saeuo nisi ab hoste recedam:  
 hostem Fortunam sit satis esse mihi.

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<sup>327</sup> *Tristia* 3.11.15-16

<sup>328</sup> *Tristia* 4.6.45-46.

<sup>329</sup> *Tristia* 5.1.38-39. See also, *Tristia* 5.5 where Ovid declares with a hint of jealousy that he hopes she appreciates her homeland, family and friends on her birthday.

<sup>330</sup> Scholars have noted that his instructions here are a variation of the instructions he gives in the *Ars Amatoria* in his role as *praeceptor amoris*. See Colakis 1987.

plura quidem subeunt, sed sunt turbata timore;  
haec quoque uix poteris uoce tremente loqui.  
suspikor hoc damno fore non tibi: sentiet illa  
te maiestatem pertimuisse suam.  
nec tua si fletu scindentur uerba, nocebit:  
interdum lacrimae pondera uocis habent. (*Ex Ponto* 3.1.145-158)

When you succeed in reaching Juno's presence,  
make sure you remember the part you have to play.  
Don't defend my actions: a poor case should be silent.  
Let your words be nothing but anxious prayers.  
Next remove the barrier to tears, sink to the ground,  
stretch your arms towards those deathless feet.  
Then ask for nothing except that I might leave the cruel  
enemy behind: let fate be enemy enough.  
More comes to mind, but confused by fear,  
your voice trembling, you'll barely be able even to say that.  
I suspect it won't harm you. She'll see you're  
terrified of her majesty. And it won't hurt if your speech is  
interrupted by sobs: tears sometimes carry the weight of words.

While it is rather surprising how frank Ovid is in publicly advising his wife to put on this performance, particularly given our presumption that he anticipates Livia will read his works, his acute awareness that sympathy is more powerful than logical argumentation in his case suggests that both his persistent efforts to reveal his suffering, and his pain in being separated from his wife, were designed to function in a similar way. To amplify the pathos of his poems, and the force beneath his appeals to sympathies, he uses his wife as a kind of

evidence for the wider impact of Augustus' edict and to reveal how his decision has affected other, professedly innocent parties, and not just Ovid himself.<sup>331</sup>

On my reading, the invocation and subsequent presentation of Ovid's wife are seemingly used to support his overall argument that his punishment is far too extreme and to initiate a sympathetic response from the audience at large. However, alongside both of these, the portrait of his wife might also function a means of rehabilitating public perception of his moral character: to re-cast himself as a moral man, by proxy. As Petersen has observed, the Roman male and his public image was intertwined with his relationships with women and friends. Like the company he keeps, and his other family members, the behaviour and moral reputation of one's spouse was believed to provide a general indication of an individual's character to wider society.<sup>332</sup> The symbiotic nature of relationships and their impact on public perceptions in Roman world is perhaps typified by Pliny the Younger. In his Panegyric delivered before the Emperor Trajan, Pliny demonstrates how people considered Trajan's wife (and also later, his sister) to be reflections on the man himself:

tibi uxor in decus et gloriam cedit. quid enim illa sanctius, quid antiquius? ...  
quam illa nihil sibi ex fortuna tua nisi gaudium vindicat! quam constanter non  
potentiam tuam, sed ipsum te reueretur! idem estis invicem quod fuistis;  
probatis ex aequo, nihilque vobis felicitas addidit, nisi quod scire coepistis, quam  
bene uterque vestrum felicitatem ferat. eadem quam modica cultu, quam parca  
comitatu, quam civilis incessu! mariti hoc opus, qui ita imbuit ita instituit; nam  
uxori sufficit obsequi gloria. an, cum videat quam nullus te terror, nulla comitetur

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<sup>331</sup> On a broader level, Petersen 2005: 4, argues that because the poems are part of a larger collection for publication, his wife might also act as a synecdoche for his wider audience. Here Petersen argues that Ovid's pleas for her sympathies and support might equally become a plea to the general public to gather behind his cause.

<sup>332</sup> Petersen 2005: 7. See further Hillard 1992.

ambitio, non et ipsa cum silentio incedat, ingredientemque pedibus maritum, in quantum patitur sexus, imitetur? Decuerit hoc illam, etiamsi diversa tu facias; sub hac vero modestia viri quantam debet verecundiam uxor marito, femina sibi!  
(Pliny *Panegyricus* 83)

But your own wife contributes to your honour and glory, as a supreme model of the ancient virtues ... From your position she claims nothing for herself but the pleasure it gives her, unswerving in her devotion not to your power but to yourself. You are just the same to each other as you have always been, and your mutual appreciation is unchanged; success has brought you nothing but a new understanding of your joint ability to live in its shadow. How modest she is in her attire, how moderate the number of her attendants, how unassuming when she walks abroad! This is the work of her husband who has fashioned and formed her habits; there is glory enough for a wife in obedience. When she sees her husband unaccompanied by pomp and intimidation, she also goes about in silence, and as far as her sex permits, she follows his example of walking on foot. This would win her praise even if you did the opposite, but with a husband so moderate in his habits, how much respect she owes him as his wife, and herself as a woman!<sup>333</sup>

As Petersen has rightly suggested, if Ovid wished to improve his tarnished reputation and provide further evidence of his morality, then separating himself from the immoral elegiac *amator* by emphasizing their marital love, and presenting a wife who conformed to the Roman, if not Augustan ideal, would play a powerful part in rehabilitating himself publicly as a moral man. His possession of a virtuous wife, and his ability to fashion her habits as we see here through encouragement, speaks not only to his masculinity but also to his morality and character as a whole. Perhaps this is the reason why we see so much mirroring of

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<sup>333</sup> Trans. Radice 1969.



behaviour throughout his works, though particularly in the earlier poems. As we have seen in *Tristia* 1.3, while Ovid weeps, his wife weeps more bitterly; while he is sad without her, he reveals how she is equally distraught. While he proclaims that he has committed no crime, he characterises his wife as undeserving and innocent. With every mention and instance that their behaviour is mirrored, Ovid compounds the connection between them. The notion thus gains strength from repetition and consideration throughout the exile poems.

Finally, while Ovid might use exemplification as a means of supporting his bid to persuade the emperor to change his mind, generate sympathy for his case and perhaps even restore his reputation as a moral man, we also see quite visibly that Ovid uses exemplification as a means of controlling his wife's behaviour. Between his various proclamations of her exemplary behaviour, as we have seen, Ovid not only establishes exemplary status as a prize to be sought after, but he reminds his wife of how she will be perceived. In addition to this, Ovid also reminds his wife how it is within his power to shape her reception, he can both grant a positive presentation or equally take it away. While this notion is implied on occasion it is most explicitly developed in *Ex Ponto* 3.1. Here, following his proclamation that he has established her as an exemplary wife throughout his works, Ovid first asserts that his wife should be careful not to slip from her position, and that she should act in accordance with his presentation so that the portrait he has created remains true: *hanc caue degeneres, ut sint praeconia nostra / uera; uide Famae quod tuearis opus.*<sup>334</sup> Then, to intensify his ostensible threat, he reminds her of his power as an author, and that the audience is watching her every move:

vt nihil ipse querar, tacito me Fama queretur,

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<sup>334</sup> *Ex Ponto* 3.1.45-46.

quae debet fuerit ni tibi cura mei.  
 exposuit memet populo Fortuna uidendum  
 et plus notitiae quam fuit ante dedit.  
 notior est factus Capaneus a fulminis ictu,  
 notus humo mersis Amphiarus equis.  
 si minus errasset, notus minus esset Vlixes,  
 magna Philoctetae uulnere fama suo est.  
 si locus est aliquis tanta inter nomina paruis,  
 nos quoque conspicuos nostra ruina facit.  
 nec te nesciri patitur mea pagina, qua non  
 inferius Coa Bittide nomen habes.  
 quicquid ages igitur, scena spectabere magna  
 et pia non paucis testibus uxor eris.  
 crede mihi, quotiens laudaris carmine nostro,  
 qui legit has laudes, an mereare rogat.  
 vtque fauere reor plures uirtutibus istis,  
 sic tua non paucae carpere facta uolent.  
 quarum tu praesta ne liuor dicere possit:  
 "haec est pro miseri lenta salute uiri". (*Ex Ponto* 3.1.47-66)

Though I don't complain myself, fame, as she should,  
 will complain when I'm silent, if you don't show care for me.  
 Fate has exposed me to the public gaze,  
 and given me more notoriety than before.  
 Capaneus was made more famous when the lightning struck:  
 Amphiarus when his horses were swallowed by the earth.  
 Ulysses would have been less known if he'd wandered less:  
 Philoctetes' great fame derived from his wound.  
 If there's a place for the humble among such names,  
 I too am made conspicuous by my ruin.  
 And my writings won't let you pass unknown,

you, whose name's no less than Coan Bittis.  
So whatever you do will be seen on a mighty stage,  
and you'll be a virtuous wife before many witnesses.  
Believe me, whenever you're praised in my verse  
he who reads that praise asks if you're worthy of it.  
And though many, I think, approve those virtues,  
not a few women will carp at your deeds.  
It's for you to ensure that jealousy can't say:  
"She's indifferent to her poor husband's safety."

While in his earlier *Tristia* Ovid uses exemplification as a means of inspiration, incentivising it by revealing the benefits of its status, in his letters he begins to issue threats. As he becomes increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress in this situation, Ovid threatens to remove her from the metaphorical pedestal on which he had placed her if she does not do as he suggests. As we have seen, the letter revolves around instructing his wife to beseech the emperor and Livia to get them to change their mind, and to persuade his wife to act.

While Ovid uses exemplary status as a means of emotional blackmail: to manipulate his wife's behaviour, he also, ultimately, uses it to regain some semblance of control over the situation. As we can see, Ovid is essentially impotent in exile. He is almost completely reliant on his wife and friends to affect some form of change. While on one hand he might arguably console himself by reflecting upon his wife's unwavering support, on another, by creating a positive portrait for her, he can reassert a sense of his authority and control.<sup>335</sup> He can coerce his wife and her actions by revealing the prize for loyalty, and his power to take it away.

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<sup>335</sup> For the notion that fashioning women into *exempla* of loyalty might comfort their author and soothe personal anxieties see Parker 2001.

## Conclusion

While Ovid presents his wife in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* as an *exemplum* using conventional language and means, we have seen that she is used in many ways beyond conventional functions. On one level she is used as a tool for manipulating the audience's response to his situation, rehabilitating his tarnished reputation by association and generating sympathy for his cause. On another, like Cicero, Ovid is using exemplification simultaneously as a means of controlling her behaviour. He sets her up as an *exemplum* and broadcasts her persona publicly, as a means of creating leverage in a situation in which he is effectively impotent and regain some control.

With Ovid's poetry from Pontus then we see once more that exemplification and the discourse of exemplarity in Roman culture can comprise a socio-political dimension when contemporaries are involved. Though there might be certain moral and rhetorical elements, it is often deployed more immediately and strategically to serve the author's own objectives in negotiating personal or political relationships, power dynamics, or manipulating others to gain further influence or control. Importantly, with our exploration of Ovid's poetry from Pontus, we also see that such a dimension is not necessarily exclusive to speeches and letters in prose. It is the inclusion of this temporal variable and the relationships between the author and others involved. As we will see in the chapters that follow, this is a recurrent strategy adopted by a number of Latin authors throughout the Roman period, beyond Ovid and Cicero themselves. In our next case study, *Seneca's Consolations*, we see many of these same socio-political dimensions emerge as well.

## Chapter 6. Seneca the Younger: Exemplification and the Consolations

### Introduction

In this chapter we will explore our next case study – Seneca the Younger – and examine the creation and dissemination of female *exempla* within his works.<sup>336</sup> Here however we will focus in particular on his *Consolations* written to two women – Marcia and Helvia – though we will also consider other works where necessary, from his wider literary corpus.<sup>337</sup> The *Consolations* are important for our purposes for several reasons, not least because Seneca relies heavily upon *exempla* to console these women and affect some form of change.

Within both *Consolations* we see that Seneca presents his recipients with a variety of female figures, to persuade them to alter their current behaviour and return to their previously virtuous state. Alongside historical and mythological female *exempla* however, we also find that Seneca exemplifies several contemporary women to fulfil his consolatory aims. Indeed, the *Consolations* are a prime case study for this assessment as on both occasions, Seneca exemplifies the recipient of the essay themselves.

As Kerr has observed, Seneca's deployment of *exempla* within these essays are unsurprising, and conventional in many ways. First, as he highlights, *exempla* were one of the key therapeutic apparatus of the consolatory genre, supporting the various precepts and maxims that authors would often cite to persuade their recipient to change their ways.<sup>338</sup> Second, Seneca's use of *exempla* is also unsurprising because he frequently

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<sup>336</sup> Lucius Annaeus Seneca, referred to as 'the Younger' to distinguish him from his father of the same name was born c. 4 B.C.E. in Cordoba (Hispania) and died c. 65 C.E. in Rome.

<sup>337</sup> The *Consolations* were thought to be produced between 40 and 44 C.E. (*Ad Marciam*: c.40 C.E. and *Ad Helviam Matrem* c. 42/43 C.E.) though scholars suggest that these dates are still contentious and subject to scrutiny. For the dating of these texts and the issues surrounding it, see Marshall 2014; Bellmore 1992; Manning 1981; Griffin 1976; and Ferrill 1966.

<sup>338</sup> For the notion that *exempla* were conventional rhetorical devices in consolation see Kerr 2009: 90, discussed further below.

champions the benefits of learning from how others around him behave. Evidence for this can be found within his letters to Lucilius (the *Epistulae Morales*) where Seneca strives to provide a moral education for his charge. In letter 59, Seneca advises Lucilius to generate living examples by observing others behaviour, as precepts often take too long:

plus tamen tibi et viva vox et convictus quam oratio proderit; in rem praesentem venias oportet, primum quia homines amplius oculis quam auribus credunt, deinde quia longum iter est per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla.  
(*Epistulae Morales* 59)

Nevertheless, the living voice and social interaction will benefit you more than discussion; you ought to come into the actual presence, first because people trust their eyes more than their ears, second because the journey through precepts is long, but the one through *exempla* is quick and efficient.<sup>339</sup>

While Seneca's exemplification of both historical and contemporary individuals within his *Consolations* might align with the traditions of the genre, and Seneca's own penchant for adopting *exempla* as living models within his life, his application of these two categories of *exempla* nevertheless sheds new light on the use of exemplification in Roman culture and the nature of exemplary discourse. As I will argue within this chapter, Seneca's *Consolations* support the notion presented by this thesis that exemplification is situationally dependent upon the relationship between the author and those who are exemplified within the work. Moreover, it shows that when contemporaries are exemplified there is often a further, more socio-political reading that can be applied beyond the typical moral and rhetorical

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<sup>339</sup> Trans. Stewart 1900. See also *Epistulae Morales* 104.21, where Seneca encourages Lucilius (and his wider readers) to live with exemplary figures like the Catos, Laelius and Tubero, as reflection upon their lives and endurance will prepare us to suffer as well. For further discussion of this passage, and Seneca's penchant for adopting living breathing models within his live see particularly Mayer 2008: 313, or more recently, Schafer 2011: 32-52.

recourse. Alongside both of these, Seneca's application of exempla within the *Consolations* also shows that the discourse is not only highly subjective, but also highly gendered in several ways. As we will see, Seneca consciously tailors the *exempla* that he presents before Marcia and Helvia according to their sex, to increase the efficacy of the messages he aims to convey.

While much attention has been paid to the *Consolations*, and Seneca's use of *exempla* throughout, scholars tend to focus on how his deployment fits within the traditional parameters of the consolatory genre, or how he might offer a uniquely philosophical slant.<sup>340</sup> Few have explored the connection between exemplifying the recipient of these consolations and the author's broader socio-political aims, and none have acknowledged that this is part of a wider observable pattern amongst Roman authors to achieve other objectives beyond that which they might claim.

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<sup>340</sup> With regards to those who look at Seneca's use of *exempla* within his works, see Kerr 2009; Correa 2017; Dressler 2012; Urban 2011; Schafer 2011; Mayer 2008, and Roller 2004, 2007, 2015, 2018. Roller 2004, 2018, has recently shown that while the rhetorical aspect of exemplarity was dealt with by the grammarians and rhetoricians, Seneca was also, one of the only authors to reflect upon the use of *exempla* from a particularly philosophical perspective. In his analysis of Seneca's letters to Lucilius (particularly *Epistulae* 120) Roller suggests that Seneca contravenes conventional Roman exemplary discourse and advocates a particularly Stoic slant. As Roller argues, while he might use *exempla* in traditional fashion, he also suggests that the moral validity of one's character, or actions cannot be judged by singular instances of virtue, but rather by a continual display of (said) virtue throughout their life, and/or across multiple spheres. c.f. Gloyn 2017, who proposes that Seneca further displays a unique perspective, applying Stoic Oikeisos theory in his bid to console Helvia and Marcia. c.f. Gloyn 2014. With regards to his engagement with women and use of female *exempla*, Viden 1993, assesses Seneca's view of women and briefly considers their function as a *exempla*. He strives to provide a composite picture of Seneca's concept of what makes women exemplary as well as how his promotion of equality between the sexes in their capacity for virtue is often at odds with, and undermined by, his other works. Mauch 1997, more broadly, examines Seneca's view of women, and his use of them as moral *exempla* in his letters and treatises. He attempts to answer the question of when and how Seneca uses women according to their degree of moral development, as deterrent examples, or as role-models of certain virtues like *pudicitia* and *constantia*. Shelton 1995, provides an in-depth analysis of Sections 1-6 of the *Ad Marciam* but does not fully appreciate what this tells us about the use of women as examples within the wider discourse of exemplarity. Wilcox 2006, focuses on analysing issues of gender within the consolations. And while she highlights many important points, she does not tackle all examples – e.g. Helvia's sister in the *Ad Helviam* – nor examine the discourse more broadly. Her discussion focuses on Seneca's proclivity to endow female *exempla* with masculine qualities and the tension this creates. c.f. Reydams Schils 2005; McAuley 2015, and Gloyn 2017. For those who look at the socio-political dimensions of the *Consolations* see in particular McAuley 2015; Wilson 2013; Fantham 2007: 171-6; Griffin 1986: 21-2; 60-1; Abel 1967: 48ff; Favez 1966; Ferrill 1966, and Stewart 1953. C.f. Manning 1981: 5-6, who sees a genuine attempt at consolation alongside other benefits.

In this chapter therefore we will explore how Seneca not only offers historical and mythological *exempla* with these essays, but also establishes the recipient of the consolation as an *exemplum* themselves. We will outline how he does this in each individual case, and also speculate as to his reasons for doing so as well. Here we will argue that with Marcia, Seneca is using notions of her exemplary behaviour in line with convention, to fulfil his consolatory aims. Yet with its subsequent publication we also see that there are potentially other socio-political dimensions beneath his rhetoric, and perhaps even literary ambitions being chased. In the case of the *Ad Helviam*, I will argue that Seneca exemplifies his mother and others on some level to reflect well upon himself. When we consider that at the time of its publication, Seneca had been banished from Rome: it seems as if he strives to muster his recall through sympathetic appeal and rehabilitate his tarnished reputation by association with his exemplary mother and other family members.

### Consoling Marcia

Of the three consolatory essays that have survived antiquity, the *Consolatio Ad Marciam* is Seneca's earliest work. Written under Caligula, in the year before his banishment from Rome, Seneca strives here to comfort Marcia, a mother who has been mourning the loss of her son. According to Seneca, Marcia has been grieving Metilius' death for three years by the time of writing and refuses any mention of his name. She shuns all those friends and family who try and console her, and claims that Fortune was to blame.<sup>341</sup> Importantly for our purposes we see that Seneca relies heavily on *exempla* in his bid to remedy Marcia's grief.<sup>342</sup> Not only does he use them frequently throughout the course of the essay, but he

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<sup>341</sup> See *Ad Marciam* 1.1.5-7.

