

DOCUMENTS OF A CRUMBLING MARRIAGE: THE CASE OF CICERO AND TERENTIA Available in published form in *Phoenix* 50. 3-4 (1996), 208-232

Jo-Marie Claassen, University of Stellenbosch

Why did Cicero divorce his wife after more than thirty years? Is Plutarch right when he implies that she was dishonest and ill-treated her daughter? What was the nature of Roman marriage and family life? Was the Cicero family life ever 'happy', judged by modern standards? Can the resources of modern sociology apply, and will such application lead to an alternative interpretation of the known facts?

INTRODUCTION

Cicero's private life as evidenced in his correspondence cannot be separated from his political life: at times each part seems to work as a sort of counter-irritant to troubles in the other half. While his marriage was still intact, it sometimes seemed to be all that saved the beleaguered consular's sanity. His divorce of Terentia, his wife of over thirty years, and subsequent marriage to his young ward Publilia in late 47 or early 46 B.C. (at a time when Cicero's political career seemed at an impasse) has never been satisfactorily accounted for. Cicero divorced this second wife soon after his daughter Tullia's death in 45, 'because she seemed pleased about it' (Plut. *Cic.* 41.8).¹ This divorce, too, seems odd, at the very least.

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First it will review the usually cited evidence for the disintegration of the marriage of Cicero and Terentia, starting with Plutarch, with a view to reinterpretation of aspects that appear to have been misconstrued by the ancient biographer and followed by moderns. Next the evidence to be found in Cicero's letters relating to the couple's relationship will be examined, with a view to establishing both a 'psychological portrait' of the family in the years immediately preceding the divorce and, if possible, a picture of the disintegration process itself. Finally, modern standard descriptors of marital strain will be applied in an attempt to assess possibly previously unconsidered factors in the Ciceronian marital breakdown.

TRENDS IN INTERPRETATION

Relatively little attention has been paid to Cicero's family life by his modern biographers: understandably, as there is so much material in his public life that merits attention. Cicero's authoritative biographer, Elizabeth Rawson (1979:222) dismisses the matter with 'The rights and

¹ *Att.* 12.32.2 refers to his having 'wanted to be alone for a while' and 'not feeling well enough to see Publilia', who had gone back to her mother. The tone of the latter indicates that he was desperate to get clear of his young wife, for whatever reason.

wrongs of this unhappy business are irrecoverable'. An article written in Polish (Pianko 1973) is not readily accessible to most readers. Early in this century Petersson (1926:206-8) was satisfied to surmise that there was no reason to assume the marriage was unhappy, but pointed out that Terentia's family was nobler than Cicero's, and that she had greater financial resources.² Gelzer (1938) confined himself to dates and facts. Little more is to be had from Cicero's best-known recent biographers: on Mitchell (1991) see below.

Apparently there are few critics who do not read a process of 'crumbling' from the correspondence between Cicero and Terentia. But there is the problem of insufficient source material, even if one also takes into consideration various oblique allusions in letters to Atticus, some of which are open to various interpretation. There is no sign, for instance, of a final decree, similar to the one mentioned casually (in missives to Terentia *Fam.* 14.10 and 13) in connection with Tullia's divorce from her third husband, the Caesarian Dolabella, who apparently ill-treated her. According to Roman custom, such a letter was obligatory. We are, in the case of Cicero and Terentia, in the position of friends of the husband, who hardly know the wife, and tend, typically, to allocate praise or blame according to our interpretation of the husband's interests. Most of these friends are kind, others less so. Jérôme Carcopino not only ascribed the publication of Cicero's correspondence during the first years of the principate to an enemy (Augustus himself, no doubt), but he is extremely critical of the consular's every action, and particularly, of his manipulation of human relationships.³

Most critics are satisfied to note that as the years progressed the tone of allusions to Terentia in Cicero's letters to Atticus changed. Anxiety about money and non-payment recurred with greater frequency. Terentia was referred to as being 'obstructive'. At times she seemed to have become another of the problems that the kind friend had to sort out for the neurotic consular.⁴ Sometimes she featured only as *ea* or *illa*, or her actions were hinted at in other, more oblique ways, usually negatively. In this,

² Commented upon by Fau (1978:10). Her dowry amounted to 400 000 sesterces cash and some property. Cf Gardner (1986:101). Petersson (1920:518) (with Tyrrell) suggests that the two merely 'drifted apart'.