<sup>342</sup> Medical imagery features heavily throughout his consolations. Though notably, more often when consoling women. It is persistently invoked in the *Consolatio Ad Helviam Matrem*, as well as here, as Seneca frequently



inverts the traditional order of things to award *exempla* with sequential primacy. We see this clearly in section 2, where Seneca outlines the methods that he will apply. Here, in this programmatic statement, he discusses the importance of examples in the consolatory process, and that Marcia's course of therapy will suit her individual needs:

scio a praeceptis incipere omnis qui monere aliquem uolunt, in exemplis desinere. mutari hunc interim morem expedit; aliter enim cum alio agendum est: quosdam ratio ducit, quibusdam nomina clara opponenda sunt et auctoritas quae liberum non relinquat animum ad speciosa stupentibus. duo tibi ponam ante oculos maxima et sexus et saeculi tui exempla: alterius feminae quae se tradidit ferendam dolori, alterius quae pari adfecta casu, maiore damno, non tamen dedit longum in se malis suis dominium, sed cito animum in sedem suam reposuit. (*Ad Marciam* 2.1-2)

I know that all who wish to give any one advice begin with precepts, and end with examples: but it is sometimes useful to alter this agenda, for we must deal differently with different people. Some are guided by reason, others must be confronted with authority and the names of celebrated persons, whose brilliancy dazzles their mind and destroys their power of free judgment. I will place before your eyes two of the greatest examples belonging to your sex and your century: one, that of a woman who allowed herself to be entirely carried away by grief; the other, one who, though afflicted by a like misfortune, and an even greater loss, yet did not allow her sorrows to hold dominion over her for a very long time, but quickly restored her mind to its accustomed poise.<sup>343</sup>

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presents grief as a disease, and consolation as a kind of remedy. The disparity between his application of this imagery between the consolations to men and women however might be in part due to the corruption of the *Ad Polybium* manuscripts and our consequential loss of its introductory sections.

<sup>343</sup> All translations of the *Consolatio ad Marciam* will henceforth be provided by Stewart 1900, unless otherwise stated.

While Seneca's application of *exempla* in his *Consolation* is seemingly conventional, aligning with the traditions of the genre on the whole, we see within this programmatic statement that Seneca proposes to offer a relatively novel approach.<sup>344</sup> As he outlines, he will invert the traditional sequence of consolatory devices to offer *exempla* and not *praecepta* first. He effectively suggests that they have an increased efficacy this personalised therapy course.

Alongside this we also see that Seneca will further tailor his choice of *exempla* for Marcia along gendered and temporal lines. As he proposes, he will confront Marcia with the behaviour of two exemplary figures based on her sex and time. The two *maxima exempla* that Seneca refers to here are Octavia, the sister of the emperor Augustus, and Livia, his wife.<sup>345</sup> According to Seneca they will provide two antithetical models of how one should grieve the loss of a loved one before their time. As James Kerr summarises, the negative case is clearly Octavia, who after the death of her son Marcellus in 23 C.E. would not let herself be reminded of him in any shape or form (including poetry composed for celebrating the memory of Marcellus) and remained perpetually in grief. The positive example is Livia, who eventually recovered from the death of her son Drusus in 9 C.E. to the point that she did not cease from celebrating her son's name and represented him everywhere both in private and public.<sup>346</sup> However, while Seneca suggests that Octavia and Livia will constitute

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<sup>344</sup> Mayer 2008: 307, notes that as a class of treatise, the consolation traditionally made frequent calls upon a store of *exempla*, as well as *praecepta*. And Kerr 2009: 90, observes that 'in practice, "reason" (elsewhere paraphrased with *consilium*, *prudētia*, or *uirtus* with masculine connotations) implies the array of therapeutic devices that the consoler makes available in the course of the text. These are primarily (1) arguments (*praecepta*, *rationes*, *medicinae*, *consolationes*), supplemented by (2) examples (*exempla*) and (3) comforts or compensations (*solacia*). See also, Urban 2011: 135, who highlights how *exempla* often feature heavily in the context of giving advice in general.

<sup>345</sup> See *Ad Marciam* 1.2-5.

<sup>346</sup> Kerr 2009: 94. See also Mayer 2008: 309; Viden 1993: 133, and Shelton 1995: 171-7. It is interesting how in both passages we see that Seneca evaluates not only the women and their behaviours but also the character of the deceased. He provides an effective encomium of Metilius and Drusus within their respective passages that emphasize their virtues and positive attributes. While in many ways this justifies Octavia and Livia's reason for mourning further, emphasizing the value of those they had lost, in the case of Octavia in particular, it also reinforces her negative aspects further, in amplifying her moral failings by comparison.

the essay's primary *exempla*, he presents Marcia with a cast of exemplary characters from Roman History and contemporary society, including Marcia herself.<sup>347</sup>

In the opening of the essay, Seneca outlines the reasons for undertaking this task. He declares that had he not known Marcia to be unlike other women, displaying little of their typical mental weakness, and other vices, he would not have attempted to console her. However, as Marcia has proven herself in the past, particularly during times of great personal tragedy, he is confident that she will be receptive to his consolatory therapy and eventually recover:

nisi te, Marcia, scirem tam longe ab infirmitate muliebris animi quam a ceteris uitiiis recessisse et mores tuos uelut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici, non auderem obuiam ire dolori tuo, cui uiri quoque libenter haerent et incubant, nec spem concepissem tam iniquo tempore, tam inimico iudice, tam inuidioso crimine posse me efficere ut fortunam tuam absolueres. fiduciam mihi dedit exploratum iam robur animi et magno experimento adprobata uirtus tua. (*Ad Marciam* 1.1)

Did I not know, Marcia, that you have as little of a woman's weakness of mind as of her other vices, and that your life was regarded as a model of antique virtue, I should not have dared to combat your grief, which is one that many men fondly nurse and embrace, nor should I have conceived the hope of persuading you to hold fortune blameless, having to plead for her at such an unfavorable time, before so partial a judge, and against such an odious charge. I derive confidence,

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<sup>347</sup> Alongside the two *maxima exempla* (Octavia and Livia) that he outlines in his introduction, Seneca also invokes, Marcia herself (1.1), Julia Augusta (4.1), the anonymised and collectivised, 'great generals and princes (12.2-5)'; Lucius Cornelius Sulla (12.6), the high priest Pulvillus (13.1), Paulus (13.3-4), Lucius Bibulus and Julius Caesar (14.1-4), the collective household of the Caesars (15.1); then individually, Augustus, and Tiberius (15.2-4); Lucretia, Brutus, Cloelia (16.1-3), the two Corneliae (16.3-5); Pompey and Cicero (20.4-6); Rutilius, Socrates and Cato (22.1), her father Cremutius Cordus (22.4ff) and finally, the anonymous 'giant boy from Rome' reported by Fabianus (23. 5) We might also include in this list, his analogy of the farmer (*agricola*) at 16.7. Interestingly, while Seneca suggests that Livia and Octavia are selected for their applicability in terms of sex and time, they have other connections to Marcia beyond these two criteria alone. They are also particularly applicable to her in terms of their social role.

however, from the proved strength of your mind, and your virtue, which has been proved by a severe test.<sup>348</sup>

Though Seneca suggests later that his essay will rely on two *maxima exempla*, from the essay's inception we see that the first *exemplum* presented is in fact Marcia herself.<sup>349</sup> Not only does Seneca highlight Marcia's virtuous attributes here – her strength of mind and moral excellence – to suggest that she will be receptive to his therapeutic programme, but he also makes an explicit allusion to her exemplary potential with his reference to her reputation as an *antiquum exemplar*. As Seneca continues, he develops this further. Building on his suggestion that Marcia has proven herself to be virtuous in the past, he then proceeds to remind her of how she previously dealt with death. He recalls how she conducted herself during the downfall and subsequent suicide of her father, the Historian, Cremutius Cordus: a particularly painful event.<sup>350</sup> While the passage is quite lengthy, it is worth recording in full here:

non est ignotum qualem te in persona patris tui gesseris, quem non minus quam liberos dilexisti, excepto eo quod non optabas superstitem. Nec scio an et optaueris; permittit enim sibi quaedam contra bonum morem magna pietas. mortem A. Cremuti Cordi parentis tui quantum poteras inhibuisti; postquam tibi apparuit inter Seianianos satellites illam unam patere seruitutis fugam, non fauisti consilio eius, sed dedisti manus uicta, fudistique lacrimas palam et

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<sup>348</sup> Much has been made of the fact that Seneca attributes the inherently masculine trait of *uirtus* onto a woman here. See in particular, McAuley 2015; Wilcox 2006; Viden 1993, and Gloyn 2017. While *uirtus* is an important characteristic of women that Seneca claims to be exceptional, for our purposes, I will delay discussion of it until later.

<sup>349</sup> Seneca is not necessarily innovative in presenting the subject herself as an *exemplum* in this manner. According to Kerr 2009: 90, Cicero also frequently focuses on the example of the addressee's own past behaviour, in appealing to their sense of self-consistency (*constantia*).

<sup>350</sup> According to Tacitus, Cremutius was accused of committing treason in 25 C.E. for praising Brutus and Cassius within his works. See *Annales* 4.35ff. For a discussion of the event see Gowing 2005; McHugh 2004, and Langlands 2004.

gemitus deuorasti quidem, non tamen hilari fronte textisti, et haec illo saeculo quo magna pietas erat nihil impie facere. ut uero aliquam occasionem mutatio temporum dedit, ingenium patris tui, de quo sumptum erat supplicium, in usum hominum reduxisti et a uera illum uindicasti morte ac restituisti in publica monumenta libros quos uir ille fortissimus sanguine suo scripserat. optime meruisti de Romanis studiis: magna illorum pars arserat; optime de posteris, ad quos ueniet incorrupta rerum fides, auctori suo magno inputata; optime de ipso, cuius uiget uigebitque memoria quam diu in pretio fuerit Romana cognosci, quam diu quisquam erit qui reuerti uelit ad acta maiorum, quam diu quisquam qui uelit scire quid sit uir Romanus, quid subactis iam ceruicibus omnium et ad Seianianum iugum adactis indomitus, quid sit homo ingenio animo manu liber. magnum mehercules detrimentum res publica ceperat, si illum ob duas res pulcherrimas in obliuionem coniectum, eloquentiam et libertatem, non eruisses: legitur, floret, in manus hominum, in pectora receptus uetustatem nullam timet; at illorum carnificum cito scelera quoque, quibus solis memoriam meruerunt, tacebuntur. haec magnitudo animi tui uetuit me ad sexum tuum respicere, uetuit ad uultum, quem tot annorum continua tristitia, ut semel obduxit, tenet. et uide quam non subrepam tibi nec furtum facere adfectibus tuis cogitem: antiqua mala in memoriam reduxi et, ut scires hanc quoque plagam esse sanandam, ostendi tibi aequae magni uulneris cicatricem. (*Ad Marciam* 1.2-5)

All men know how well you behaved towards your father, whom you loved as dearly as your children in all respects, save that you did not wish him to survive you: indeed, for all that I know you may have wished that also: for great affection ventures to break some of the golden rules of life. You did all that lay in your power to avert the death of your father, Aulus Cremutius Cordus but when it became clear that, surrounded as he was by Sejanus' henchmen, there was no other way of escape from slavery, you did not indeed approve of his resolution, but gave up all attempts to oppose it; you shed tears openly, and choked down your sobs, yet did not screen them behind a smiling face; and you did all this in the present century, when not to be unnatural towards one's parents is considered the height of filial affection. When the changes of our times gave you

an opportunity, you restored to the use of man that genius of your father for which he had suffered and made him in real truth immortal by publishing as an eternal memorial of him those books which that bravest of men had written with his own blood. You have done a great service to Roman literature: a large part of Cordus's books had been burned; a great service to posterity, who will receive a true account of events, which cost its author so dear; and a great service to himself, whose memory flourishes and ever will flourish, as long as men set any value upon the facts of Roman history, as long as any one lives who wishes to review the deeds of our fathers, to know what a true Roman was like—one who still remained unconquered when all other necks were broken in to receive the yoke of Sejanus, one who was free in every thought, feeling, and act. By Hercules, the state would have sustained a great loss if you had not brought him forth from the oblivion to which his two splendid qualities, eloquence and independence, had consigned him: he is now read, is popular, is received into men's hands and bosoms, and fears no old age: but as for those who butchered him, before long men will cease to speak even of their crimes, the only things by which they are remembered. This greatness of mind in you has forbidden me to take into consideration your sex or your face, still clouded by the sorrow by which so many years ago it was suddenly overcast. See; I shall do nothing underhand, nor try to steal away your sorrows: I have reminded you of old hurts, and to prove that your present wound may be healed, I have shown you the scar of one which was equally severe.

As we can see, particularly within these final lines, Seneca presents Marcia with this event from her past to remind her that she has the mental strength to overcome her present situation. It fulfils an exhortatory and motivational function in suggesting that as Seneca derives confidence from her proven record, so should she.<sup>351</sup> However, while Seneca might revive old scars to remind Marcia that she might yet change her ways, and prepare her for

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<sup>351</sup> This notion has been acknowledged by several scholars. See for instance: Shelton 1995: 188, Mauch 1997: 80 or more recently, Gloyne 2017: 26.

his consolation, his recollection of her exemplary conduct in this episode simultaneously comprises a didactic dimension. It presents Marcia with a model of approved behaviours in such a situation that she might consider, adapt to these new circumstances and replicate herself.

The constituent elements of Marcia's model are delineated through Seneca's signposting and praise, though what emerges most prominently in this passage is the devotion and sense of duty that Marcia displayed. As we see Seneca highlights that while she cared for her father deeply, she understood his decision to end his life. She supported him in her own way until the end and grieved openly when he had died. This, as Seneca observes, was indicative of Marcia's filial affection. As he comments sarcastically, while others treated the death of a parent with contempt, Marcia's public outpouring of grief that it affected her deeply. While in the first half of the passage Seneca focuses on her filial affection, highlighting the love (*diligo*) that Marcia had for her father and children, in the second half he focuses on her filial duty, praising Marcia's republication of his *Histories* post-mortem. With this, as Seneca proclaims emphatically, Marcia not only did a service to Roman literature, but also a service to her father personally. It secured his legacy and effectively saved him from descending into oblivion.

While Marcia emerges firstly as a model of duty and devotion, we see in Seneca's praise a number of other, distinctly, positive traits. As Jo-Ann Shelton has argued, for instance, in this episode Marcia clearly displays wisdom (*sapientia*). Not only did she accept fate, but she also showed correct reasoning in understanding that death was not necessarily a *malum* in this situation but would liberate her father from further persecution.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Shelton 1995: 186. See also Gloyne 2017: 19-23. The point that death is liberating is reiterated in section 20.1.

Alongside wisdom, and correct reasoning, Marcia also shows a level of moderation and temperance. She does not grieve excessively but limits its display. Moreover, following her father's suicide, she does not descend into mourning and let her emotions consume her, but channels her efforts and energies into more productive things, like commemorating his name. As Shelton has summarised, in praising Marcia for the fact that she did not respond to his death by falling into grief, but by taking an active role in the survival of his work, Seneca is showing how Marcia contributed to the welfare of both the family – in securing the reputation of one member - and the state - as Seneca asserts that Marcia served public interest by saving the information in Cordus' histories, about Rome's outstanding citizens and persevering the memory of a man who could teach posterity.<sup>353</sup> Effectively what Seneca is suggesting therefore is that Marcia demonstrated self-control. She subordinated her own naturally selfish desire to see him live, to the greater purpose of securing her liberty.

Though Seneca might claim that he has recalled past events to inspire Marcia to change her ways, we also see that he is simultaneously offering her a model for how she should behave. Ultimately, Seneca's praise provides this current Marcia with an effective guide for how one should deal with death. While not every detail might apply to her present situation, he makes the connection between past and present apparent by incorporating her children in his opening statements, and highlighting certain broad but repeatable actions. Through his praise of Marcia's past actions for instance, we see him reinforce the need for grief but in moderation. Alongside this, Seneca also clearly reinforces the need to commemorate and celebrate the individual. To perpetuate their legacy, and not, as Marcia does now, forbid any mention of their name and conceal their existence. Finally, as Gloyn

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<sup>353</sup> Shelton 1995: 187. See also, Kerr 2009: 93; Gloyn 2017: 26. Interestingly, Gloyn 2017: 26, suggests that the *Ad Marciam* is potentially a double consolation with such a significant portion of it dedicated to Marcia's father.



has recently argued, Seneca also suggests that there should be a sense of balance in one's grief response. With both his conspicuous inclusion of the caveat here, that she loved her children as much as her father, and later, in Cremutius' imaginary soliloquy which questions why the member of the house who died most happily, receives the longest mourning period, Gloyn suggests that Seneca conveys to Marcia that she should grieve for her son as much as she did her father.<sup>354</sup> According to Gloyn, such logic is grounded in Stoic Oikeiosis theory: a theory which delineates that as the parent and child occupy the same sphere of influence and affection, they should receive the same amount of grief. However, Gloyn admits that Seneca does not reference Stoic Oikeiosis theory directly within the work and given the candour we have witnessed in his programmatic statements, alongside the fact that he often references principles and philosophical precepts within the work itself, it would be somewhat uncharacteristic to merely hint at this. Whether influenced by the principles of Stoic Oikeiosis theory, or otherwise, I do agree with Gloyn, and others like Mauch and Shelton, that Seneca's references are quite obviously intended to highlight the disparity in grief response between Marcia's past and present selves. It is meant to make Marcia see how she has responded very differently to these events and consider whether she should once more temper her emotions and channel her efforts into perpetuating her son's memory and legacy, as she did her father.<sup>355</sup>

While Seneca recalls Marcia's previous dealings with death to provide her with both positive encouragement, and a model for her to learn from, adapt and replicate, in another sense, we might also consider that she also acts as both a standard for evaluation and a means of correcting her own behaviour. By presenting her previous conduct as an

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<sup>354</sup> *Ad Marciam* 26.3: *cur in doom nostra diutissime lugetur qui felicissime moritur?* ('Why then, should that member of our household who died most happily be mourned the longest?')

<sup>355</sup> Mauch 1997: 80, and Shelton 1995: 188.

aspirational model, it simultaneously reveals and reaffirms the negative aspects of her current behaviour. Her former wisdom and self-control speak to her current irrational behaviour, and his focus on how she perpetuated her father's name, and secured his legacy, clearly speaks to the fact that she currently refuses to hear Metilius' name.<sup>356</sup>

While it is clear that Seneca presents Marcia as an *exemplum* for her own consideration in the ways I have outlined above, some scholars argue that she functions beyond the immediate situation and has the potential to provide an *exemplum* for Seneca's wider audience.<sup>357</sup> Manning for example argues that, in Seneca's decision to disseminate his work, Marcia has the potential to function as an *exemplum* for other bereaved parents.<sup>358</sup> Like the two *maxima exempla* that he will invoke later for Marcia's personal programme of consolation, Marcia's past and present behaviour provides two antithetical models for his audience's consideration. Wilcox alternatively argues that Marcia might also act more specifically as a corrective *exemplum* for Seneca's male reader.<sup>359</sup> Highlighting Seneca's reference later in the essay to Cloelia and her rebuking force, alongside the fact that Marcia's exemplary conduct comprises several, ostensibly masculine virtues, like *virtus*, *sapientia* and self-control, she suggests there might be further subliminal messages, concealed within the text.<sup>360</sup> Wilcox's thesis is certainly possible. As I have argued with

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<sup>356</sup> Abel 1967: 31, sees a similar function in Seneca's introduction of another *exemplum*, Julia Augusta. Abel argues that the shame (*pudor*) of knowing that her friend is a witness to her lack of emotional control would provoke Marcia to be more willing to correct her behaviour. However, while this is certainly possible, I do not necessarily think that this was Seneca's intention. With Julia Augusta, Seneca is more immediately reinforcing how he thinks Marcia should behave. He is offering her a third, alternative model, as Shelton suggests, to communicate to Marcia that it is possible to fulfil one's public and private duties after a devastating loss. See Shelton 1995: 177. Perhaps more importantly however, with Julia, Seneca is also reaffirming that Marcia should listen to his advice. By emphasizing how she benefitted from listening to the advice of Augustus' sage, he is clearly paralleling their current situation, and implying she should too.

<sup>357</sup> Suggested by Shelton 1995: 164.

<sup>358</sup> Manning 1981: 5-6.

<sup>359</sup> C.f. Hemelrijk 1999: 47-53, who concludes that Seneca's readers were predominantly male.

<sup>360</sup> Wilcox 2006: 75.

Cicero's *Pro Roscio, exempla* certainly have the potential to shame male audiences by highlighting how certain virtues are displayed more prominently in situations by the opposite sex. And, as we cited earlier with this same case study, Quintilian confirms both the admonitory aspect and the Roman sensitivity to gender and virtue in his statements that certain virtues are more potent if displayed by women than men. However, despite these factors, I am not entirely convinced that Seneca strives to shame male audience specifically by his promotion of women within his text. Much of Wilcox's argument relies on the premise that the women Seneca promotes here are highly masculinised and ostensibly distanced from their sex. Like his opening statements where he proclaims that Marcia is unlike other women, Wilcox has highlighted that Seneca distances Marcia and others from their sex, and on certain occasions, portrays them as rejecting their gender identity.<sup>361</sup> However, I would argue that they are perhaps missing the point. Seneca's objective in this is to emphasize that Marcia is exceptional, not that she is virtuous because she acts like a man. He is using these distancing techniques to emphasize her superlative status and more easily establish her as standard with which to evaluate her current behaviour, and provide Marcia (and perhaps Seneca's wider audience) with a moral-didactic guide. While Marcia exhibits certain virtues that are expected of the Roman male, it is perhaps something of a misconception that these virtues inevitably transform women into men. As we have seen in all of our case studies at this point (Cicero, Ovid and Seneca), the virtues that so many claim, are the remit of the Roman male are attributed to women more often we think.<sup>362</sup> Moreover, when they are applied, there is often no sense of friction, or shock tactics involved. They are almost always used positively in the sense that they transcend the

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<sup>361</sup> Wilcox 2006: 93.

<sup>362</sup> We will also see this in the next chapter, on Pliny the Younger's Letters, although on some occasions Pliny does cast the virtues of certain Stoic women as hypermasculine for different reasons.

limitations pre-determined by their sex. They are not necessarily presented in a negative light as transgressing gender boundaries and assuming a masculine presence. Of course, such a strategy for elevation relies on the premise that these virtues are uncommonly observed with the female sex. But like Cicero and his treatment of Caecilia Balerica we see that Seneca firmly locates Marcia on the female side of the gender spectrum, despite simultaneously distancing her from other women within the text. Women, as we have seen throughout this study, are often defined by their relationship to men. Moreover, they are often praised or equally derided as mothers, daughters, nieces, and wives, and evaluated by their performance of certain social roles. Marcia, while in some ways distanced from her sex, is similarly defined. She is presented firstly, and most explicitly, as a loving and devoted daughter. Though he does not use the term due to the first-person nature of the address, he highlights the love she has for her father and gives it emphasis by its placement within the narrative. Then, with the subordinate caveat that she also, and equally, loved her children, Seneca presents Marcia as a loving and devoted mother. Finally, in his praise of her commemorative endeavours, she is presented more neutrally, as a member of the family. While in one regard Seneca seems to distance Marcia from her sex, like other women written within by a male within their text, Seneca reaffirms her femininity by both defining her and evaluating her in conventional patriarchal ways. Though his evaluations of her character and promotion of her virtuous traits are perhaps grounded in culturally indoctrinated, misogynistic conceptions of gender and expectations, they are also simultaneously grounded in terms of her performance in certain social roles, and thus reaffirm her femininity. Alongside this we must also consider the fact that, in his programmatic statement that follows this section, Seneca places gender high on his list of criteria for selection of *exempla*. To hit the message home, and tackle her grief, he

proclaims that he will present those most relevant for her sex and time. And when he does not adhere to his own prescriptions, presenting Marcia with other, male examples from history, he anticipates a negative reaction on Marcia's part:

scio quid dicas: "oblitus es feminam te consolari, uirorum refers exempla." quis autem dixit naturam maligne cum mulierum ingeniis egisse et uirtutes illarum in artum retraxisse? (*Ad Marciam* 16.1)

I know what you will say, "You quote men as examples: you forget that it is a woman that you are trying to console." Yet who would say that nature has dealt grudgingly with the minds of women, and stunted their virtues?

Given the sensitivities we expect Seneca's audience to have, and the perceived requirement for Roman men to distance themselves from all things feminine, Seneca's proclamation to tailor his consolation specifically for a woman might have an adverse effect on male audiences. Rather than shame them for their own lack of control, and female-like behaviour, as some suggest, perhaps it would instead disengage a male reader from Marcia's *exemplum* altogether. Ultimately, as Wilcox admits, subjectivity here is key. While his male reader might adopt Marcia's model, or feel ashamed of himself because of it, another might equally reject it, or, as I have suggested in my earlier analysis of Roller's work, might opt instead not to engage.<sup>363</sup>

While I do not necessarily believe that Seneca intended to exemplify Marcia specifically to shame male audiences, I would argue that he intends the work itself to feature as a broader literary *exemplum*. Beyond the specifics of the various models like Marcia, invoked within the text, in many ways the text itself has the potential to service the

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<sup>363</sup> Wilcox 2006: 87. Echoed by McAuley 2015: 172.

author's objective of providing an example of how to console. As we can see clearly, not only did he decide to disseminate his work, but he seems intent on offering a novel approach to consolation. He intentionally deviates from convention to achieve success and from the beginning makes his strategies known. In my view, Seneca's programmatic statement and advocacy of tailoring one's approach seems overtly promotional here, and not simply justifying the sequence of his advice. He is disseminating his new and improved method and establishing a literary model for how to console. When we consider that at this time, Seneca was cast out from favour, and forced into early retirement, it seems as if he is using his work as a means of securing a continued relevance in society by establishing a literary legacy through his novel approach.

Though we have only analysed the first *exemplum* that features in Seneca's essay, it is clear that there is much more to his work than consolation alone. While he tries to persuade Marcia to relinquish her grief by presenting her with herself and others (later) as models for her consideration, emulation and or avoidance, he perhaps uses the opportunity to establish a literary legacy and maintain some relevance in society simultaneously. In this regard therefore we see that the work itself has broader socio-political dimensions beyond his bid to console. And while in this sense it is achieved by the work as a whole, we might also consider how these dimensions emerge in his exemplification of Marcia also.

The notion that the consolations comprise a socio-political dimension has been broached before, though as we will see later, it is perhaps most prominently visible in his later consolations to Helvia and Polybius. However, Roland Mayer has alluded to a socio-political dimension to his use of *exempla* in the *Ad Marciam* in highlighting that there is often an element of flattery involved. Essentially Mayer argues that Seneca's selection of *exempla* within the text conveys subliminal messages about certain individuals and that he

uses *exempla* to flatter or criticise.<sup>364</sup> However he also acknowledges the fact that Seneca's introductory proclamation that Marcia is an *antiquum exemplar* is highly complimentary too. While Mayer focuses primarily on the historical *exempla* that feature, we might consider also how Seneca's exemplification of the subject and recipient of the consolation, Marcia, might also flatter her as well. Indeed, when we probe this aspect further we find that Seneca not only uses exemplification for rhetorical benefit, but also to negotiate his relationship with Marcia and keep her on his side.

With Seneca's bid to exemplarize Marcia we see that there clearly is an undercurrent element of flattery involved. Not only does he suggest in his introductory proclamation that she is above other women in terms of virtue, and generally free from vice, but he also proclaims how her life is a model of ancient virtues, suggesting that she harkens back to the golden days of the Republic, and implicitly aligns her within the realms of the canonical Cornelia, Lucretia and Verginia. Alongside these initial statements, his proclamation about Marcia's proven capacity for virtue is equally complimentary. While Seneca offers this as a reminder that she has ability to overcome this situation, and provide inspiration to initiate a change, they are inherently complimentary and might flatter Marcia further.

Additional examples of flattery can be seen intermittently throughout the text. In section 3 for instance, after presenting Marcia with the two *maxima exempla* (Octavia and Livia) for her consideration, we see that Seneca once again flatters Marcia with allusions to her virtuous character. Here, after asking which *exemplum* she would rather choose (*elige itaque utrum exemplum putes probabilius*) he outlines her what she ought to do.<sup>365</sup> Yet he

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<sup>364</sup> Mayer 2008: 308-9.

<sup>365</sup> *Ad Marciam* 1.3.3.

simultaneously compliments her by appealing to her modesty and decency, while instructing Marcia too:

quam in omni uita seruasti morum probitatem et uerecundiam, in hac quoque re praestabis; est enim quaedam et dolendi modestia. Illum ipsum iuuenem, dignissimum qui te laetam semper nominatus cogitatusque faciat, meliore pones loco, si matri suae, qualis uiuus solebat, hilarisque et cum gaudio occurrit. (*Ad Marciam* 1.3.3)

You ought to display, in this matter also, that decent behaviour and modesty which has characterised all your life: for there is such a thing as self-restraint in grief also. You will show more respect for the youth himself, who well deserves that it should make you glad to speak and think of him, if you make him able to meet his mother with a cheerful countenance, even as he was wont to do when alive.<sup>366</sup>

Later in the *Consolation* we see a similar strategy applied. In section 8, during a discussion of the notion that time is nature's greatest healer, Seneca once more appeals to the notion of her virtuous character, reiterating that relinquishing her grief is in line with her decorum and sense of propriety:

nunc te ipsa custodis; multum autem interest utrum tibi permittas maerere an imperes. quanto magis hoc morum tuorum elegantiae conuenit, finem luctus potius facere quam expectare, nec illum opperiri diem quo te inuita dolor desinat! ipsa illi renuntia. (*Ad Marciam* 1.8.3)

How much more in accordance with your cultivated taste it would be to put an end to your mourning instead of looking for the end to come, and not to wait for

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<sup>366</sup> This perhaps simultaneously ignites a sense of shame in Marcia and to inspire a change to her behaviour.



the day when your sorrow shall cease against your will: dismiss it of your own accord.

While Seneca's primary strategy to flatter Marcia can be seen in his many complimentary statements and evaluations of her virtuous character, we also see that Seneca persistently plays down criticism of Marcia throughout his text. While he might claim that he will not use soft measures but provide some harsh home truths (§1-2), he does not explicitly criticise Marcia openly throughout the essay, but rather opts to highlight the dichotomy between her past and present selves through representative *exempla* of Livia and Octavia.<sup>367</sup> However, even here, Seneca avoids any explicit form of reproach. As Shelton has observed, while he makes it clear that Octavia's behaviour should be avoided, he softens his critique by emphasizing that she, like Marcia, had the capacity to overcome the situation if only she would let go of her grief. He does not present Octavia simply as a one-dimensional character – a caricature of wrong behaviour – he highlights that she was otherwise virtuous but destroyed herself by indulging in grief.<sup>368</sup> The flattering nature of his statements, and this ostensible softening of critique, I would argue, has a patently socio-political purpose. While in one respect, it is ostensibly rhetorical, designed to increase Marcia's receptivity to his advice, in ensuring that she is not alienated from his work by excessive criticism, on another (more social level), it helps to maintain cordial relations between them and keep their friendship in good health. It seems as if it is involved in the negotiation of their relationship, using flattery to soften the blow of his criticism and keep her on his side.

In many ways we see that Seneca uses Marcia and other *exempla* in conventional ways, yet it once more supports the hypothesis presented in this thesis that the

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<sup>367</sup> Noted by Shelton 1995: 171-2; 175.

<sup>368</sup> Shelton 1995: 172.

exemplification of contemporaries often comprises dimensions beyond that which the author proclaims. In our second case study, Seneca's *Consolatio ad Helviam* we find a similar dichotomized use. Though the socio-political dimensions of exemplification emerges much more prominently.

### Consoling Helvia

In this section we will explore the second of Seneca's surviving *Consolations*, written to his mother Helvia (*Consolatio ad Helviam Matrem*). Following his expulsion from Rome and subsequent exile to the island of Corsica in 41 C.E., Seneca writes to Helvia, to address his situation and try to console her.<sup>369</sup> Throughout the course of the essay we see that Seneca strives to convince his mother that he is happy and unperturbed by the situation. Moreover, he also asks her not to grieve for him, and not to mourn his absence.<sup>370</sup> As with his earlier consolation to Marcia, we see throughout the *Consolation* that Seneca relies heavily upon the presentation of *exempla*. Though there might not be the same sense of novelty expressed here in terms of his approach, Seneca offers his mother with a cast of exemplary characters to alter her perspective and behaviour. Once more therefore we find that *exempla* play an important role in fulfilling Seneca's persuasive objectives. Yet we will also see in his presentation of his mother and other family members, that exemplification might also comprise certain socio-political dimensions. We will begin first with Helvia's sister.

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<sup>369</sup> According to our sources, Seneca was charged with adultery with the sister of Caligula, Julia Livilla. Though this transpired in 41 C.E., the *Ad Helviam* is conventionally dated to between one and two years later.

<sup>370</sup> For a general overview of the text and commentary see Costa 1994.

## Helvia's Sister

The first *exemplum* that Seneca presents within the essay, at least from contemporary society, is his maternal aunt (and thus Helvia's sister). Though she does not feature until the midway point of the essay, she is established as a powerful *exemplum*. Interestingly, with her first mention, she is introduced initially as a *solacium*. As Seneca proclaims she is Helvia's principal source of comfort during this time, and thus she should metaphorically lean upon her shoulder:

maximum adhuc solacium tuum tacueram, sororem tuam, illud fidelissimum tibi pectus, in quod omnes curae tuae pro indiuiso transferuntur, illum animum omnibus nobis maternum. (*Ad Helviam* 19.1)<sup>371</sup>

As we see here, Seneca suggests that his aunt is loyal in character. Moreover, Seneca also reveals that she treats her sister and nephew as if she were their mother. Of course, Seneca's rhetorical praise is designed at first to suggest that she can provide a maternal aura that will ease Helvia's burden. It is tied up in the rhetoric to convince Helvia that she should perceived her as a source of comfort.

As Seneca continues, he reminds to his mother that her sister also mourns his banishment. Alongside this he also suggests that they maintained a close relationship. He recalls how she nursed him back to health in his youth during a period of long illness, and always supported his bid for office. Moreover, she would help Seneca in any way she could unprevented by modesty, old-fashioned habits or devotion to leisure:

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<sup>371</sup> All translations of the *Consolatio ad Helviam Matrem* will henceforth be taken from Stewart 1900, unless otherwise stated.

illius manibus in urbem perlatus sum, illius pio maternoque nutricio per longum tempus aeger convalui; illa pro quaestura mea gratiam suam extendit et, quae ne sermonis quidem aut clarae salutationis sustinuit audaciam, pro me vicit indulgentia verecundiam ... nihil illi seductum vitae genus, nihil modestia in tanta feminarum petulantia rustica, nihil quies, nihil secreti et ad otium repositi mores obstiterunt, quo minus pro me etiam ambitiosa fieret. (*Ad Helviam* 19.2)

It was in her arms that I was carried to Rome, it was by her devoted and motherly nursing that I recovered from a lengthened illness; she it was who, when I was standing for the quaestorship, gave me generous support—she, who lacked the courage even for conversation or a loud greeting, in order to help me, conquered her shyness by her love. ... neither her retired mode of life, nor her modesty, so old-fashioned amid the great boldness of present women, nor her quietness, nor her habits of seclusion and devotion to leisure prevented her at all from becoming even ambitious in order to help me.

Following this, Seneca then instructs Helvia to embrace her sister more closely, to help her regain her strength and composure: *hoc est, mater carissima, solacium quo reficiaris. illi te, quantum potes, iunge, illius artissimis amplexibus alliga.*<sup>372</sup> And he implores her to speak with her often, to prevent her from withering away in isolation: *tu ad illam te, quidquid cogitaveris, confer; sive servare istum habitum voles sive deponere, apud illam invenies vel finem doloris tui vel comitem.*<sup>373</sup>

From this point however Seneca transforms his aunt from a *solacium* into an *exemplum*. He reminds his mother how his aunt behaved at the time she lost her husband, and recalls her *dicta et facta*. Alongside this he also recalls other events that illustrate her exemplary character. Amidst Seneca's proclamations of her virtuous display, we see that

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<sup>372</sup> *Ad Helviam* 19.3.

<sup>373</sup> *Ad Helviam* 19.3-4.

Seneca also regrets his aunt's lack of renown and immortalisation. He laments that the deeds of the virtuous often go unnoticed, and suggests that she deserves to receive acknowledgement and celebration:

sed si prudentiam perfectissimae feminae novi, non patietur te nihil profuturo maerore consumi et exemplum tibi suum, cuius ego etiam spectator fui, narrabit. carissimum virum amiserat, avunculum nostrum, cui virgo nupserat, in ipsa quidem navigatione; tulit tamen eodem tempore et luctum et metum evictisque tempestatibus corpus eius naufraga evexit. O quam multarum egregia opera in obscuro iacent! si huic illa simplex admirandis virtutibus contigisset antiquitas, quanto ingeniorum certamine celebraretur uxor, quae, oblita imbecillitatis, oblita metuendi etiam firmissimis maris, caput suum periculis pro sepultura obiecit et, dum cogitat de viri funere, nihil de suo timuit! nobilitatur carminibus omnium, quae se pro coniuge vicariam dedit. hoc amplius est, discrimine vitae sepulcrum viro quaerere; maior est amor, qui pari periculo minus redimit.

post hoc nemo miretur quod per sedecim annos quibus Aegyptum maritus eius optinuit numquam in publico conspecta est, neminem prouincialem domum suam admisit, nihil a uiro petit, nihil a se peti passa est. itaque loquax et in contumelias praefectorum ingeniosa prouincia, in qua etiam qui uitauerunt culpam non effugerunt infamiam, uelut unicum sanctitatis exemplum suspexit et, quod illi difficillimum est cui etiam periculosi sales placent, omnem uerborum licentiam continuit et hodie similem illi, quamuis numquam speret, semper optat. multum erat, si per sedecim annos illam prouincia probasset: plus est quod ignorauit. (*Ad Helviam* 19.4-6)

If, however, I rightly understand the wisdom of that most perfect woman, she will not suffer you to waste your life in unprofitable mourning and will tell you what happened in her own instance, which I myself witnessed. During a sea-voyage she lost a beloved husband, my uncle, whom she married when a maiden; she endured at the same time grief for him and fear for herself, and at

last, though ship-wrecked, nevertheless rescued his body from the vanquished tempest. How many noble deeds are unknown to fame! If only she had had the simple-minded ancients to admire her virtues, how many brilliant intellects would have vied with one another in singing the praises of a wife who forgot the weakness of her sex, forgot the perils of the sea, which terrify even the boldest, exposed herself to death in order to lay him in the earth, and who was so eager to give him decent burial that she cared nothing about whether she shared it or no. All the poets have made the wife [Alcestia] famous who gave herself to death instead of her husband: my aunt did more when she risked her life in order to give her husband a tomb: it shows greater love to endure the same peril for a less important end.

After this, no one need wonder that for sixteen years, during which her husband governed the province of Egypt, she was never beheld in public, never admitted any of the natives to her house, never begged any favour of her husband, and never allowed anyone to beg one of her. Thus it came to pass that a gossiping province, ingenious in inventing scandal about its rulers, in which even the blameless often incurred disgrace, respected her as a singular example of uprightness, never made free with her name, – a remarkable piece of self-restraint among a people who will risk everything rather than forego a jest, – and that at the present time it hopes for another governor's wife like her, although it has no reasonable expectation of ever seeing one. It would have been greatly to her credit if the province had approved her conduct for a space of sixteen years: it was much more creditable to her that it knew not of her existence.