³ Carcopino (1947, transl. to Eng. 1951) discusses the letters pertaining to Terentia and Tullia exhaustively in Chapter III of the first volume of his contentious book, with sections on Cicero's manipulation of the interests of his wife, children and sons-in-law. Carcopino was reading with modern eyes and judgement, and his interpretations sometimes appear willfully erroneous, perhaps even his conclusion that such 'character suicide' could only have been assassination at the hands of an enemy publisher.

⁴ Shackleton Bailey (1965-70), Vol I, Introduction, p.47, speculates on what return Atticus expected for all his 'multifarious offices.'

as in other matters, Atticus appeared as Cicero's only confidant. Yet some of the negative allusions may not necessarily be to Terentia.

The racy details of the apparently startling divorce and remarriage are often extrapolated in works dealing with the status of women in the ancient world, but these can be problematic.⁵ Two articles (Dixon 1984, repr.1986, and Carp 1981) discuss Terentia and Tullia's legal, financial and familial status. Dixon argues for Terentia's suspected dishonesty as the major reason for the divorce. Balsdon (1962:46) is one of the few to give credit to Terentia for tolerating Cicero 'for the egoist that he was'. He ascribes the divorce to Cicero's '[obsession] that she was stealing from him.' Only Fau (1978) ascribes any volition in the matter of their divorce to Terentia herself, considering that Cicero's failure to live up to the promise of his consulate prompted his wife to goad him towards divorce and led her to subsequent remarriages. Fau's theory has not been taken up in any more recent publications. Syme in various writings appears finally to have laid to rest the ancient myth about Terentia's reputed second and third marriages, to the historian Sallust, and subsequently to the formerly Republican-minded Messalla Corvinus, who later joined the cause of Augustus.⁶

PLUTARCH: THE SOURCE OF THE CONFUSION

Cicero's serial biographer, Thomas N. Mitchell, in his second book on Cicero's public life (1991: 273) ascribes the divorce to a 'generally unsympathetic attitude during his stay in Brundisium' and Terentia's 'niggardly treatment of Tullia'. This is a clear reference to Plutarch *Cic.*41.2-6, which is generally interpreted as being based on information left by Cicero's editor Tiro. Judith Hallett, in her otherwise excellent book on Roman fathers and daughters (1984:140) erroneously interprets this 'stay in Brundisium' as a reference to Cicero's return from exile in 57. It actually refers to his return after the defeat of Pompey, nine years later. The confusion may already have been present in Plutarch's mind: hence his allusion to Cicero's daughter as a 'young girl' (*paidiskê*) at the time, hardly an appropriate epithet for the then thirty-odd-year old, thrice-married Tullia⁷.

⁵ Treggiari (1991a:42) points out that we know relatively little about causes and frequency of divorce in the ancient world, and indicates in the preface to 1991b that we have too little to go on in the case of Cicero and Terentia. Corbier (1991:50-1) shows that a false symmetry obtained in attitudes to remarriage by divorced men and divorced women. Dixon (1992) consistently cites the Cicero family to make points about Roman family life, without changing the prevalent picture.

⁶ Syme's first comment (*Sallust* 1964: 284) is quoted by Rowland (1968), who plausibly suggests that the young second wife, Publilia, may have been the serial wife in question, as she almost certainly was the (unnamed) widow who married Vibius Rufus, *cos.suff.* A.D. 16, Dio 57.15.6.

⁷ On Tullia's age, Gardner (1986:38).