In these two, rather lengthy sections, we see that Seneca makes a visible bid to establish his aunt as an *exemplum*. Not only does he invoke her *dicta et facta*, but he also presents his own evaluations. As he continues, he develops this further. Building on the suggestion that she might act as a model for Helvia, Seneca proclaims that he does not recall these things

merely to sing his aunt's praises, he wants his mother to understand her sister's virtues, and emulate her behaviour. See 19.7:

haec non ideo refero, ut laudes eius exsequar, quas circumscribere est tam parce transcurrere, sed ut intellegas magni animi esse feminam, quam non ambitio, non avaritia, comites omnis potentiae et pestes, vicerunt, non metus mortis iam exarmata nave naufragium suum spectantem deterruit, quo minus exanimi viro haerens non quaereret, quemadmodum inde exiret, sed quemadmodum efferret. huic parem virtutem exhibeas oportet et animum a luctu recipias et id agas, ne quis te putet partus tui paenitere. (*Ad Helviam* 19.7)

I do not cite these things for the purpose of recounting her praises—for to list them so scantily is to do them injustice—but in order that you may understand the high-mindedness of a woman who has submitted neither to the love of power nor to the love of money – those attendants and curses of all authority – who, with ship disabled and now viewing her own shipwreck, was not deterred by the fear of death from clinging to her lifeless husband and seeking, not how she might escape from the ship, but how she might take him with her. You must show a courage to match hers, must recall your mind from grief, and strive that no one may think that you regret your motherhood.

While the aunt's situation clearly has little to do with Helvia's own circumstances, beyond the broader theme of loss and separation, she is presented as both an aspirational standard, and a moral-didactic guide for correct behaviour.<sup>374</sup> However, as we see here, Seneca does not limit her exemplary potential to how her sister dealt with grief and loss, but invites Helvia to emulate her entire character. He asks his mother to imitate his aunt's courage, control and virtuous conduct as well as her generally virtuous demeanour. Interestingly, as

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<sup>374</sup> Inwood 2005: 79-81.

Gloyn argues, while Seneca's advice that Helvia imitate her sister's behaviour as faithfully as she can aligns with the conventional purpose of presenting moral-didactic models, the fact that Seneca suggests his aunt's model is to be emulated in its entirety, and not more specifically for her ability to cope with grief, speaks specifically to the Stoic context of Seneca's advice.<sup>375</sup> By requiring Helvia to emulate her general disposition and her possession of the Stoic cardinal virtues, he suggests that Helvia will not only conquer grief, but also advance forward in her journey as a *proficiens*.<sup>376</sup> She is pitched as an example of moral perfection that will improve Helvia's own ethical situation.

While it is clear that Seneca establishes his aunt as an *exemplum* for Helvia to consider, Gloyn also suggests that Helvia's sister has the capacity to function more broadly as an *exemplum* for others beyond Helvia herself. As she argues, by presenting her as a virtuous ideal in this broadly virtuous way, Seneca makes his aunt to accessible to both his mother and his wider readers, post-publication.<sup>377</sup> In my view it seems likely that Seneca aims to capitalise upon the situation. The *Consolations* do seem to have been written with an eye to their wider audience, and there is certainly something strategic about Seneca's recollection of these events and his aunt's subsequent exemplification. If, as Seneca implies, he intended simply to encourage his mother to change her ways in offering a model within her sister, then there would be little reason for him to recall these events in such fantastic detail and present his own evaluations of her character as he does. It would be sufficient to recall the event, and remind her, as Helvia would have known of it. It was part of their family history after all.

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<sup>375</sup> Gloyn 2017: 42. See *Stobaeus* 2.58.5-15. c.f. Viden 1993: 124-130, and Wilcox 2006: 78.

<sup>376</sup> Gloyn 2017: 44.

<sup>377</sup> Gloyn 2017: 44-5.



The notion of the *Consolation's* publication inevitably alerts us to the potential for further functions, beyond the context of a personal exchange. While scholars like Gloyn might argue rightly that Seneca's exemplification of his aunt fulfils a conventional moral-didactic purpose for both Helvia and Seneca's wider audience, we might also consider how this reflects simultaneously on Seneca's public persona as well. Given that at this point Seneca is in exile from Rome and has fell out of imperial favour, elevating his aunt to exemplary status might for instance, improve his reputation and bolster his appeal for sympathy from the emperor and society. As we have seen in chapter on Ovid and will again see in Pliny later, association with exemplary individuals could be deployed strategically and publicly to rehabilitate a tarnished reputation. It suggested that they were moral individuals themselves as spoke particularly to their character. If these associates were other family members, it suggested more particularly that they had been raised by those who are virtuous and elevated their social currency by proxy.

Interestingly Seneca's recollection of his aunt and her experiences share many parallels with Pliny's letter about Arria and Fannia.<sup>378</sup> Not only in terms of their similar lamentations that the deeds of virtuous go unnoticed, but also in the story of the shipwreck, their respective virtues displayed, and their concordant references that individuals were simultaneously *solacia et exempla*. This is not to say necessarily that Pliny is interacting with Seneca here at a textual level, by referencing this earlier material. Yet perhaps there is a case to be made for arguing that Seneca inspired parts of Pliny's infamous letter.

More importantly for our purposes here, in recent years, scholars have performed a similar holistic reading on the letter about Arria and Fannia. They claim that the letter's

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<sup>378</sup> See Pliny *Epistulae* 3.16. Discussed below p.254-260. Alongside this we also see similarities with St. Jerome's letter congratulating Demetrias.

inclusion within his publication was designed to publicise his exemplary associations and confirm the morality of his character. Bennett for instance speculates that Pliny felt guilty for prospering under Domitian. That he reveals his friendships with central players within the Stoic opposition to play down criticism of his complaisance.<sup>379</sup> If we apply a similar a similar though process and reading to Seneca's *Consolations*, then we see within his exemplarizing rhetoric the potential personal benefits and implications. And as I will argue in the next section concerning his treatment of Helvia, Seneca's presentation and exemplification his mother and other family members might have both a rhetorical and political motivation.

#### Helvia the *Optima Mater*

While Helvia's sister is presented as an *exemplum* within his *Consolation*, we see that Seneca also elevates Helvia herself to an equally exemplary status. Though Helvia is not explicitly identified as an '*exemplum*', as we saw with his earlier bid to console Marcia, she is consistently presented as an *optima mater* and is exemplified for her behaviour.<sup>380</sup> Of course, this sometimes comes into conflict with the situation, as the essays suggests that Helvia requires consolation, yet while we assume that she behaves improperly at this time, and grieves to excess, Seneca still creates an exemplary portrait for his mother across the text. Helvia's exemplification is achieved in several ways, though most notably through Seneca's his repeated bid to reveal her various virtues. Moreover, alongside recalling how she has behaved virtuously in the past, we also find that associates Helvia with other exemplary women. Though we might see in this rhetoric that Seneca is offering Helvia

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<sup>379</sup> See particularly, Shelton 2013, and Bennett 1997.

<sup>380</sup> See *Ad Helviam* 1.1; 14.1, and 19.3 respectively for Seneca's use of *optima* and *carissima*.

further motivation and that he is suggesting, as he did with Marcia, that she has the ability to cope with the current situation. As I will argue within this section it seems that her presentation is more intentionally designed with an eye to the essay's wider publication, and that there is an underlying socio-political objective the portrait that is created.

We see this firstly in section 2, where Seneca outlines his methods that he will apply. Here, while Seneca declares that he will expose Helvia's previous calamities to heal one whose body is full of scars and wounds, he simultaneously reveals that Helvia has exceptional strength, having endured so many things:

... omnis itaque luctus illi suos, omnia lugubria admovebo; hoc erit non molli via mederi, sed urere ac secare. quid consequar? ut pudeat animum tot miseriarum victorem aegre ferre unum vulnus in corpore tam cicatricoso. fleant itaque diutius et gemant, quorum delicatas mentes enervavit longa felicitas, et ad levissimarum iniuriarum motus conlabantur; at quorum omnes anni per calamitates transierunt, gravissima quoque forti et immobili constantia perferant. unum habet adsidua infelicitas bonum, quod quos semper vexat, novissime indurat. (*Ad Helviam* 2.2-3)

... so to the stricken mind I shall exhibit all its distresses, all its garbs of woe; my purpose will be not to heal by gentle measures, but to cauterize and cut. And what shall I gain? I shall cause a heart that has been victorious over so many afflictions to be ashamed to bewail one wound the more upon a body so marked with scars. Let those, therefore, whose pampered minds have been weakened by long happiness, weep and moan continuously, and faint away at the threat of the slightest injury; but let those whose years have all been passed in a succession of calamities endure even the heaviest blows with strong and unwavering resolution. Constant misfortune brings this one blessing, that those whom it always assails, it at last fortifies.

As McAuley has argued, by describing his mother as physically degraded yet hardened by grief, Seneca constructs a metaphorical exemplary body for Helvia within the text. Just as soldiers provide evidence of their *virtus* and endurance of pain through exposing their own battle scars, Seneca parades his mother's exemplary body as visible proof of her virtue.<sup>381</sup> While on first inspection it would seem that Seneca is applying strategies he has used before: invoking past events to provide a reminder that his addressee has the fortitude to overcome the situation. Here, Seneca suggests that his recollection will shame Helvia for lamenting one more wound when her body is clearly replete and not, as he states to Marcia, necessarily provide her with positive encouragement. As we see here, Seneca also places much more emphasis on the physical effects of Helvia's misfortunes within the consolation than he does with Marcia's respective text. Though he uses medical metaphors to convey the notion of impairment and correction in both, he is much more graphic in his reference to Helvia's wounds and scars than we find elsewhere in his earlier essay. This I would argue is more intended to reveal her strength of character, and elicit a sympathetic response from the audience, not simply to provide Helvia with encouragement.

Nevertheless, while in 2.2-3 Seneca merely alludes to Helvia's many misfortunes, as he continues, he lists them sequentially for all to see. First, he claims she has received no respite, losing her mother on the day she was born: *nullam tibi fortuna vacationem dedit a gravissimis luctibus; ne natalem quidem tuum exceptit. amisisti matrem statim nata, immo dum nasceris, et ad vitam quodammodo exposita es.* ('To you Fortune has never given any respite from the heaviest woes; she did not except even the day of your birth. You lost your

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<sup>381</sup> McAuley 2015: 180. Interestingly, McAuley 2015: 181, also argues that in breaking and exposing Helvia's body as Seneca describes himself doing, we see implicitly a kind of textual rape. However, I would argue that Seneca presents himself more prominently here as a restorer of Helvia's body, and the notion of her violation is not necessarily evinced. Here is a metaphorical surgeon, cutting and cauterising her wounds.

mother as soon as you had been born, nay, while you were being born, and entering life you became, as it were, an outcast.')<sup>382</sup> Then he suggests that she suffered the perils of having a step-mother, though through Helvia her step-mother was transformed: *crevisti sub noverca, quam tu quidem omni obsequio et pietate, quanta vel in filia conspici potest, matrem fieri coegisti; nulli tamen non magno constitit etiam bona noverca.* ('You grew up under a stepmother, but by your complete obedience and devotion as great as can be seen even in a daughter you forced her to become a true mother; nevertheless every child has paid a great price even for a good stepmother.')<sup>383</sup> With this we see that Seneca not only exposes two further virtues (her deference to authority and her loyalty to her family) but he also inverts the traditional expectation that the parent acts as the *primum exemplum* for children to learn from and form. He reveals that Helvia acted as an *exemplum* for her step-mother, transforming her into a real mother by her virtuous behaviour, and thus the dynamics of the relationship were against the norm. This, I would argue, is particularly interesting. Given the fact that there is a subtle parallel developed here between Helvia and Seneca (her son). Through Seneca's own virtues perhaps – *prudentia* and *pietas* – generated implicitly throughout the text - he is effectively repeating his mother's experience, inverting the traditional order of things and transforming Helvia into an *optima mater* as she had done with her step-mother before.

To amplify her exemplary portrait, Seneca then provides further instances of Helvia's experiences of loss. Not only did she lose her brother – Seneca's uncle – whom he claims was the best and bravest man: *avunculum indulgentissimum, optimum ac fortissimum*

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<sup>382</sup> *Ad Helviam* 2.2.

<sup>383</sup> *Ad Helviam* 2.3.

*virum, cum adventum eius expectares, amisisti* (2.4), but she also lost her own husband – Seneca’s father – within that same month:

ne saevitiam suam fortuna leviolem diducendo faceret, intra tricensimum diem carissimum virum, ex quo mater trium liberorum eras, extulisti. Iugenti tibi luctus nuntiatus est omnibus quidem absentibus liberis, quasi de industria in id tempus coniectis malis tuis, ut nihil esset, ubi se dolor tuus reclinaret. (*Ad Helviam* 2.4-5)

Lest Fortune by dividing her cruelty should make it lighter, within thirty days you buried your dearest husband, who had made you the proud mother of three children. This blow was announced when you were already mourning, when, too, all of your children were absent, just as if your misfortunes had been concentrated into that period purposely in order that your grief might find nothing to rest upon.<sup>384</sup>

Finally, Seneca highlights how Helvia also lost her grandchildren, including Seneca’s own son. He also states that it was less than twenty days after she had buried his son that she received the news of his exile:

transeo tot pericula, tot metus, quos sine intervallo in te incursantis pertulisti. modo modo in eundem sinum, ex quo tres nepotes emiseras, ossa trium nepotum recepisti; intra vicesimum diem, quam filium meum in manibus et in osculis tuis mortuum funeraveras, raptum me audisti. hoc adhuc defuerat tibi, lugere vivos. (*Ad Helviam* 2.5)

I pass over the countless dangers, the countless fears which you have endured, though they assailed you without cessation. But lately into the self-same lap from which you had let three grandchildren go, you took back the bones of three grandchildren. Less than twenty days after you had buried my son, who died in

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<sup>384</sup> It is interesting that he refers to Seneca the Elder here specifically as her most caring husband, and not, his father.

your arms and amid your kisses, you heard that I had been snatched from you.

This misfortune you had still lacked—to mourn the living.

As we see in this section then, while Seneca proposes to highlight how Helvia was subject to Fortune's incessant blows, he also exemplifies his mother at the same time. He reveals her various virtues, from her mental and physical strength, to her deference to authority and devotion to her family. He also suggests that she acted as an *exemplum* for her stepmother, was a devoted sister, and loving wife. Alongside these facets, Seneca suggests that Helvia was a *univira* and makes it clear that she bore three children - a virtue itself in Roman ideology since Augustus' reign. Finally, in the way she cared for Seneca's son and her oversight of his funeral rites expressed in these final lines, he suggests that she was also a loving grandmother. With these we see that Helvia is not only an exemplary mother, but more broadly an exemplary *femina*, virtuous throughout the various stages and social roles within her life.<sup>385</sup>

As we progress further through the consolation, we see that Seneca creates an idealised, exemplary portrait of his mother in several other ways. In chapter 14, for instance, Seneca establishes a sense of her exemplarity and indeed exceptionality, by once more outlining her positive traits. However here he exposes his mother's character through antithesis, by highlighting the vices she lacks, and comparing her to other 'bad mothers':

viderint illae matres quae potentiam liberorum muliebri inpotentia exercent,  
quae, quia feminis honores non licet gerere, per illos ambitiosae sunt, quae  
patrimonia filiorum et exhauriunt et captant, quae eloquentiam commodando

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<sup>385</sup> It is perhaps important to note here, that just as he reveals her exemplary behaviour across various life-stages and social roles, he also reveals that Helvia has experienced losses in various forms. With his inclusion of his recent exile amongst her list of tragedies, he juxtaposes actual loss through death, with other forms of loss through separation.

aliis fatigant: tu liberorum tuorum bonis plurimum gauisa es, minimum usa; tu liberalitati nostrae semper inposuisti modum, cum tuae non inponeres; tu filia familiae locupletibus filiis ultro contulisti; tu patrimonia nostra sic administrasti ut tamquam in tuis laborares, tamquam alienis abstineres; tu gratiae nostrae, tamquam alienis rebus uteris, pepercisti, et ex honoribus nostris nihil ad te nisi uoluptas et inpena pertinuit. numquam indulgentia ad utilitatem respexit; non potes itaque ea in erepto filio desiderare quae in incolumi numquam ad te pertinere duxisti. (*Ad Helviam* 14.2-3)

Let other mothers look to that, who make use of their sons' authority with a woman's passion, who are ambitious through their sons because they cannot bear office themselves, who spend their sons' inheritance, and yet are eager to inherit it, and who weary their sons by lending their eloquence to others: you have always rejoiced exceedingly in the successes of your sons, and have made no use of them whatever: you have always set bounds to our generosity, although you set none to your own: you, while a minor under the power of the head of the family, still used to make presents to your wealthy sons: you managed our inheritances with as much care as if you were working for your own, yet refrained from touching them as scrupulously as if they belonged to strangers: you have spared to use our influence, as though you enjoyed other means of your own, and you have taken no part in the public offices to which we have been elected beyond rejoicing in our success and paying our expenses: your indulgence has never been tainted by any thought of profit, and you cannot regret the loss of your son for a reason which never had any weight with you before his exile.

As we see, Seneca reveals that Helvia lacks ambition: claiming that she does not exploit her son's authority or offices for personal gain. He also suggests that she lacks greed in not wasting her own wealth or seeking to spend the inheritance of her offspring. With his statements at 14.3, he makes it clear that Helvia was unlike others who tarnish their sons'



reputation by gossiping and speaking about them abroad. Moreover, he also conveys a sense simultaneously that while she enjoyed her sons' successes, she never sought to profit from them at all. As he continues, Seneca suggests that Helvia set boundaries to their generosity and refused excessive gifts. He also emphasizes her frugality and lack of avarice for wealth in stating that she managed their inheritances as if they belonged to strangers. Finally, he proclaims once more that she has never used their influence, nor their offices as her own. He also announces that she has never tainted herself with thought of profit, and would not regret his exile because she would lose access to any potential benefits or influence.

In chapter 14 then we get a sense of Helvia's lack of ambition, lust for wealth and general greed. But it is communicated through hypothetical comparisons with other stereotypes of bad mothers, who exploit their children for their personal gain. In chapter 16, we see a similar sentiment, though it is broadened to reject any sense of vice at all. Interestingly here, as Seneca once more defines his mother in antithesis, he presents her as surpassing her entire sex:

non est quod utaris excusatione muliebris nominis, cui paene concessum est immoderatum in lacrimas ius, non immensum tamen; et ideo maiores decem mensum spatium lugentibus viros dederunt, ut cum pertinacia muliebris maeroris publica constitutione deciderent. non prohibuerunt luctus, sed finierunt; nam et infinito dolore, cum aliquem ex carissimis amiseris, adfici stulta indulgentia est, et nullo inhumana duritia. optimum inter pietatem et rationem temperamentum est et sentire desiderium et opprimere. Non est quod ad quasdam feminas respicias, quarum tristitiam semel sumptam mors finivit (nosti quasdam, quae amissis filiis imposita lugubria numquam exuerunt). a te plus exigit vita ab initio fortior; non potest muliebris excusatio contingere ei, a qua omnia muliebria vitia afuerunt. (*Ad Helviam* 16.1-2)

It is not for you to avail yourself of the excuse of being a woman, who, in a way, has been granted the right to inordinate, yet not unlimited, tears. And so our ancestors, seeking to compromise with the stubbornness of a woman's grief by a public ordinance, granted the space of ten months as the limit of mourning for a husband. They did not forbid their mourning, but limited it; for when you lose one who is most dear, to be filled with endless sorrow is foolish fondness, and to feel none is inhuman hardness. The best course is the mean between affection and reason – both to have a sense of loss and to crush it. There is no need for you to regard certain women, whose sorrow once assumed ended only with their death – some you know, who, having put on mourning for sons they had lost, never laid the garb aside. From you life, that was sterner from the start, requires more; the excuse of being a woman can be of no avail to one who has always lacked all the weaknesses of a woman.