Plutarch sets out his explanation clearly: ‘Cicero had been neglected by Terentia, he had been left with no provisions for the journey, she did not come to him when he tarried at Brindisi on his return after Pompey’s defeat, she did send their daughter, but without the appropriate escort or expenses,⁸ she incurred large debts, and stripped and emptied Cicero’s house of everything’.⁹ These Plutarch considers the more ‘respectable’ reasons for the divorce. The others that he quotes are Cicero’s ‘infatuation’ (with his ward Publilia), and worse, a desire to recoup his finances by securing the money he held in trust and which had to be paid over as Publilia’s dowry on her marriage.

Some of Plutarch’s assertions in *Cic.* 41 are verifiably inaccurate: Terentia did not come to Brindisi in November 48 because Cicero told her not to come (*Fam.* 14.12). Tullia arrived there quite safely and happily (*Fam.* 14.11, *Att.* 11.17), and stayed with her father for some time (*Att.* 11.19). Cicero appears to have divorced Terentia long before his decision to remarry, at the instigation of friends. It was some time before he decided on Publilia. The second marriage clearly was an afterthought, and not the cause of the divorce.¹⁰

MONEY

Plutarch’s assertion about monetary differences requires investigation. He seems to take the concept of marriage partners’ equal responsibility for mutual support for granted, as he reports the idea of Terentia’s ‘neglect’ of Cicero without comment.¹¹ It is clear that Terentia, as the more affluent partner (and apparently better manager), always did exert a great deal of influence on her frequently impecunious spouse, even aiding him beyond what Roman custom expected of an affluent wife.¹² Cicero liked wealth and the properties money could buy him. He delighted in Terentia’s farm, which

⁸ Dixon (1988: 221) reads into *Att.* 11.2.2 and 11.16.5 an implication that Tullia was being treated badly by her mother, but Cicero’s words in the first letter lay blame on himself (*mea culpa*) and in the second are not at all explicit. From *Att.* 11.17, written two months later, on Tullia’s return to her mother, one must deduce a good relationship, also implicit in discussion by Dixon (1988: 210).

⁹ Information generally imputed to Tiro, but patently erroneous, Dixon (1988:231, n. 40). Gardner (1986: 89) comments that ‘[it] sounds like the gleanings of gossip among their social circle.’

¹⁰ *Att.* 12.11 is frank about the appearance of another proposed candidate: *Nihil vidi foedius*.

¹¹ It is clear that Terentia was expected to help to provide for their son as well, Dixon (1988: 69, n. 21) on *Att.* 15.20.4.

¹² Dixon (1984=1986:105) quotes Terentia’s monetary independence to illustrate the ‘strictly compartmentalized view of family obligation and matrimonial property [as] very different from our own.’

became 'his' by virtue of her dowry.¹³ Tenure and security of property ownership were all-important to him.¹⁴ But the usual interpretation of early financial clashes between the two does not quite hold water when references given by those of Cicero's standard biographers who follow Plutarch's lead, are examined. After Cicero's return from exile in 57, he did, twice, guardedly refer to troubles he did not like to mention more explicitly (*Att.*4.1.8, 4.2.7). But these could have been anything, even matters from the couple's conjugal couch, not necessarily financial. After his return Cicero was patently short of resources, as he admitted in *Att.*4.3.6, but the 'domestic troubles' hinted at in the previous two letters may have been something else entirely. He did not say.

Mitchell (1991:160, n.54) interprets an allusion in *Fam.* 14.1.5 (November 58) to Terentia's selling some property during her straitened circumstances as the wife of a *relegatus* as the reason for Cicero's hints of trouble in these three letters, but the letter to Terentia merely mildly expostulated that if she sold her land to help him, there would be nothing left for the children. Cicero was fearful for the future fortunes of little Marcus, for whom his mother was clearly expected to provide. A previous letter had expressed husbandly contrition at his part in Terentia's problems, and concern that she should perhaps lose her all for his sake (*Fam.*14.4.3, April 58). We should remember that interdiction from fire and water technically dissolved their marriage. If Cicero's property were to be confiscated, Terentia's dowry, normally due to her in the event of the dissolution of the marriage, could not be repaid. It was therefore important that she retain whatever she had. Suspicion that she would be robbing her son of his just inheritance cannot be read from this exchange. The property seems after all to have remained secure. When, during the dark days after Tullia's death, Cicero advised Atticus to pay his son's expenses from rents¹⁵ he may have been referring to income from this property.

In all, both Cicero and Terentia in Plut. *Cic.*41 appear as victims of a bad press. Terentia comes out slightly better than her husband with regard to mutual support. That she enjoyed politics is clear from her ready participation in her husband's public duties during his consulate. Plutarch quotes Cicero's own words, in connection with the punishment of the Catilinarians, 'she was not a mild sort, nor without daring in her nature generally, but an ambitious woman and ... she took a greater share of his

¹³ See Corbett (1930:202) on the husband's usufruct of dotal property, Claassen (1992) on his efforts to regain his property after exile. Cf. Strasburger (1931:61).

¹⁴ It is perhaps significant that Cicero's *Hortensius* (written in the winter of 46-45, apparently during the time that he was undergoing divorce and remarriage) of which some hundred fragments survive, seems to have started with a discussion of the meaning of wealth. Cf. Straume-Zimmermann (1976:231), and MacKendrick (1989:106), on Cicero's realization that deification of Tullia could work as a tax-hedge.

political worries from him than she gave him of her household worries' (*Cic.* 20.3, transl. Moles). In similar vein, Plutarch ascribes Cicero's animosity to Clodius after the Bona Dea scandal to Terentia's jealousy about a relationship that she suspected between her husband and Clodia (*Cic.* 29.2).

TOWARDS A NEW INTERPRETATION

Terentia never was the idealized, virtually invisible, 'good' Roman wife, a self-effacing *prolifera* and *lanigera*. Even on the evidence of Plutarch, she appears to have been a capable and formidable woman. Cicero trusted her judgement, and many of the extant letters refer to business arrangements made by her.¹⁶ She was clearly not as shrewish as the unfortunate Quintus Cicero's Pomponia. The brothers-in-law on each side, Marcus Cicero and Pomponius Atticus, appear to have been called in frequently to smooth things over between the warring spouses. In the oft-commented *Att* 5.1.3-4, May 50, Cicero details one such scene of marital strife, and appears shocked enough to indicate that he was unused to similar wrangling within his own household¹⁷. Yet it is Terentia and Marcus' marriage that failed first, and the intriguing question remains why this should have happened?

If at least some of Plutarch's premises are inadequate, what other resources do we have? The last ten years have seen a veritable explosion in women's studies, including comparative studies of marriage customs, and the legal status of women in the ancient world. Certain critics' names frequently recur. To quote each work in the context of the Cicero-Terentia divorce would be redundant. If these critics are relying on Plutarch, or if they are interpreting the correspondence in the light of his assertions, there may be a need for reinterpretation, perhaps by recourse to general family studies. Modern sociological observations about the causes of marital fissure are, however, not wholly appropriate, as the very nature of Roman marriage, and, consequently, of divorce, was so vastly different from the modern.¹⁸ The system of family financing worked differently, and, consequently, the laws and customs regulating ownership and inheritance are scarcely comparable. In Rome continuance of marriage depended not on

¹⁵ *Att.* 12.32. See Evans (1991:108), Dixon (1984=1986).

¹⁶ Plut. *Cic.*20. Cf. Evans (1991: 84-5), and Petersson (1920:277). Dixon (1984=1986) uses the letters as a case study to show the degree of financial independence obtaining between spouses in Roman marriage *sine manu*.

¹⁷ Cf. Hallett (1984:230). Earlier letters (notably *Att.* 1.6 and 1.8) portray Marcus Cicero as anxious that Quintus should do right by the sister (and mother) of his friend.

¹⁸ Dixon (1992:1-35) traces the debate, but argues for greater similarities of affect than are sometimes acknowledged. Cf. Treggiari (1991a:41-6).

cohabitation, but on *affectio maritalis*.¹⁹ This should not be read as ‘conjugal affection’ but as ‘the mental attitude’ or ‘determination - to be married’.