While Seneca's rhetoric here is clearly part of his bid to persuade her not to grieve, it once more emphasizes how she does not contain such vices and encourages her to see it. As he continues, Seneca distances his mother from her sex once more, but here he speaks specifically to her chastity and her lack of regard for finery and physical appearance:

non te maximum saeculi malum, impudicitia, in numerum plurium adduxit; non gemmae te, non margaritae flexerunt; non tibi divitiae velut maximum generis humani bonum refulserunt; non te, bene in antiqua et severa institutam domo, periculosa etiam probis peiorum detorsit imitatio; numquam te fecunditatis tuae, quasi exprobraret aetatem, puduit, numquam more aliarum, quibus omnis commendatio ex forma petitur, tumescentem uterum abscondisti quasi indecens onus, nec intra viscera tua conceptas spes liberorum elisisti; non faciem coloribus ac lenociniis polluisti; numquam tibi placuit vestis, quae nihil amplius nudaret, cum poneretur. unicum tibi ornamentum, pulcherrima et nulli obnoxia aetati forma, maximum decus visa est pudicitia. non potes itaque ad obtinendum dolorem muliebre nomen praetendere, ex quo te virtutes tuae seduxerunt;

tantum debes a feminarum lacrimis abesse, quantum vitiis. ne feminae quidem te sinent intabescere volneri tuo, sed leviolem necessario maerore cito defunctam iubebunt exurgere, si modo illas intueri voles feminas, quas conspecta virtus inter magnos viros posuit. (*Ad Helviam* 16.4-5)

Unchastity, the greatest evil of our time, has never classed you with the great majority of women; jewels have not moved you, nor pearls; to your eyes the glitter of riches has not seemed the greatest boon of the human race; you, who were soundly trained in an old-fashioned and strict household, have not been perverted by the imitation of worse women that leads even the virtuous into pitfalls; you have never blushed for the number of your children, as if it taunted you with your years, never have you, in the manner of other women whose only recommendation lies in their beauty, tried to conceal your pregnancy as if an unseemly burden, nor have you ever crushed the hope of children that were being nurtured in your body; you have not defiled your face with paints and cosmetics; never have you fancied the kind of dress that exposed no greater nakedness by being removed. In you has been seen that peerless ornament, that fairest beauty on which time lays no hand, that chiefest glory which is modesty.' You cannot, therefore, allege your womanhood as an excuse for persistent grief, for your very virtues set you apart; you must be as far removed from woman's tears as from her vices. But even women will not allow you to pine away from your wound, but will bid you finish quickly with necessary sorrow, and then rise with lighter heart—I mean, if you are willing to turn your gaze upon the women whose conspicuous bravery has placed them in the rank of mighty heroes.

With the *topoi* that Seneca selects and the rather specific allusion to her famous statement about children being her jewels, it seems quite clear here that Seneca is establishing an implicit connection between Helvia and Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi: the archetypal Roman matron. While Cornelia stood to represent the ideals of Roman motherhood in overseeing her children's education, as we have discussed before, she also supported her

sons' political careers without striving to exert any benefit from their position, as Seneca suggests Helvia does here too. However, if implicit association was not enough, at 16.6 he explicitly invokes her as an *exemplum* for Helvia to consider, alongside Rutilia, whose son was driven to exile in 91 B.C.E. Of Cornelia he states:

Corneliam ex duodecim liberis ad duos fortuna redegerat; si numerare funera Corneliae velles, amiserat decem, si aestimare, amiserat Gracchos. flentibus tamen circa se et fatum eius execrantibus interdixit, ne fortunam accusarent, quae sibi filios Gracchos dedisset. ex hac femina debuit nasci, qui diceret in contione: "tu matri meae male dicas, quae me peperit?" multo mihi vox matris videtur animosior; filius magno aestimavit Gracchorum natales, mater et funera. (*Ad Helviam* 16.6)

Cornelia bore twelve children, but Fortune had reduced their number to two; if you wished to count Cornelia's losses, she had lost ten, if to appraise them, she had lost the two Gracchi. Nevertheless, when her friends were weeping around her and cursing her fate, she forbade them to make any indictment against Fortune, since it was Fortune who had allowed the Gracchi to be her sons. Such a woman had right to be the mother of him who exclaimed in the public assembly: "Do you dare to revile the mother who gave birth to me?" But to me his mother's utterance seems more spirited by far; the son set great value on the birthdays of the Gracchi, but the mother on their funerals as well.

And of Rutilia he states:

Rutilia Cottam filium secuta est in exilium et usque eo fuit indulgentia constricta, ut mallet exilium pati quam desiderium, nec ante in patriam quam cum filio rediit. eundem iam reducem et in republica florentem tam fortiter amisit quam secuta est, nec quisquam lacrimas eius post elatum filium notavit. in expulso virtutem ostendit, in amisso prudentiam; nam et nihil illam a pietate deterruit et nihil in tristitia supervacua stultaque detinuit. (*Ad Helviam* 16.7)

Rutilia followed her son Cotta into exile, and was so wrapped up in her love for him that she preferred exile to losing him; and only her son's return brought her back to her native land. But when, after he had been restored and now had risen to honour in the state, he died, she let him go just as bravely as she had clung to him; and after her son was buried no one saw her shed any tears. When he was exiled, she showed courage, when she lost him, wisdom; for in the one case she did not desist from her devotion, and in the other did not persist in useless and foolish sorrow.

As Seneca concludes his narrative of Rutilia's deeds, he aligns Helvia with these archetypal matrons further in proclaiming that they have always been models that she looked to in her life. However, Seneca simultaneously betrays the motivations beneath her exemplary portrait here, in declaring that he desires her also to be counted amongst them:

cum his te numerari feminis volo. quarum vitam semper imitata es, earum in coercenda comprimendaque aegritudine optime sequeris exemplum. (*Ad Helviam* 16.7)

In the number of such women as these I wish you to be counted. In your effort to restrain and suppress your sorrow your best course will be to follow the example of those women whose life you have always copied.

What is more interesting perhaps is that while he implicitly likens her to Cornelia, she cannot be likened fully to Rutilia at this point. Though Helvia displays a similar level of courage implicitly through her actions, she does not display the level of wisdom that Rutilia has achieved. As she still requires consolation, as Seneca would have us believe, and not let go of her grief, she has not attained the perfection Seneca wants her to achieve. Just as he mirrors the dichotomy between Marcia's past and present behaviour implicitly through

Octavia and Livia in Seneca's earlier text, it seems that Seneca might once be reflecting his mother's past and potential future through two representative *maxima exempla* here too.

While Seneca might express through Rutilia the notion that wisdom is a virtue that his mother is yet to fully achieve, she does however possess two precursory virtues that are closely linked. In section 17, following a discussion of the difference between productive distractions and true remedies for grief, (17.1-2) Seneca turns to the power of philosophy. Here however, while he outlines its benefits, he augments her exemplary portrait further revealing that his mother had a keen intellect and thirst for literature:

itaque illo te duco, quo omnibus, qui fortunam fugiunt, confugiendum est, ad liberalia studia. illa sanabunt vulnus tuum, illa omnem tristitiam tibi evellent. His etiam si numquam adsuesses, nunc utendum erat; sed quantum tibi patris mei antiquus rigor permisit, omnes bonas artes non quidem comprehendisti, attigisti tamen. utinam quidem virorum optimus, pater meus, minus maiorum consuetudini deditus voluisset te praeceptis sapientiae erudiri potius quam imbui! non parandum tibi nunc esset auxilium contra fortunam sed proferendum; propter istas, quae litteris non ad sapientiam utuntur sed ad luxuriam instruuntur, minus te indulgere studiis passus est. beneficio tamen rapacis ingenii plus quam pro tempore hausisti; iacta sunt disciplinarum omnium fundamenta. (*Ad Helviam* 17.3-5)

And so I guide you to that in which all who fly from Fortune must take refuge—to philosophic studies. They will heal your wound, they will uproot all your sadness. Even if you had not been acquainted with them before, you would need to use them now; but, so far as the old-fashioned strictness of my father permitted you, though you have not indeed fully grasped all the liberal arts, still you have had some dealings with them. Would that my father, truly the best of men, had surrendered less to the practice of his forefathers, and had been willing to have you acquire a thorough knowledge of the teachings of philosophy instead of a mere smattering! In that case you would now have, not to devise, but merely to

display, your protection against Fortune. But he did not suffer you to pursue your studies because of those women who do not employ learning as a means to wisdom, but equip themselves with it for the purpose of display. Yet, thanks to your acquiring mind, you imbibed more than might have been expected in the time you had; the foundations of all systematic knowledge have been laid.

While the section is designed to highlight first the power of philosophy in curing an individual's grief, it simultaneously highlights her intellectual capabilities. Alongside this, as we can see, while Seneca reveals her thirst for literature, he also highlights how she was an obedient wife, eternally deferent to her husband's authority.

As we see therefore, while each of these sections might have their own, more immediate, persuasive agenda they also clearly construct a positive portrait of Helvia herself. Through these we see that Helvia is mentally tough, hardened by incessant misfortunes and experiences of loss; how she displays virtues like *pietas*, *pudicitia*, and *moderatio* as well as other applauded traits. Through his strategic distancing from other women, and rejection of the very stereotypes that misogynistically characterise her sex, she not only lacks the many vices of women, like ambition, greed, vanity and intrusion into male spheres of influence, but is superlative amongst them. Aligned with Cornelia, whom she takes as a model, and perhaps Rutilia alongside, she is pitched as a new paradigm of motherhood for Seneca's age.

While Helvia has only been presented as an exemplary woman, and not explicitly delineated as an *exemplum* with allusion to the noun or its various synonyms, Seneca does allude to her wider moral-didactic potential when he requests that she take care of her younger family members. In chapter 18, following a lengthy plea for Helvia to think of her wider family, and the take comfort in those that remain, Seneca asks Helvia to take

particular care of her grand-daughter, Novatilla. After highlighting the hardships that her granddaughter has had to endure, he asks that Helvia help to guide her, notably by her example if nothing more:

tene in gremio cito tibi daturam pronepotes Novatillam, quam sic in me transtuleram, sic mihi adscripseram, ut posset videri, quod me amisit, quamvis salvo patre pupilla; hanc et pro me dilige! abstulit illi nuper fortuna matrem; tua potest efficere pietas, ut perdidisse se matrem doleat tantum, non et sentiat. nunc mores eius compone, nunc forma; altius praecepta descendunt, quae teneris imprimuntur aetatibus. tuis adsuescat sermonibus, ad tuum fingatur arbitrium; multum illi dabis, etiam si nihil dederis praeter exemplum. hoc tibi tam sollemne officium pro remedio erit; non potest enim animum pie dolentem a sollicitudine avertere nisi aut ratio aut honesta occupatio. (*Ad Helviam* 18.7-8)

Hold to your bosom Novatilla, who so soon will present you with great-grandchildren, whom I had so transferred to myself, had so adopted as my own, that in losing me she may well seem to be an orphan although her father is still living; do you cherish her for me also! Fortune recently snatched from her mother, but you by your affection can see to it that she shall but mourn, and not really know, her mother's loss. Now is the time to order her character, now is the time to shape it; instruction that is stamped upon the plastic years leaves a deeper mark. Let her become accustomed to your conversation, let her be moulded to your pleasure; you will give her much even if you give her nothing but your example. Such a sacred duty as this will bring to you relief; for only philosophy or an honourable occupation can turn from its distress the heart that sorrows from affection.

The notion that a parent or guardian should act as a *domesticum exemplum* for younger family members is something we have seen before. Indeed, not only does Seneca exploit the fact that this was a culturally indoctrinated expectation when inverting the conventional



dynamics to highlight her exceptional influence over her stepmother, he even conveys a sense of this expectation here in referring to how her care for Novatilla is something of a sacred duty (*sollemne officium*). What is particularly interesting here however, particularly with regard to the wider discourse of exemplarity as a whole, is that Seneca identifies only Novatilla here as the object of her exemplary responsibilities. When he refers to her male descendants, like her grandson Marcus, we do not find an equivalent expectation. Despite the fact that both parents were expected, in Roman culture more broadly, to function as *exempla* for their offspring, it is on both occasions only with regard to other women (her *nouerca*, or *Novatilla*) that her exemplarity is explicitly referenced. When we consider further his statements that Marcia's course of consolatory therapy is to be structured by offering specially curated *exempla* based explicitly on her sex and time, although in reality, based more upon their equivalent circumstances and social role, it seems that a pattern emerges with Seneca whereby exemplary discourse is highly gendered and selection tailored on both occasions along gendered lines.

### Helvia's Functions

In his efforts to console Helvia we clearly see that Seneca makes a continuous bid to exemplarize his mother from the beginning and throughout. Not only does he reveal her virtues and exemplary character traits, but he fashions Helvia as the new Cornelia for the modern age. However, while we have explored the way he does this, and the cumulative portrait that he creates, we have yet to assess the reasons why he does this and what objectives he hopes to achieve. On some level, as we see with Marcia in Seneca's first *Consolation*, it seems that Seneca invokes Helvia's past behaviour and exposes her virtuous traits to remind his mother that she will be strong enough to cope and instigate some form

of change. In this regard we might consider creation of an exemplary portrait to have a rhetorical function, working towards his primarily persuasive aims. And yet as much of his praise is unrequired for conveying his overall message, it seems there are perhaps other motivations beneath his ostensible claims. On another level perhaps, Seneca's presentation fulfils a wider function beyond the purported recipient herself. As the embodiment of the *optima mater* for example, fashioned as a new Cornelia Gracchi, perhaps Helvia stands to serve as both a didactic model of motherhood for Seneca's wider audience and an aspirational standard for them to achieve.<sup>386</sup> In my view, however, while both of these are possible and not necessarily mutually exclusive, given Seneca's circumstances at the time of writing and the fact that he disseminated his work publicly, it seems that his works once more comprise certain socio-political dimensions and service his other, more self-serving objectives.

As we have seen with Marcia, Seneca's statements are highly complimentary towards his mother. While we should perhaps see this as a means of appeasing her at this sensitive time and his wider bid to console in one respect, we might also see Seneca engage in other social practices as Ovid did with his wife. On some level perhaps his consolation acts as a commemorative gift. Though he does not necessarily frame it as a *munus* as Ovid does with his poetry, it nevertheless awards his mother the gift of immortality through the literary *imago* that he creates. As scholars have often argued, however, in many ways the *ad Helviam* is directed at the emperor and his circle as much as it is Helvia and her grief.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Given the fact that, as I highlighted above, Seneca reveals his mother's virtues throughout the various stages of her life, one might argue that she functions beyond the limitations of her matronly role, and is a more general model of virtuous womanhood.

<sup>387</sup> See for example, McAuley 2015: 171; 199, or Fantham 2007:192.

Ferrill for example suggests that every word was edited with an eye to muster his recall.<sup>388</sup> He argues that the primary objective of the consolation was to enable Seneca to renounce his political ambitions and facilitate his return.<sup>389</sup> In a similar vein, others have suggested that it was a bid to elicit sympathy from his audience for his situation and temper the imperial wrath. As McAuley has argued, if we read between the lines of the text, and invert the situation we realise that Seneca has suffered as much as his mother, losing his son, his father and other family members to premature death, and now his mother due to his exile.<sup>390</sup>

This sympathetic response is achieved not through lamentation of his personal situation but through the exposition of Helvia's many misfortunes and painful losses in the present and the past. Indeed, McAuley suggests that Seneca amplifies the reader's sympathetic identification with his graphic representation of Helvia's sorrows as physical wounds and scars. While the consoler proclaims that he displays these things to prove that she should be immune to pain, and be ashamed to lament another wound, he is also parading the spectacle of his mother's disfigured body for his wider reader to view and heightening the sympathetic appeal.<sup>391</sup>

While Seneca's presentation of Helvia might service the author's ostensibly political agenda, manipulating his own presentation to elicit sympathy from the emperor and expedite his recall, it also comprises other social and ethical dimensions. As Wilcox notes, exposing Helvia's exemplary body is not just proof of her virtue, but also of Seneca's own.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Ferrill 1966: 254-6. See also, Stewart 1953; Griffin 1986:21-2; 60-1; Abel 1967: 48ff and Fantham 2007: 171-6. C.f. Manning 1981:5-6, who believes it was a genuine consolation, but that he intended to appeal to a wider audience simultaneously.

<sup>389</sup> Ferrill 1966: 255.

<sup>390</sup> McAuley 2015: 177.

<sup>391</sup> McAuley 2015:179-80. C.f. Degl'Innocenti argues, Seneca aligns Helvia with Hecuba, a paradigmatic figure of maternal grief in order to mobilise tragic sympathy.

<sup>392</sup> Wilcox 2006: 88. See also, McAuley 2015: 182.

Like Ovid does through his wife, it recalibrates his moral reputation on the right side of the moral-ethical spectrum, counterbalancing the immorality of his exploits that led to his exile. His reference to his mother's *pudicitia* for example (in 16.3) related a particularly powerful message. As Langlands has shown, women's *pudicitia* functioned in many ways as a commodity in Roman culture, reflecting directly upon their husbands and male kin. When observed by others, it enhanced and fortified their honour, public reputation and social power.<sup>393</sup> Given that Seneca had been exiled for adultery, it would naturally be in his best interest to reference his mother's *pudicitia* to his readers back in Rome. It would indirectly reassert his own chastity to his audience, and counteract the stain on his reputation that would inevitably have occurred with his exile.<sup>394</sup>

As we have seen with Ovid and others, Seneca's promotion of his mother within the text is a mirror upon the man himself. It reveals both his own suffering as well as his ethics and virtue and thus potentially rehabilitates his tarnished reputation by proxy, through her virtues as much as his own.<sup>395</sup> However Seneca's self-promotion here does not rely exclusively on the presentation of his mother alone within the essay. It is both reinforced and enhanced by his other family members too. As we have seen, in his bid to console Helvia, Seneca not only constructs a positive portrait for his mother but also his father,

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<sup>393</sup> Langlands 2006: 108.

<sup>394</sup> McAuley 2015: 182-3. McAuley also argues here that his engagement with his mother equally promotes Seneca's masculine identity. By exercising his control over Helvia and her textual body as he sees fit, (figuratively penetrating and violating her as McAuley suggests), he reasserts his male authorial control. See for example his statement in the opening of chapter 2: *potentioem me futurum apud te non dubito quam dolorem tuum, quo nihil est apud miseros potentius*. ('I do not doubt that I shall have more power over you than your grief, though there is nothing that has more power over the wretched.') It is perhaps important to note highlight here that Seneca makes a subtle connection between his mother's virtues and his own. In 16.3, alongside highlighting Helvia's *pudicitia*, he also emphasizes how she provided a good old-fashioned upbringing. Moreover, when he references her husband later, notably referenced explicitly as his father, to relate his mother's love of literature, he makes it clear to his reader that his father's ways were equally traditional.

<sup>395</sup> McAuley 2015: 173.