We may nevertheless search for common ground in the sphere of affect. Both Treggiari (1991b:229-253) and Dixon (1992: 83-90, 1991) argue for the prevalence of what are often considered to be ‘modern’ concepts such as affection and the sentimental view of the family in the Roman world. There is enough ancient evidence for such sentiment, even in Cicero’s own letters.²⁰ A man who so unashamedly laid bare his all-too-human egoism to a somewhat disapproving posterity, not keeping back the most abject of his laments during exile,²¹ may be construed as being equally honest in his emotion, or lack of emotion, in his dealings with his wife. If family joys and sorrows affected Cicero as father and husband, we may be sure to find them reflected in his letters. It is therefore not unjustified to try to interpret the Ciceronian family life in terms of modern criteria for ‘family happiness’.²²

In the early years, and, in fact, until nearly the end of their marriage, contrary to most interpretations, there are clear signs of both affection and the required ‘determination to remain married’.²³ To illustrate this, we can turn to the letters for evidence of many crises successfully weathered, but also to search for possible changes in attitude over time.

THE LETTERS AS SOURCE

On absolute count, the stem ‘Terentia-’ appears some 92 times in Cicero’s *corpus*²⁴, of which seven are adjectival, and irrelevant here.²⁵ Twenty-four letters in book 14 of the letters to friends and family are addressed to Terentia, ranging in date from the time of Cicero’s exile down to 47 BC, when Cicero

¹⁹ D. 24.1.32.13 (Ulpian), also termed *animi destinatio*, D. 25.7.4 (Paul).

²⁰ E.g. Lucretius *De Rer. Nat.* 3.894-6, Catullus 61, *passim*, Pliny’s letters to and about his wife, *Epist.* 4.1, 4.19, 6.4 6.7; 7.5, 8.10, 8.11, 10.120-1, Musonius Rufus *Fragm.* 13A, beside all the evidence adduced by Dixon, and also Treggiari (1991b:257-9). Manson (1983:153) refers to the increase of use of words of affect from Cicero onwards. Hallett’s (1984:230) argument that Roman men did not expect much emotional support from their wives is based partly on her erroneous reading of Plutarch as denoting a lapse of nine years before Cicero reacted to Terentia’s ‘neglect’ - at best a circular argument.

²¹ See Claassen (1992:26-31), also Treggiari (1991b:253-5) on obvious affection in the letters to his wife.

²² Cf. Bradley (1991:84).

²³ Cf Treggiari (1991a:33). She suggests in 1991b:120 that the divorce followed ‘loss of harmony’ which the couple at first dealt with by avoiding each other.

²⁴ Read from: Packard Humanities Institute 1991: PHI CD ROM #5.3. *Latin texts: Bible versions*. Los Altos, Ca.

was cowering at Brundisium, in the aftermath of Pharsalus. These are very few letters in all. We have none of hers. We might argue that husband and wife were so seldom apart that no more were written by him and that hers had been lost. We know that she wrote often. Many of his letters are replies or acknowledgements. We know that they were often physically apart: during his exile, during his time in Cilicia, during the period of opposition to Caesar.

Emotionally Cicero and Terentia appear to have been closest during his exile: the first four letters of Book 14 attest to that. As critics repeatedly rediscover and often hold against him, Cicero the man could handle adversity far less ably than could Cicero the philosopher, and the letters of the time reflect his misery. But these could not have been all the letters addressed to his wife during eighteen months of exile. So, many must have been lost, perhaps suppressed, either as being unimportant, or, dubiously, as being too personal.²⁶

In Cicero's private correspondence with Atticus, his wife's name crops up quite frequently, forty-four times in all, in forty different letters, the first a charming announcement of the birth of a little boy, *Terentia salva* (*Att.*1.2.1). Often the husband used some form of third person allusion. *Ea* (or, in the oblique cases, gender-indeterminate *eius* and *ei*), as well as the third person singular endings of verbs, sometimes clearly alluded to Terentia, but sometimes seemed ambiguous. In the whole of the collection of Cicero's letters to and from family and friends, Terentia was referred to by name in letters to another only twice (*Fam.* 5.6, 16.11), in the context of greetings from Cicero's family, including his wife, to Tiro, both during the beloved freedman's illness. There is one other allusion to her in the collection. In *Fam.* 9.9 Tullia's third husband Dolabella comments in May 48 on a report of the illness of his mother-in-law, before launching into political persuasion, perhaps on Caesar's instructions.²⁷

A close attention to those of the letters to Atticus which span the same time as the letters to Terentia may reveal a pattern of conjugal relationship slightly different from the pattern discernible in the scraps of one-sided communication between the spouses that we have. Exactly half these letters had a wholly positive tone in referring to his wife: many were no more than a wife's friendly greetings relayed by a fond husband to a valued friend.²⁸ Friendly communication between the members of the Ciceronian

²⁵ Two refer to the Lex Terentia (both in *Against Verres*), and four are adjectives from Terentius Afer.

²⁶ It is impossible to ascertain whether this was fortuitous or conscious suppression by an authorized editor, Cicero's freedman, Tiro. See Bradley (1991:88) on the closeness of the relationship.

²⁷ So Shackleton Bailey, comm. *ad loc.* This was at a time when the parents were already worried about their daughters' treatment at the hands of the writer.

²⁸ Greetings: *Att.*2.7.5, 2.9.4, 2.12.4, 2.15.4. Thanks: *Att.*3.5.1, 3.8.4, 3.9.4.

‘nuclear family’ speaks very clearly from Cicero’s letters in the early years.²⁹ Little Marcus, the apple of his father’s eye, sent all kinds of playful greetings to ‘Atticus the Athenian’ in Greek.³⁰ In the years 58-57, during Cicero’s exile, Terentia and the children were much in his thoughts, as the objects of fatherly and conjugal concern, his brother Quintus even more so.³¹ Yet it would be reading more into the letters than is warranted to give a negative interpretation to the fact that Cicero only once, during his exile, exhorted his brother to take care of Terentia (*Q.fr.* 1.3.10).

THE TONE OF THE LETTERS TO TERENTIA

Terentia’s name of course occurs in the *Salutatio* of each of the letters addressed to her. We have four long, virtual ‘love’ letters from the exilic era, chronologically earliest in the extant *corpus* (*Fam.* 14.1 - 4, April to November 58), addressed to the family, but really aimed at Terentia alone. At least once again in each of the four exilic letters her name was repeated with the addition of further terms of endearment. The conventions of Roman epistolography were scrupulously followed in these long letters, but even the shortest notes of later years carried some abbreviation of the standard formal greeting.³² I have treated of the ‘romantic’ aspects of the exilic letters extensively elsewhere (Claassen 1992). Of importance here is a practical matter. At the time of his exile, as so often, Terentia acted as Cicero’s agent, managing his affairs in Rome. He wrote to remind her that their slaves should be considered manumitted, in the event of a final crash and consequent confiscations. The slaves would remain their property if all went well (*Fam.* 14.4.4).

During Cicero’s tour of duty in Cilicia, the matter of Tullia’s third marriage (to Dolabella) was apparently decided independently by the two women, to the slight discomfort of the *paterfamilias*, who was in the process of negotiation about another candidate. He gave way with good grace, however, and the parents’ relationship remained sound.³³ A letter giving details of his journey home, and thanking his wife for letters detailing some practical arrangements, also ended on a loving *mea suavissima et optatissima Terentia et Tulliola* (*Fam.* 14.5.2, October 50).

²⁹ *Att.* 1.18.1, quoted by Dixon (1992:29) referred to time spent with wife and children as Cicero’s only pleasure when his brother and Atticus were away.

³⁰ *Att.* 2.9.4, 2.12.4, 2.15.4.

³¹ See Claassen (1992) for references. Bradley in Rawson (1991:94-5) suggests that during his exile Cicero appeared to show more concern for Quintus than for his nuclear family.