Novatilla, and his uncle and aunt too. While Helvia is described as an *optima* or *carissima mater*, her brother is coincidentally *optimus et fortissimus* and his father, whom he refers to specifically as her husband in the earlier passage is *carissimum virum*, and elsewhere an *optimus pater*.<sup>396</sup> With such a conspicuous bid to exemplify all other family members, Gloyn has recently argued that Seneca not only presents his mother as an exemplary woman but turns his family into an *exemplum* for his general readers too. He constructs a picture of a family, generally untroubled by internal conflict.<sup>397</sup> As she comments, given the turmoil of Helvia's family life, the observable harmony between relatives is remarkable. Yet it reinforces the Stoic notion that one should not suffer or respond to the external accidents of fate, regardless of external factors. According to Gloyn, Seneca constructs a portrait of his family that models this behaviour, and provides an *exemplum* for familial harmony as yet unwitnessed in other stoic texts.<sup>398</sup> As she concludes, this raises the cultural capital of the Annaei. It makes up for their recent losses in honour and reputation as a result of his own exile.<sup>399</sup> By including other family members within his consolation then, Seneca not only fleshes out his own self-portrait but offers a wider model of the ideal family. Yet, as Gloyn and others suggest, while this has moral-didactic dimensions, reinforcing Seneca's stoic precepts through offering an observable model for emulation, it also comprises socio-political dimensions in rehabilitating Seneca and his wider family's reputation for virtuous behaviour.

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<sup>396</sup> Fairweather 1984: 522-3, notes that the portrait he offers of his father is rather inconsistent with the views offered in his father's own extant works. Subsequently, Fairthweather suggests that he Seneca perhaps models his father on a cultural ideal type, rather than his actual character. He models him particularly as a father of the 'old-school'.

<sup>397</sup> Gloyn 2017: 45.

<sup>398</sup> Gloyn 2017: 45.

<sup>399</sup> Gloyn 2017: 45.

On another level one could argue that Seneca uses his *Consolation*, like his earlier essay to Marcia, as a bid to maintain relevance in society, and continue his literary legacy by offering an *exemplum* for how one might console a grieving mother in this situation. The consolatory corpus as we have seen often focuses upon wives. Cicero's wrote letters to Terentia and his children and Ovid, through the *Tristia* and *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, engaged primarily with his wife and friends. Perhaps Seneca is offering here another novel literary *exemplum* to go along with his consolation to Marcia, for how one might console. Such a supposition is perhaps supported once more by certain statements within the text. At 1.2 for instance, while outlining the purpose of his essay, Seneca records how he scoured other literature on consolations but could not find anything fitting so had to compose his own:

praeterea cum omnia clarissimorum ingeniorum monumenta ad compescendos moderandosque luctus composita euoluerem, non inueniebam exemplum eius qui consolatus suos esset, cum ipse ab illis comploraretur; ita in re noua haesitabam uerebarque ne haec non consolatio esset sed exulceratio. quid quod nouis uerbis nec ex uulgari et cotidiana sumptis adlocutione opus erat homini ad consolandos suos ex ipso rogo caput adleuanti? omnis autem magnitudo doloris modum excedentis necesse est dilectum uerborum eripiat, cum saepe uocem quoque ipsam intercludat. (*Ad Helviam* 1.2-3)

Beside this, while turning over all the works which the greatest geniuses have composed, for the purpose of soothing and pacifying grief, I could not find any instance of one who had offered consolation to his relatives, while he himself was being sorrowed over by them. Thus, the subject being a new one, I hesitated and feared that instead of consoling, I might embitter your grief. Then here was the thought that a man who had only just raised his head after burying his child, and who wished to console his friends, would require to use new phrases not taken from our common every-day words of comfort: but every sorrow of more than usual magnitude must needs prevent one's choosing one's words, seeing

that it often prevents one's using one's very voice. However this may be, I will make the attempt, not trusting in my own genius, but because my consolation will be most powerful since it is I who offer it.

Like his consolation to Marcia then, Seneca once more suggests within the text that this situation was something new and unique. Not only do his statements provide justification for the production of the treatise, but they also give it a sense of purpose and importance for society more broadly, providing them with a public dramatisation of the therapeutic process and thus an observable model for the act of consoling an individual. In this light Helvia (and indeed Seneca himself) become characters in the process: a metaphorical representation of the ideal Roman matron, and a pawn for him to use to play out his performance within the text.

### Conclusion

Matthew Roller once concluded, in a 2007 article on Seneca's use of *exempla*, that 'Seneca is typical in his use of Roman exemplary discourse. He tells us no more, or no less than others do.'<sup>400</sup> Yet this is clearly not the case. Through Seneca's *Consolations* we see once more that the exemplification of contemporary individuals in public often comprises dimensions beyond the conventional moral-didactic and rhetorical functions. While they might be constructed to fulfil these traditional functions on the surface, they also, simultaneously service the author's wider personal objectives as well. Whether that be using exemplification as a means of maintain cordial relations between the author and addressee; rehabilitating a tarnished reputation by proxy; providing an exemplary portrait

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<sup>400</sup> Roller 2007: 83.

for the public as a means of compensating his mother for the trouble he has caused, or Seneca's literary ambitions, and maintaining relevance in society by establishing an active illustration of the consolatory process and the strategies involved. While some scholars have acknowledged that such dimensions with Seneca exist, they are rarely considered in the context of the wider discourse of exemplarity. Yet Seneca clearly augments our understanding and provides further support for the idea that exemplarity is more than a rhetorical trope.



## Chapter 7. Pliny the Younger and the Rhetoric of Exemplarity

### Introduction: Pliny's Exemplary Programme

It has often been suggested in modern scholarship, that Pliny published his correspondence as a means by which to present his reader with a catalogue of modern *exempla* for their guidance and instruction.<sup>401</sup> As scholars like Langlands, Bradley, Carlon and Shelton have shown, not only does Pliny strive on several occasions to present himself within the letters – i.e. to his immediate recipients – and through the letters, collectively – to his wider audience & posterity – as the *primum exemplum* to be imitated, but he also reinforces the importance of exemplary learning at length: highlighting how he adopts homiletic models in his own life, and further, in presenting other ‘exemplary’ individuals to his recipients, explicitly for their consideration.<sup>402</sup>

However, while Pliny might conform to the conventional and expected deployment of *exempla* in many ways – calling upon and creating exemplary figures in many of his letters explicitly as tools for his audience’s ethical instruction – I believe that he also uses exemplarity in other, more self-serving ways. I would argue that it is not always the case that Pliny is offering up every exemplary individual that feature within his letters exclusively as a model for his reader’s edification. Indeed, as Roberto Gazich has highlighted, there are many occasions in which it is in fact quite difficult to see how the figure that Pliny presents might actually provide them with a model at all.<sup>403</sup> On my reading there are many occasions where Pliny’s exemplarizing rhetoric seems to have a simultaneous, if not more immediate, social agenda. I propose that he very frequently uses exemplarity as a point of praise and

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<sup>401</sup> Henderson 2002; See also, Langlands 2014; Gibson and Morello 2012; Shelton 2012; Bradley 2010; Carlon 2009; Bernstein 2008; Posadas 2008; Gazich 2003; Methy 2003, and Veyne 1990.

<sup>402</sup> See for example *Epistulae* 1.8; 1.18; 1.22; 2.26; 6.24; 8.14; 8.18. See further, Langlands 2014: 215.

<sup>403</sup> Gazich 2003: 137.

deploys the term *exemplum*, or other synonymous terminology, as a complimentary designation designed quite visibly, to flatter his friends and family. At times this can be seen straightforwardly, when he proclaims to his recipient directly that they are an *exemplum*, though on some occasions we see it subtly and implicitly, when Pliny exemplarizes another friend's wife or family member, and plays on contemporary notions that one's character can be exposed by association with another, ethically sanctioned individual. It seems to me therefore, that Pliny has a rather particular use for exemplarity alongside the ethical and didactic functions that we see elsewhere. By using it as a means of flattering, or complimenting individuals, in turn, we see that exemplarity plays an important role in the creation and negotiation of social relationships. In many ways, it seems, setting someone up as an *exemplum* is as much a part of Pliny's strategy for social networking, and providing a positive portrait of himself, by association with these purportedly exemplary characters, as it is for moral instruction. In this chapter therefore, I will argue that in Pliny's letters, as with our other authors, there is a prominent social dimension to his rhetoric of exemplarity, particularly when this concerns his friends and family. Through a close reading of several letters, I will explore how Pliny not only creates exemplary portraits for his reader's benefit, providing figures that might function as an 'example to us all', but also how, in several cases, his rhetoric seems more likely designed to fulfil another, more visibly social purpose.

While the prominence of *exempla* and learning by example in Pliny's letters is well documented in recent scholarship, and scholars have acknowledged that there are dimensions beneath Pliny's use of examples beyond the conventional moral and rhetorical modes, scholars have not yet considered the social implications of creating and

disseminating exemplary characters within his letters, nor what it tells us about the wider discourse of exemplary in Roman culture at this time.<sup>404</sup>

#### Letter 4.19 To Calpurnia Hispulla

Our first case study is a letter Pliny writes to his new wife's aunt, Calpurnia Hispulla (*Epistulae* 4.19). Here, in this quite famous letter, not only can Pliny be seen to make a conscious effort to exemplarize Hispulla – fashioning for her a virtuous and exemplary portrait from the beginning and throughout – but he even alludes to her exemplary potential, explicitly identifying her as an *exemplum pietatis*. However, when we consider the purpose of the letter itself, and his statements in more detail, we quickly see that Pliny's creation of an exemplary portrait does not necessarily mean that he aimed to offer Hispulla as a paradigmatic model for his audience to learn from, but also, or perhaps instead, that he is using notions of her exemplarity as a means by which to flatter his wife's aunt, cement his relationship with his new wife's family, and improve his public image amongst his contemporaries and posterity.

In the opening of the letter, Pliny proclaims that Hispulla is a model of familial devotion (*exemplum pietatis*). As he explains, not only did she love her brother and his

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<sup>404</sup> Bütler 1970, provides a useful summary of how Pliny uses the term but does not discuss this social aspect. Hindermann 2013, looks at his use of gendered nouns (especially *mulier*, *femina*, *uxor* and *coniunx*) and compares Pliny's use with Cicero. But does not discuss the position of 'exemplum' or its related synonyms, in this discourse. c.f. L'Hoir 1992. Jeppesen Wigelsworth 2010, and Viden 1993, have examined Pliny's presentation of several women in the letters, but again do not address how this might have functioned in a social capacity, as a means of flattery. Langlands 2014, has explored how Pliny presents a sense of equality between the sexes in their capacity to act as *exempla* by discussing both those he exemplifies explicitly and implicitly (c.f. Centlivres Challet, 2013), however she says little about how he simultaneously applies these strategies as a means of flattering the individuals themselves. Carlon 2009, and Shelton 2012, have argued that his collection might be viewed as a platform for articulating his views on the ideal wife, acknowledging how some of his statements are complimentary, yet draw no broader conclusions on with respect to exemplary discourse. Henderson 2002, argues that his works might be read as an intentional bid to revise his personal history and advancement under Domitian. See also Henderson 2003; de Pretis 2003; Bennett 1997; Leach 1990, and Traub 1955.

daughter, but she went further than any normal aunt in caring for her niece like the father that she had lost. Because of this, Pliny presumes, she would be greatly pleased to know that her niece is proving herself worthy. She is worthy of her father, her grandfather and even Hispulla herself:

cum sis pietatis exemplum, fratremque optimum et amantissimum tui pari caritate dilexeris, filiamque eius ut tuam diligas, nec tantum amitae ei affectum verum etiam patris amissi repraesentes, non dubito maximo tibi gaudio fore cum cognoveris dignam patre dignam te dignam avo evadere. (*Epistulae* 4.19.1-2)

Since you are a model of family devotion, and you loved your excellent and most loving brother as dearly as he loved you; you love his daughter as if she were your own, and, by filling the place of the father she lost, you are more than an aunt to her, I know that you will be glad to hear that she has proved herself worthy of her father, her grandfather and you.<sup>405</sup>

As he continues, Pliny applauds the virtues of his wife. He praises her superlative intellect (*summum est acumen*), her frugality (*summa frugalitas*) and that she truly loves him (*amat me*), something which Pliny purports is demonstrative of her overall purity (*quod castitatis indicium est*).<sup>406</sup> According to Pliny, during their time together, Calpurnia has developed a taste for study: *accedit his studium litterarum, quod ex mei caritate concepit*. She collects all of his speeches and even learns them off by heart: *meos libellos habet lectitat ediscit etiam*.<sup>407</sup> When he goes off to plead in court, his wife remains anxiously waiting at home, displaying so much joy when he returns: *qua illa sollicitudine cum videor acturus, quanto*

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<sup>405</sup> All translations henceforth will be taken from Radice 1969, unless otherwise stated. This first translation has been adapted to incorporate the 'cum clause' and reflect the truer meaning of 'pietatis' and 'amantissimum'.

<sup>406</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.2.

<sup>407</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.2.

*cum egi gaudio afficitur!*<sup>408</sup> As if her husband's biggest supporter, Calpurnia boasts of his victories in court. She tells everyone she can about his reception and the courts reaction, proudly relaying every detail: *disponit qui nuntient sibi quem assensum quos clamores excitarim, quem eventum iudicii tulerim.*<sup>409</sup> Whenever he holds a public reading of his works, she sits discreetly behind a curtain, assessing how he is perceived: *eadem, si quando recito, in proximo discreta velo sedet, laudesque nostras avidissimis auribus excipit.*<sup>410</sup> She even sets his works to music, inspired only by her love for him: the best teacher of them all: *versus quidem meos cantat etiam formatque cithara non artifice aliquo docente, sed amore qui magister est optimus.*<sup>411</sup> In all of this, Pliny claims, he feels secure that their mutual happiness will be long-lasting and will continue to grow each day: *his ex causis in spem certissimam adducor, perpetuam nobis maioremque in dies futuram esse concordiam,* for Calpurnia loves him not for his youth or good looks (both fleeting), but his glory: *non enim aetatem meam aut corpus, quae paulatim occidunt ac senescunt, sed gloriam diligit.*<sup>412</sup> Such behaviour, Pliny claims, is surely fitting for a woman raised by Hispulla's hand, and guided by personally by her instruction: *nec aliud decet tuis manibus educatam, tuis praeceptis institutam.*<sup>413</sup> For Hispulla entertained nothing in her household that was not pure, and honourable, and taught her to love him by her recommendation: *quae nihil in contubernio tuo viderit, nisi sanctum honestumque, quae denique amare me ex tua praedicatione consueverit.*<sup>414</sup> In the final lines, Pliny asserts that while Hispulla had a close relationship with Pliny's own mother, she also had a say in his own development. When he was a boy,

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<sup>408</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.3.

<sup>409</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.3.

<sup>410</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.3.

<sup>411</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.4.

<sup>412</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.5.

<sup>413</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.6.

<sup>414</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.6.

she shaped his character, and encouraged him: *me a puerita statim formare laudare*, predicted that he would be the man he is today: *talemque quails nunc uxori mea videor omnari solebas*.<sup>415</sup> For all of this, he claims, Pliny and his wife compete over who should thank her most: Pliny for being paired with her, or she for being paired with him: *certatim ergo tibi gratias agimus, ego quod illam mihi, illa quod me sibi dederis, quasi invicem elegeris*.<sup>416</sup>

As we can see, while the letter is framed as a kind of status report – with Pliny relaying how the couple are getting on – and as a thank you note at the same time – with the couple extended their gratitude for bringing them together – Pliny makes a concerted effort to exemplify Hispulla and his wife throughout. With Hispulla, not only does he immediately and emphatically identify her an *exemplum pietatis*, but he also praises her for caring for her brother and niece. He applauds how she successfully shaped Calpurnia’s development and guided her by hand - a notion that had been particularly applauded since Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi – and makes it clear that she continues to fulfil this parental role in arranging for her niece a prosperous and successful marriage. Alongside all of these things, as he concludes, we hear that Hispulla maintains a household that is morally pure, upright and even produces other exemplary individuals: Calpurnia and even Pliny himself. With this Pliny implicitly extends the remits of her maternal role, endowing her with a reproductive quality.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.7.

<sup>416</sup> *Epistulae* 4.19.8.

<sup>417</sup> As a side note, it is interesting how specific Pliny is here: highlighting not only that she was educated by Hispulla’s hand (*tuis manibus*) her but also by her precept/instruction (*praeceptis*). Even more interesting for us of course, is what Pliny fails to mention. We have no suggestion here that Hispulla raised Calpurnia by her example: something which we might have anticipated, given both his earlier statements and how it was traditionally expected in contemporary ideology for the parent (and, or other older relatives) to constitute a powerful *domesticum exemplum*: a domestic role model for younger family members. Surely, it would be quite fitting at this juncture for Pliny to acknowledge her ‘exemplary’ role in this regard.

With Calpurnia, while she is not explicitly invoked as an *exemplum*, she is certainly presented as an exemplary *uxor*. Not only does Pliny reveal her various virtues – her intellect, frugality, love and support – but he also suggests that she is superlative in all these things. With his use of the intensifier *summa*, Pliny implicitly evaluates her virtuous attributes against the rest of the world to proclaim that Calpurnia is the best of them all.

Given the fact that Pliny purposefully published his letters, alongside his more general invitation to see the exemplary potential in the various individuals mentioned within his works it seems, that with their exemplification Pliny is offering Hispulla and his wife up for public consumption. However, while Hispulla and Calpurnia may have exemplary potential, serving as an aspirational standard for others to achieve, or perhaps even a generic model for how to be an exceptional aunt/wife, it seems more likely that Pliny has a more immediate social agenda beneath his exemplarizing rhetoric: that his presentation of these women and his inclusion of the letter within his publication serves another more patently social purpose.

If the letter's only purpose was to provide Hispulla with an update on the couple's progress, there is no real need to make these exemplifying asides. Unless the author has an ulterior motive beneath these various statements he does not need to call Hispulla an *exemplum pietatis*, nor explain the powerful influence she has had over his wife.<sup>418</sup> On my reading of the letter, Hispulla's exemplification is more immediately intended to compliment Hispulla, than to posit an *exemplum* for his reader's moral instruction. Like his

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<sup>418</sup> Despite the ostensible emphasis he places on Hispulla's exemplarity, on my reading, Pliny's choice of construction endows the statement with an overall air of inconsequence. Grammatically, it functions as a springboard for the report that follows: 'since you are a model of devotion, and you loved your brother and his daughter with equal esteem ... you will appreciate [the following information]' And rhetorically, it smooths the transition from Hispulla, the initial subject, to others – first her brother and then, more importantly, Pliny's wife Calpurnia. As a result, it seems more like a 'passing comment' than a truly emphatic statement designed to highlight her exemplary status to a perceived third-party audience.

other laudatory statements that extoll her love and affection, her hands on approach to education, and the integrity of her household, he calls her an *exemplum* and praises her virtuous behaviour to flatter her personally and ingratiate him further to the woman that he suggests has raised his wife and orchestrated their union. In my view therefore, Pliny's application of exemplary terminology is used strategically and purposefully to negotiate their relationship. It supports the positive view Hispulla already has of him – presenting himself as a reverent and respectful man – and aids the maintenance of cordial relations between them by revealing his cognisance and appreciation of the efforts she has made.<sup>419</sup>

Pliny's flattery of course has further implications, and these increase exponentially through the letters publication: for, while at the level of a personal correspondence, it allows him to directly display his deferential reverence and ingratiate himself towards her, more publicly, as a published 'epistle', her presentation serves a number of other objectives and agendas. As I have outlined earlier, the letter is framed as a means of expressing Pliny's thanks. It conveys his gratitude for bringing them both together, explicitly, and implicitly for raising another exemplary woman. However, as Jo-Ann Shelton has suggested, while within the letter Pliny expresses his thanks directly, through its publication Pliny's portrait becomes an additional gift of gratitude extended to Hispulla. It supplements his thanks by publicising and immortalising Hispulla's wisdom and her devotion to her family before a wider audience.<sup>420</sup> If Shelton is correct, as I believe she is, and Pliny's decision to include the letter in his collection is intended to function as a kind of *munus* for Hispulla, then his

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<sup>419</sup> Carlon 2009: 117, has acknowledged the complimentary nature of Pliny's statements, summarising that 'it is hard to imagine a more complimentary description of Calpurnia Hispulla than the opening sentence of 4.19. Not only is she a model of devotion... who shared deep affection with her deceased brother, but she has taken on his role, *ut ... affectum verum etiam patris amissi repraesentes*, in the upbringing of his daughter, Calpurnia, whom she loves as her own.'

<sup>420</sup> Shelton 2012: 257.



exemplification has further implications for our understanding of his objectives and agenda. Not only does it suggest that exemplification can be used as a means of flattery, and involved in the rhetoric of praise, but it also suggests, as we have seen with Ovid, how exemplification and creation of an exemplary portrait also engages with the process of gift exchange and with the formation of social networks. Whether, as Shelton implies, Pliny is using this as a means of compensating Hispulla for her services so far, or perhaps, as I would argue, establishing new bonds of obligation between them, providing her with a new stimulus to continue in her support, it engages in a variety of social processes involved in managing their relationship.<sup>421</sup>

While Shelton suggests that Pliny's decision to publish might be intended as a means of extending further thanks, others have highlighted how Hispulla's exemplification has implications on Pliny's perceived bid to create a positive self-portrait for the public and posterity through the letters. Carlon has commented how the letter is as much about Pliny, as it is about his wife and her aunt. He exploits every opportunity to insert himself into the letter, highlighting not only how he shapes his wife's behaviour, but also how Hispulla had a hand in his development and even predicted his future character.<sup>422</sup> As Carlon states, 'even in his expression of gratitude provides a vehicle for him to inform his wider reader that his talents are innate and visible to Calpurnia from a young age.'<sup>423</sup> However, while Pliny seems to carve out a positive public persona for himself through such statements, his treatment of the two women that feature augment his public image further. As Carlon has also highlighted for instance, Pliny's treatment of Hispulla and his wife speak directly to his character. They reveal that he has chosen a wife who is exemplary in her own right, as well

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<sup>421</sup> For a further discussion of literary *munera*, once more see Culpepper 2010.

<sup>422</sup> Carlon 2009: 164-5.

<sup>423</sup> Carlon 2009: 165.

as the fact that he was raised by one who was a model of devotion. For Carlon, presenting Hispulla in this way communicates to his audience that his wife was accorded the proper guidance and training after her mother had died. It relates further information about her background and his reasoning for his choice of Calpurnia as a wife.<sup>424</sup> While in some regards Pliny reveals the kind of man that he is by the way in which he engages with Hispulla within the letter, like Ovid and Seneca, establishing his wife and other family members as exemplary individuals amplifies Pliny's persona further by association. Not only does it shape the audience's perception of the women that feature, but also the man himself. It raises Pliny's profile through their virtues, and through the harmonious picture of family life evinced throughout the text.

Pliny's exemplification of Hispulla and Calpurnia within the letter serves a variety of functions, yet it seems that few involve providing a model for his reader's moral edification. It is used to fulfil a social purpose of maintaining cordial relations between Pliny and Hispulla and carving out a positive public persona for himself before his wider audience at the same time. As I have suggested, Hispulla's exemplification features as a strategy for flattery and praise. He effectively compliments Hispulla with his exemplifying asides, to ingratiate himself to her, and keep her on his side. Through the letters publication however, his exemplification goes further, to function as a gift. It extends his thanks for orchestrating their union and for her involvement in Calpurnia's upbringing by revealing her actions publicly and immortalising her name. On another level, as I have also suggested, Pliny's exemplification of these women has more self-serving benefits, yet equally social aims. It shapes the audience's perception of his character and lifestyle to the wider audience,

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<sup>424</sup> Carlon 2009: 157-8.

presenting a portrait of marital bliss, and harmonious interchange with other family members, as well as subliminally raising his own virtuous profile by association.

#### Letter 4.23 To Pomponius Bassus

While one might argue that Pliny's letter to Hispulla is relatively unique, being one of the rarer instances within his corpus in which the recipient of his letter features as the identified *exemplum* in question, I would argue that this letter only highlights the beginnings of a wider pattern within his works. Throughout his corpus there are a number of instances where Pliny uses exemplarity as a means of maintaining a positive relationship with his friends and family, and to enhance his public persona at the same time. Another letter, particularly comparable to 4.19 in tone and social strategy be seen in Pliny's letter to Pomponius Bassus (*Epistulae* 4.23). Not only does Pliny once more praise his recipient, but he also identifies him explicitly as an *exemplum* to be imitated:

magnam cepi voluptatem, cum ex communibus amicis cognovi te, ut sapientia tua dignum est, et disponere otium et ferre, habitare amoenissime. ... ita senescere oportet virum, qui magistratus amplissimos gesserit, exercitus rexerit, totumque se rei publicae quam diu decebat obtulerit. nam et prima vitae tempora et media patriae, extrema nobis impertire debemus, ut ipsae leges monent, quae maiorem annis otio reddunt. ... quando mihi licebit, quando per aetatem honestum erit imitari istud pulcherrimae quietis exemplum? quando secessus mei non desidia nomen sc tranquillitatis accipient? vale. (*Epistulae* 4.23)

I was greatly pleased, to discover from mutual friends that in a manner worthy of your wisdom, you are organising your leisure and coping with it. ... This is the ideal old age for a man who has held highly distinguished magistracies, commanded armies, and devoted himself wholly to the state for so long as it was

fitting. For we must devote our early and middle years to our native land, and our closing years to ourselves. ... I wonder when this will be permitted me –when shall I reach the honourable age which will allow me to follow your example of a graceful retirement, when my withdrawal will not be termed laziness but rather a desire for peace? Farewell.

As we see here, Pliny declares that Bassus is an *exemplum* of a beautiful retirement and that he longs to join him at this time. Yet it is interesting that as he does so, he also highlights a number of other qualities he finds in Bassus, and praises him for other things he has achieved throughout his life. As we see, he acknowledges that Bassus was also a successful commander, a patriot and politician and devoted himself to the state for a considerable length of time. Consequently, it could be argued that Pliny expands the parameters of Bassus' *exemplum* beyond the correct use of *otium* in retirement, to express more broadly how one should organise each stage of their life. As Pliny implies through his encomium of Bassus, while one should be patriotic and a faithful servant to the country, they should also bow out gracefully when it is time.

Given once again that the purpose of Pliny's letters was at least partially, to offer exemplary material in the characters that feature, it seems that Pliny has included the letter within the work intentionally to present Bassus as model for others beyond himself. However, while it seems clear that Pliny posits Bassus as an *exemplum* for his audience's consideration, and their socio-ethical education, I would argue that there are other dimensions beneath Pliny's statements, beyond exemplary citation exclusively itself. Firstly, as we see within the letter, there is an overarching sense of obsequious deference, and a subtle sense of performative politeness in Pliny's congratulatory tone. Perhaps Pliny is observing social conventions in displaying respectful veneration for Bassus who is his

superior in wisdom and in age. Yet I suspect that Pliny is also attempting to compliment his friend, and flatter him directly, using notions of his exemplary status as a powerful point of praise. With this it seems that exemplification has a social application: that at the level of a personal correspondence it participates in the management of interpersonal relationships through flattery and compliment. Alongside this, as Hall has argued with Cicero's letters, celebrating a friend's successes, supporting their endeavours, and praising their behaviour was itself an important part of establishing or reinforcing social alliances amongst elite Roman men.<sup>425</sup> In doing so within the letter, voluntarily and in an ostensibly altruistic fashion, Pliny observes the rules of *amicitia*, to perform the duties required of a good friend.

While much of this transpires at the level of a personal correspondence, as a published epistle we see further social dimensions beneath Pliny's emphatic praise. Firstly, as I have argued with the letter to Hispulla, Pliny's decision to include this letter within the collection not only establishes his recipient as an *exemplum* but it also effectively immortalises his name. In this regard it might be considered to function as an additional gift of friendship, as it awards Bassus with a lasting legacy as an *exemplum* and a sense of purpose beneath his life with this new fame. Alongside this, if we consider the letter to have been written with an eye to its wider publication, we see that it publicises their relationship and acknowledges another individual in Pliny's network of exemplary friends. Moreover, it participates in the development of Pliny's self-portrait through the letters by revealing how he interacts with Bassus as well.

While Bassus' elevation to the status of an *exemplum* has the benefit of broadening Pliny's social network and participates in the development of a positive public persona in

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<sup>425</sup> Hall 2009: 47-49.

these ways, we also see simultaneously that it enhances his image further in highlighting and publicising the qualities that Pliny values himself. Through his praise of Bassus we see that Pliny places a premium on patriotism and faithful service to the state. We also see that he desires to replicate his productive use of *otium* in retirement and bowing out gracefully from public life. While these facets might constitute the various elements of Bassus' *exemplum*, they also communicate information about Pliny character and morality at the same time. They convey to the audience reflectively that Pliny is equally patriotic and reminds them that he has also served the state faithfully for his whole life.

With Pliny's letter to Bassus therefore, we see once more that exemplification is instrumentalised and politicised by Roman authors, to achieve certain socio-political aims. Beyond simply offering a model for his audience's edification in line with his programmatic vision, elevating individuals to exemplary status not only has rhetorical/didactic value, but also social weight. It is a means of flattering individuals through this powerful form of praise and participates in gift giving by immortalising their name. Moreover, it is something that they revert to frequently, along with other strategies, to fulfil social conventions, manage their public image and relationships, as well as amplify their social prestige, by communicating further information about themselves.

### Letter 3.1 To Calvisius Rufus

It is important to note at this point that Pliny's exemplifying strategy not exclusively consigned to women and wives. As we see in his letter to Pomponius Bassus, it is something that he applies to individuals of both sexes, to negotiate personal and political relationships,

and bolster his public image at the same time.<sup>426</sup> A prime example of this can be found in a letter Pliny writes to Calvisius Rufus regarding Vestricius Spurinna (*Letter 3.1*). As Gibson and Morello have argued, like his letter to Bassus, Pliny's letter about Spurinna was intended to serve an edifying purpose.<sup>427</sup> Not only does he present him to Calvisius, his recipient, explicitly as a model to be emulated, but he also articulates through him his beliefs about what is proper for a man in his retirement. First, in the opening of the letter Pliny states: *nescio an ullum iucundius tempus exegerim, quam quo nuper apud Spurinnam fui, adeo quidem ut neminem magis in senectute, si modo senescere datum est, aemulari velim; nihil est enim illo vitae genere distinctius.* ('I doubt whether I have spent any time more delightfully than I did during my recent stay with Spurinna, so much so that there is no one whom I would want to emulate in old age (if old age is granted to me that is), for nothing is more distinguished than this man's way of life.')<sup>428</sup> And later, towards the conclusion, he reiterates a similar sentiment when he proclaims: *interim mille laboribus conteror, quorum mihi et solacium et exemplum est idem Spurinna.* ('Spurinna is both, my consolation and example.')<sup>429</sup> However, while Pliny's primary objective in writing to his friend seems to lie in presenting Spurinna as a model for emulation, we can also see quite clearly how his exemplification might also, on another level, comprise a more social purpose. As a working correspondence, written with not only posterity in mind, but the letter's contemporary reception, Pliny's exposition of Spurinna's exemplary lifestyle not only has the power to instruct Calvisius, but also compliment his mentor. Indeed, given the quasi-eulogistic tone of

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<sup>426</sup> If we look to letter 4.7, to Catus Lepidus, we also see that Pliny's use of the term *exemplum* for certain individuals is also not always used in a positive sense. See for instance, Pliny's statements about Regulus, his arch rival: *exemplo est Regulus. imbecillum latus, os confusum, haesitans lingua, tardissima inventio, memoria nulla, nihil denique praeter ingenium insanum, et tamen eo impudentia ipsoque illo furore pervenit, ut orator habeatur. Epistulae 4.7.4.*

<sup>427</sup> Gibson and Morello 2012: 106-7.

<sup>428</sup> *Epistulae 3.1.1.*

<sup>429</sup> *Epistulae 3.1.11.*

the letter, and the close personal connection that Pliny claims exists between the two men, it seems rather likely here that Pliny is attempting to both present him as an exemplar for consideration and flatter the man himself, by creating and disseminating an overtly positive portrait.

Once more then, I would argue that Pliny's rhetoric of exemplarity not only has didactic value, but also, simultaneously, social currency. It allows him to concordantly present him as an *exemplum* for his readers and posterity and display his deferential reverence towards Spurinna and immortalise him, through publication. Interestingly, in this same letter, Pliny also exemplarizes Spurinna's wife: Cottia, though does not specifically name her. At 3.1.5, as Pliny outlines Spurinna's daily routine, he states:

deinde considit, et liber rursus aut sermo libro potior; mox vehiculum ascendit, adsumit uxorem singularis exempli vel aliquem amicorum, ut me proxime.

(*Epistulae* 3.1.5)

Next he sits down, the book is continued, or preferably the conversation; after which he goes out in his carriage accompanied by his wife, an unparalleled example, or one of his friends, a pleasure which was recently my own.

It seems quite clear that unlike her husband, Pliny is not necessarily offering the wife here as an *exemplum* for Calvisius to emulate. Indeed, his treatment is so brief that his discussion is essentially just a passing comment. So why does Pliny say this? In my view, Pliny's statement here is designed to fulfil two things. Firstly, as with Spurinna, there is an element of potential flattery going on here, though this time for Cottia herself. Secondly, although I do suspect perhaps more immediately, I would also argue that he is making this emphatic statement to enhance the portrait of her husband and augment his exemplary potential



reflectively through her. As we have seen in earlier chapters, it was conventional, in elite male ideology at least, for wives to be seen as symbolic extensions of their husbands. Indeed, as we have discussed, the wife's ability to reflect the character of her spouse is a theme we see in several of Pliny's own letters. It features implicitly in Letter 4.19 to Hispulla, as Pliny acknowledges his own influence on his wife's more laudatory qualities, and, it is even most lucidly articulated in his *Panegyricus*, his speech of official thanks delivered before the emperor Trajan, where Pliny commends Trajan for fashioning the habits of his wife, particularly, through his own example. Given this then, it seems likely that Pliny's assertive characterisation of Cottia as an *exemplum* is more immediately designed to augment the portrait of Spurinna here, reflectively through his wife. While I do believe that, on some level at least, it was designed to flatter Cottia herself, as Pliny's primary focus is on Spurinna and his exemplary lifestyle, it seems that the message being conveyed here is that Spurinna, like other good Roman men (i.e. Pliny himself and Trajan), fashioned a wife who is beyond reproach. As we see, despite Pliny's ostensibly positive characterisation, she is only referred to in relation to her husband – as his *uxor* – she seemingly only features here parenthetically, as an appendix to, or an extension of her husband.<sup>430</sup>

### Letter 8.5 To Geminus

Alongside Cottia in Letter 3.1, another prominent example of this can be seen when Pliny writes to his friend Geminus, in *Epistulae* 8.5. As the letter is relatively brief, it is worth recording in full here:

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<sup>430</sup> One could argue that the superiority of the wife is so enormous that she requires no detailed presentation and that being a reflection of her husband does not limit her imitable potential.

grave vulnus Macrinus noster accepit: amisit uxorem singularis exempli, etiam si olim fuisset. vixit cum hac triginta novem annis sine iurgio sine offensa. quam illa reverentiam marito suo praestitit, cum ipsa summam mereretur! quot quantasque virtutes, ex diversis aetatibus sumptas, collegit et miscuit! habet quidem Macrinus grande solacium, quod tantum bonum tam diu tenuit, sed hinc magis exacerbatur quod amisit; nam fruendis voluptatibus crescit carendi dolor. ero ergo suspensus pro homine amicissimo, dum admittere avocamenta et cicatricem pati possit, quam nihil aequae ac necessitas ipsa et dies longa et satietas doloris inducit. vale. (*Epistulae* 8.5)

Our Macrinus has received a terrible blow, he has lost his wife – an unparalleled example – who would still have been exemplary even in former times. He lived with her for 39 years without a single quarrel or offense. How much respect she showed for her husband, while deserving the highest respect for herself. How much and how many virtues, collected from every stage of life, did she assemble and comprise within her person. Macrinus certainly has lost a great source of comfort in the fact that he held onto such a good thing & for so long - although this loss does make it all the more intense, for the pain of deprivation rises from our enjoyment of delightful things. Therefore, I will remain anxious for this man, my dearest friend, while he suffers, until he is able to permit himself a distraction and allow his wounds to heal, though there is nothing that can induce this but the inevitable lapse of time and sufficient grieving. Farewell.

As we see here, though the letter ostensibly functions as a kind of report – with Pliny informing Geminus that Macrinus' wife has died, Pliny clearly goes beyond the necessities of the narrative and makes a concerted effort to exemplarize his wife. Not only does he identify her explicitly as an *exemplum* – indeed, he even applies the same phrase that we saw earlier with Spurrinna's wife: referring to her as an *uxorem singularis exempli* ('a wife of

unparalleled example') – but he also goes on to highlight her spousal sense of respect and how she was replete with different virtues.<sup>431</sup> The question that remains however is why?

As Macrinus' wife has obviously passed at this point, it is clearly not the case that Pliny is trying to flatter the subject herself, as we have seen in his other letters. Although, it does seem that in some respects, he strives to provide a complimentary and respectful tribute to her, perhaps out of affection. As we can see, the letter is effectively a eulogy and, as a published literary product, it publicises and immortalises both her life and her virtuous character for other readers and posterity to see. The letter thus constitutes a vehicle for commemoration and is perhaps a kind of final gift to her. Like the tombstones that lined the entrances and existed to urban centres across the Roman world, Pliny invites his literary 'passers-by' to stop for a moment and consider this woman and her life.<sup>432</sup>

On another level, however, simultaneously, the letter also seems to feature as a kind of *Consolatio ad Macrinum*. As we see throughout, the letter displays a patent focus on Macrinus himself. It is not simply that Pliny is explaining to Geminus that the wife has died (indeed, if this were his only objective, surely we should hear of when, how or perhaps why); but he is explaining what Macrinus has lost. Indeed, in many ways, his exemplification of the wife, seems more immediately designed to heighten the sense of Macrinus' loss, and display Pliny's concerns. It is as much a bid to indirectly console Macrinus, as to provide a tribute to his wife's memory, as it extends, albeit indirectly (through Geminus) to his friend, the consolatory messages that both time will heal and that he has friends who are there for him.

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<sup>431</sup> Note the recurrent theme here that individuals are particularly exceptional when they exemplify old-fashioned values, or when they align with canonical *exempla* of the past.

<sup>432</sup> It is particularly interesting here that, like Ovid and others, Pliny does not actually name the wife herself. He denies her an independent identity, despite his laudatory eulogy, identifying her exclusively through her uxorial connection.

Alongside all of this, the letter also compliments Macrinus' himself and exemplarizes him by proxy. Given what we know about Roman ideological notions that others, especially women, were seen to reflect the character of their husbands/kin, in fashioning this eulogy for the wife, Pliny is simultaneously conveying messages about Macrinus' ability to fashion an exemplary wife and lead an exemplary life with her. Some might argue that in this, Pliny attributes agency to the wife herself, expressing through his sequence of indicative active verbs such as *collegit* and *miscuit* that it was the wife who collects these approbatory virtues throughout her life. Pliny himself reveals in his Panegyric for Trajan and elsewhere that her husband would be considered a potent source from which to draw and develop these virtuous traits, especially given the purported length of time they spent together as a couple.

On my reading, the letter to Macrinus is multi-dimensional and fulfils a number of different objectives simultaneously, yet most importantly, as I have argued above, despite all of his exemplarizing rhetoric, his presentation has very little to do with positing her as an *exemplum* for his audience's education or instruction. Though he might explicitly signpost her to his reader as an *exemplum*, his use of exemplary terminology and his exemplarizing statements are in many ways more a bid to provide a respectful eulogy for the wife, to further console Macrinus, and present himself as a caring and respectful friend in the process. The unnamed wife, whose loss is ostensibly being commemorated, is seemingly used as a tool for him to strengthen the bonds of *amicitia* between him and his friend.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> It is important to note at this point that Pliny's application of exemplary vocabulary is both strategic and selective. Despite the picture that emerges through our evidence thus far, it is not the case that every man or woman mentioned in his letters is identified as an *exemplum*, or presented as an exemplary individual. Nevertheless, the fact that Pliny's application is elective reinforces both the potency of exemplification as a form of praise and is consciously and strategically placed.

### Letter 1.14 To Junius Mauricus

For our penultimate case study, we shall look to a letter Pliny writes to Junius Mauricus (*Epistulae* 1.14). As Rees has summarised, 1.14 is essentially a letter of recommendation.<sup>434</sup> According to Pliny, Mauricus has asked him to find husband for his niece: *petis ut fratris tui filiae prospiciam maritum; quod merito mihi potissimum iniungis.*<sup>435</sup> Here, he offers his friend and protégé Minicius Acilianus, suggesting that he would be a perfect fit: *qui quidem diu quaerendus fuisset, nisi paratus et quasi provisus esset Minicius Acilianus.*<sup>436</sup> However, while Pliny advocates for his candidate, articulating not only his relationship with Pliny but also his virtues and positive traits, we see within the letter that Pliny further substantiates his selection by detailing information about the character of his family and his household as a whole:

patria est ei Brixia, ex illa nostra Italia quae multum adhuc verecundiae frugalitatis, atque etiam rusticitatis antiquae, retinet ac servat. pater Minicius Macrinus, equestris ordinis princeps, quia nihil altius voluit; adlectus enim a divo Vespasiano inter praetorios honestam quietem huic nostrae – ambitioni dicam an dignitati? – constantissime praetulit. habet aviam maternam Serranam Proculam e municipio Patavio. nosti loci mores: Serrana tamen Patavinis quoque severitatis exemplum est. Contigit et avunculus ei P. Acilius gravitate prudentia fide prope singulari. in summa nihil erit in domo tota, quod non tibi tamquam in tua placeat. (*Epistulae* 1.14.4-7)

His native place is Brixia, one of the towns in our part of Italy which still retains intact much of its honest simplicity along with the rustic virtues of the past. His father is Minicius Macrinus, who chose to remain a leading member of the order of knights because he desired nothing higher; the deified Emperor Vespasian

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<sup>434</sup> Rees 2007: 162.

<sup>435</sup> *Epistulae* 1.14.1.

<sup>436</sup> *Epistulae* 1.14.3.

would have raised him to praetorian rank, but he has always steadfastly preferred a life of honest obscurity to our status – or, shall I say, to our struggles to gain it. His maternal grandmother, Serrana Procula, comes from the town of Patavium, whose reputation you know; but Serrana is a model of propriety even to the Patavians. His uncle, Publius Acilius, is a man of exceptional character, wisdom and integrity. You will in fact find nothing to criticise in the whole household, any more than in your own.

While Rees has suggested that Pliny's choice of *topos* is conventional, conforming to the schema which appears in treatises on epideictic oratory from the Late Republic and Empire, it nevertheless supports the notion expressed at length here, that the character of one's family members reflect consciously on the character of oneself.<sup>437</sup> Given that the primary objective of the letter, at least within the context of a personal correspondence, is to highlight Acilianus' merit for marriage to Mauricius' niece, Pliny clearly uses his father, grandmother and uncle to consolidate the virtuous portrait of Acilianus that he paints.

Interestingly in this we see a pattern begin to emerge, as Pliny once more offers a tricolon of characters as effective yardsticks for evaluating the worth, or value of an individual subject. Like letter 4.19 to Hispulla where Pliny suggests his wife was worthy of her father, her grandfather and Hispulla herself (*dignam patre dignam te dignam avo*) here he offers another three individuals to substantiate Acilianus' character. While the dynamics between each respective party is clearly reversed, the underlying message is essentially the same. Just as Calpurnia's worth was measured against the virtues of her elder family members, the virtues of Acilianus' family members effectively elevate his worth.

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<sup>437</sup> Rees 2007: 162.

Perhaps more important to us here, we see also that Pliny once more uses exemplification as a means of positive praise. When characterising his maternal grandmother, Serrana Procula, he refers to her explicitly as an *exemplum*: *Serrana tamen Patavinis quoque severitatis exemplum est*, and punctuates his statement with an emphatic aside: *quoque Patavinis* – even for the Patavians – i.e. her own people. To suggest that Serrana was an *exemplum*, ‘even’ (*quoque*) amongst her own people, coupled with the rhetorical jibe: *nostri loci mores* (‘you know what people from that place are like’), emphasizes her *severitas* further by virtue of the fact that she was able to exceed her circumstances and rise above their ways.<sup>438</sup>

In letter 1.14 therefore we see a further instance whereby Pliny uses exemplification to fulfil certain socio-political aims. He proclaims that Serrana Procula, Acilianus’ grandmother was an *exemplum* to raise her grandson’s social capital, and corroborate his merit as a candidate for marriage. Once more therefore we see that not every individual exemplified is directed towards Pliny’s broader moral-didactic aims. They are not always posited for emulation, but are involved in social networking, reflecting the character of other connected individuals function by association. In another sense we might also consider how Pliny’s exemplification of Serrana here might engage further in social networking by flattery once more. It seems clear that he knows Serrana personally, offering personal insights and a sense of intimacy in his rhetorical jibe about the Patavians (discussed above). And in presuming that she will read the letter, Pliny’s characterisation as an exemplary woman might function therefore on some level to compliment Serrana herself.

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<sup>438</sup> According to Sherwin-White 1966: 119, the Patavians were stereotypically known for their ‘excessive priggishness’.

As a final point of interest here, while the letter supports these various things, the letter also supports the notion here that his application of exemplary terminology is discriminate and strategic. As we see in his characterisation, while all three individuals are arguably exemplary – with his father, characterised with the superlative *constanissime* and his uncle Acilius characterised as serious, wise, and loyal (*gravitas, prudentia, fides*) – it is only his grandmother, Serrana, that is explicitly an *exemplum*. Such, on my reading might be explained by several factors. First, Pliny’s decision to be selective in his application is perhaps designed to provide a level of *variatio*. To identify all three characters here as *exempla* would not only seem trite but also disingenuous. Second, excessive application here would be counterproductive. It would diminish the impact of his statement if applied to all persons. Still, it is interesting that Pliny chooses to exemplarize Serrana, Acilianus’ female relative here, and not his other male kin. As we have seen him exemplarize other men elsewhere, it perhaps corroborates further the fact that his application is selective.

#### Letter 7.19 To Neratus Priscus

In our final case study, we shall explore a letter that Pliny writes to Neratus Priscus about Fannia. Here I will argue that while the purpose of the letter at the level of a personal correspondence seems intended to inform Priscus of Fannia’s failing health, and express his concerns that she might not survive, as a published epistle written with an eye to its wider reception, it also reveals his intimate relationship with another exemplary individual and allows Pliny to rewrite his own personal history.

In the opening of the letter to Pliny expresses his concern for the health of their mutual friend: *angit me Fanniae valetudo*.<sup>439</sup> According to Pliny, Fannia had contracted an

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<sup>439</sup> *Epistulae* 7.19.1.



illness whilst nursing Junia, one of the Vestal Virgins and a relative of hers, whom she took care of both voluntarily and by order of the pontiffs: *contraxit hanc dum adsidet Iuniae virgini, sponte primum (est enim adfinis), deinde etiam ex auctoritate pontificum.*<sup>440</sup> As he explains however, while Fannia faithfully performed this service, she fell victim to the illness herself, and it now gets worse: *quo munere Fannia dum sedulo fungitur, hoc discrimine implicita est. Insident febres, tussis increscit; summa macies summa defectio.* ('This service Fannia was faithfully performing when she fell a victim to her present illness. Her fever never leaves her, her cough grows worse, and she is painfully thin and weak.')<sup>441</sup> All that remains at this point, is her courage and her spirit, which Pliny determines is worthy of her husband, Helvidius and her father Thrasea: *animus tantum et spiritus viget Helvidio marito, Thrasea patre dignissimus; reliqua labuntur ...* ('There remain only the courage and the spirit worthy of her husband Helvidius and her father Thrasea...')<sup>442</sup> Consequently, Pliny not only worries for Fannia's health, but the world's potential loss. As he proclaims such a woman will not be seen again, with such chastity, integrity, and constancy:

meque non metu tantum, verum etiam dolore conficiunt. doleo enim feminam maximam eripi oculis civitatis, nescio an aliquid simile visuris. quae castitas illi, quae sanctitas, quanta gravitas quanta constantia! (*Epistulae* 7.19.4)

In every other way she is failing, and my anxiety on her behalf is coupled with grief, grief that so great a woman will be lost to the sight of her country when

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<sup>440</sup> *Epistulae* 7.19.1-2. It is curious that Pliny feels the need to explain why Fannia was involved in the next sentence, as if Priscus would not have known: *nam virgines, cum vi morbi atrio Vestae coguntur excedere, matronarum curae custodiaeque mandantur.* ('For when sickness compels the Virgins to leave the hall of Vesta, they are always committed to the care and authority of a married woman.') This seems to me to be included for the benefit of posterity – it establishes in the historical record that Fannia was a married woman.

<sup>441</sup> *Epistulae* 7.19.3.

<sup>442</sup> *Epistulae* 7.19.4.

her like may not be seen again; such are her purity and integrity, her nobility and loyal heart.

From here Pliny justifies his declaration. He recalls that Fannia twice followed her husband into exile, and on the third occasion she was banished herself due to his actions: *bis maritum secuta in exilium est, tertio ipsa propter maritum relegata*. ('Twice she followed her husband into exile, and a third time was banished herself on his account.')

<sup>443</sup> As he explains, when Senecio was on trial for having written a biography of Helvidius, her husband claimed it was at Fannia's request:

nam cum Senecio reus esset quod de vita Helvidi libros composuisset rogatumque se a Fannia in defensione dixisset, quaerente minaciter Mettius Caro, an rogasset respondit: "rogavi"; an commentarios scripturo dedisset: "dedi"; an sciente matre: "nesciente"; postremo nullam vocem cedentem periculo emisit. (*Epistulae* 7.19.5)

For when Senecio was on trial for having written a life of Helvidius, and said in his defence that he had done so at Fannia's request, Mettius Carus then demanded in a threatening tone if this was true. She replied that it was. Had she lent Senecio her husband's diaries? "Yes." Did her mother know of this? "No." Not a word in fact did she utter through fear of danger.

However, while Fannia displayed bravery and self-control in this, by not succumbing to fear and pressure, Pliny also mentions that after the trial she took the books that caused this controversy, with them into exile.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> *Epistulae* 7.19.4.

<sup>444</sup> *Epistulae* 7.19.6.

It is at this point we see that Pliny transforms Fannia into an *exemplum*. First, as he evaluates her actions, Pliny asserts that Fannia displays both friendliness and charm, inspiring respect as well as affection: *eadem quam iucunda quam comis, quam denique (quod paucis datum est) non minus amabilis quam veneranda!* ('At the same time she has such friendliness and charm, the rare gift, in fact, of being able to inspire affection as well as respect.')<sup>445</sup> Then he laments, through rhetorical questioning, whether there will ever be another model to offer to their wives for her courageous actions, for Fannia is not only an example to others amongst her sex, but she is also someone men can learn from:

eritne quam postea uxoribus nostris ostentare possimus? erit a qua viri quoque fortitudinis exempla sumamus, quam sic cernentes audientesque miremur, ut illas quae leguntur? ac mihi domus ipsa nutare, convulsaque sedibus suis ruitura supra videtur, licet adhuc posteros habeat. quantis enim virtutibus quantisque factis adsequentur, ut haec non novissima occiderit? (*Epistulae* 7.19.8-9)

Will there be anyone now whom we can hold up as a model to our wives, from whose courage even our own sex can take example, and whom we can admire as much as the heroines of history while she is still in our midst? To me it seems as though her whole house is shaken to its very foundations and is tottering to its fall, even though she may leave descendants; for how can their deeds and merits be sufficient to assure that the last of her line has not perished in her?

As we see here, Pliny seems explicitly concerned with establishing Fannia as an *exemplum*. Not only does he outline her *dicta et facta* but he evaluates them in accordance with broader social *mores*. While he identifies that she is an *exemplum fortitudinis*, he also amplifies her exemplary potential by exposing other her other virtues. Moreover, Pliny

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<sup>445</sup> *Epistulae* 7.19.7.

compares Fannia with other legendary heroines to elevate her further. In concluding that she is superlative amongst them, he establishes her primacy in the legendary hierarchy of exemplary women. Finally, while he identifies her potential imitators in other wives, Pliny also suggests that she is someone men can learn from. Though while he places no limit to her applicability along gendered lines, he simultaneously suggests that none could ever match her virtuous actions.

Once more then, given Pliny's penchant for exemplars, and his explicit identification in this instance that Fannia is an *exemplum*, it seems that Fannia is once more being offered up as exemplary material, for his audience's socio-ethical education, both as a model for emulation and a standard for evaluation. However, in his bid to establish Fannia as a moral-didactic *exemplum* there is another socio-political dimension that coincides. As scholars have highlighted, and I would also maintain, it participates in the establishment of an equally exemplary portrait for Pliny himself. Not only does it publicise his association with another exemplary individual, but it also helps Pliny to rewrite his own personal history.

As Shelton has highlighted, in the period following Domitian's death in 96 C.E., many men in the senatorial class were eager to explain their actions in the previous regime, and why they acquiesced to the emperor's orders to fulfil atrocious deeds.<sup>446</sup> Consequently, scholars believe that Pliny was seemingly one such individual, that felt guilty for prospering under the emperor Domitian, and with the succession of Trajan and his alternative administration, he desired to play down any sense of complaisance with his predecessor's regime.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Shelton 2012: 16.

<sup>447</sup> See also, Bennett 1997.

Interestingly, as Pliny continues within the letter, we see this revisionist objective in the statements that he makes about that time. First, he announces emphatically that he would be truly devastated if Fannia were to perish, for it would be like losing both a friend and a mother at the same time. Then he recalls how he always supported both Fannia and her mother throughout their life:

utramque colui utramque dilexi: utram magis nescio, nec discerni volebant.  
habuerunt officia mea in secundis, habuerunt in adversis. ego solacium  
relegatarum, ego ultor reversarum; non feci tamen paria atque eo magis hanc  
cupio servari, ut mihi solvendi tempora supersint. in his eram curis, cum  
scriberem ad te; quas si deus aliquis in gaudium verterit, de metu non querar.  
(*Epistulae* 7.19.10-11)

I honoured and loved them both—I cannot say which the more, nor did they wish a distinction to be drawn. My services were at their command alike in prosperity and adversity; I was their comfort in exile and their champion after their return. I could never make them an adequate return, and so I am all the more anxious for Fannia's life to be spared to give me time to pay my debt. These are my troubles at the time of writing to you; but, if one of the gods will turn them to joy, I shall make no complaint about my present fears.

As we see from this letter, this is not only achieved through Pliny's revelation that he was forced to perform certain actions in other publications, but it is also achieved by revealing his intimate association and friendships with these stoic individuals as well. As Pliny asserts in the letter and elsewhere, he had been a good friend to these women and had provide them with assistance, both during the darkest hours of their punishment and afterwards.<sup>448</sup> In claiming that he had not deserted these women, even though it put his own life and

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<sup>448</sup> See for example, *Epistulae* 3.11.3; 3.16 and 9.13.3.

career in peril, Pliny creates a record of his actions that had gone unnoticed and establishes a portrait of himself as a courageous and effective friend who participated in the opposition to Domitian.<sup>449</sup>

While the ostensible purpose is to establish Fannia as an *exemplum*, it also works (in conjunction with other letters) to manipulate his peers' perception of the past and his own actions, retrospectively refashioning a new history for posterity to remember. Pliny's expression of concern about Fannia's failing health are effectively being used as a springboard to reveal intimate and longstanding connections to other individuals in his social network, as well as publicise that he secretly and bravely aided the opposition's cause.<sup>450</sup>

Once more therefore, exemplarity is politicised to fulfil a purpose beyond simply positing an *exemplum*. In this case, it comprises both a didactic and socio-political dimension in constructing both Fannia's *exemplum* and re-constructing Pliny's own public persona. What is most interesting in this, is the fact that Pliny does this not only through individuals who are contemporary, but through women more particularly: through his associations with Fannia and also Arria as well.

## Conclusion

To view Pliny's letters exclusively as a means of publicising his preferred *exempla* overshadows an important socio-political dimension to his exemplification of contemporary individuals that feature. Effectively it prohibits us from viewing Pliny's designation of the term *exemplum*, and his creation of exemplary portraits for certain individuals as a strategy

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<sup>449</sup> Shelton 2012: 16.

<sup>450</sup> Shelton 2012: 16 argues that is further conveyed in the famous letter 3.16 to Cornelius Nepos concerning Arria.

for negotiating relationships through flattery and praise or extending expressions of gratitude by offering exemplification in his published letter as a gift to exchange. Finally, as we have seen on several occasions, exemplification is also present in instances of social networking and elevates Pliny and other's image by proxy at the same time. Not only is it used as a means of reflecting the character of others, but it is used specifically to elevate the social capital of the individual in question when negotiating alliances and establishing connections, and collectively reveals Pliny's own associations with other exemplary individuals as well. In short, while Pliny clearly exemplifies many individuals within the letters, and invites his reader to look for models within these, it is clearly not the case that every individual exemplified is posited as an *exemplum* for his reader's moral edification. Often, we see that it has a more immediate socio-political purpose.

## Chapter 8. Conclusion

Through this examination of the works of Cicero, Ovid, Seneca and Pliny the Younger we have shown that with the exemplification of contemporaries, particularly women, in various literary genres, Roman authors not only use exemplification conventionally for moral and rhetorical purposes, but also as a means of building social networks, establishing authority, manipulating other's behaviour and the perceptions of their wider audience. With Cicero we see that exemplification is used strategically in his personal and political relationships to smooth tensions and flatter individuals, and with Ovid we see that exemplification and the creation of a positive portrait for his wife is consciously deployed for achieving his own socio-political aims. While Ovid is particularly keen to link his own wife to the public *exemplum* of Livia, as well as other legendary heroines from the cultural cannon ostensibly to immortalise her name and secure her perpetual fame, it also engages in the practice of gift exchange, manipulates her behaviour as well as his wider audience's mindset in turn.

With Seneca we see a similar use of exemplification to achieve his socio-political objectives in his *Consolations*. While in many ways, he exemplifies his recipients – Marcia and Helvia respectively – for conventional and expected purposes, his exemplification on these two occasions functions in other, visibly socio-political ways. Whether this be to establish a literary legacy by promoting the novelty of his approach and an illustration of the consolatory process; to present himself positively by highlighting the virtues of himself and his family; or perhaps more simply to maintain his relationships with Marcia and his mother Helvia.

Finally, with Pliny and his letters we see that the socio-political dimensions are even more overt. Despite his invitation to offer homiletic models through his publication for his



audience's edification, it seems quite clear on many occasions that he uses exemplification simultaneously, a means of offering flattery and praise. Moreover, when we consider the purpose of this praise further, particularly in the wider context of both the letters occasion and his decision to publicise them, it seems that Pliny uses exemplification as part of a strategy for maintaining social relations and building social networks.

In short, I hope to have shown that in Roman literature, the tendency to make use of contemporary women within conventional exemplary discourse is part of a wider set of strategies for achieving the author's broader social and political aims. While scholars have sometimes acknowledged that the use of *exempla* within their works service dimensions beyond the moral and rhetorical, I hope to have contributed to our understanding of the discourse further in elucidating these socio-political dimensions.

Finally, while this study has focused upon the exemplification of women within the works of these four male authors, both to address the androcentric bias that still persists in modern scholarship on the *exemplum* in Roman culture, and to better elucidate the socio-political dimensions of the strategic use of exemplification amongst these individuals, one might equally explore this aspect through the exemplification of men. In terms of further work therefore one might expand the scope of future investigations to include further examples of exemplification for socio-political purposes from either sex.

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