³² On epistolographic conventions see Cotton (1984), Lanham (1975), Plasberg (1926), Peter (1901).

³³ *Fam.* 3.12.2, *Att.* 6.6.1. Cf. Dixon (1992: 50).

Two letters to Atticus from January of the year 49 reveal the same easy communication that had characterized the marriage to date. Playful punning by Atticus (*Att.*7.13) on the names of the financiers or bankers, the Oppii, Atticus' neighbours on the Quirinal, had taken some interpretation. When Cicero at last understood the joke, he told his friend that the explanation agreed with Terentia's interpretation (*Att.*7.13a.1). It is clear that the spouses had discussed this trivial matter in the course of normal, friendly conversation.

In February 49, the letters written to his family on two consecutive days still contained endearments, of which the second was directed in equal measure to wife and daughter, *duabus animis suis*, (*Fam.*14.14). It would be an idle quibble to note that the first (*Fam.*14.18) called only Tullia 'sweet'. Now followed the time of political turmoil after Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon. As the years went on, the letters to Terentia became briefer and briefer, degenerating to mere notes, their contents more formal, and their tone perhaps more cool, but it is difficult to read animosity into them. Critics ascribe such brevity to cooling relations, but secure conjugal affection can take short note-writing. Politics and family concerns may have dictated their brevity. In *Fam.*14.16 the husband explained that he wrote whenever a messenger was available, whether he had any news or not. In many letters the frequent formulaic abbreviation for the already formulaic *Si tu vales, ego quoque valeo*, (in order: *Fam.* 14.17, 16, 21, 24 and 22), may appear abrupt, but can be read in the context of hasty but comfortable intercourse of a relaxed kind, with affection taken for granted. It should be noted that most of the letters to Atticus written at this time (late 49 to mid 47) were not much longer, and were equally guarded in tone. During Cicero's exile in 58 the first despairing notes written to Atticus after he fled Rome had been equally brief. A similar despair may be read here.

There may, however, be another reason for brevity in the notes to his wife: emotional strain occasioned by their daughter Tullia's changing fortunes and indifferent health. More than a year separated two letters. The first and longer letter, from June 49, was optimistic and 'public' in the sense that politics fill the consular's horizon. Cicero sometimes appeared extremely irresponsible in his treatment of his family in the first heady days of Republican resistance. He had wavered about joining Pompey, but eventually not even the tears of Terentia and Tullia could prevail on him to stay. In his first letter home, written on board ship at Caieta, he sounded buoyant, like a schoolboy leaving everything behind to go on holiday. His depression had passed after a bilious attack: *Cholên akraton noctu eieci*, he wrote (*Fam.*14.7).³⁴ He did not really address his family's fears, but ascribed to the bilious attack his

³⁴ Perhaps migraine, brought on after relief from the tensions of agonized decision-making?

apparently previous ill humour (verging perhaps on the neurotic), for which he now was suitably apologetic.

The expedition was calamitous, and by the end of the year Cicero was languishing at Brindisi, awaiting Caesar's pardon before he could return to Rome. He was joined there by his daughter. The second note (*Fam.* 14.6, July 48) reflected a profound change both in Cicero's political fortunes and in Tullia's domestic situation. It was filled with concern for Tullia, and noted the father's gratitude for the mother's efforts on her behalf.³⁵ Here the shortness of the salutation seems to denote haste.³⁶ Shackleton Bailey *ad loc.* comments on the 'uncordiality' of this letter to Terentia, written at the same time as *Att.* 11.4, which is, however, equally curt. The political situation of the time, and Cicero's growing disillusion with Pompey, as well as anxiety about the next instalment of Tullia's dowry due to Dolabella, could have been the common factors prompting the abrupt tone of both letters, which appear deliberately cryptic about both politics and personal matters. The next note to Terentia (*Fam.* 14.12, November 4, 48) guardedly referred to the writer's unhappiness at 'injuries done him by his family' (probably the defection of his brother Quintus to the Caesarian cause).

The ending of Cicero and Terentia's marriage cannot really be considered separately from both parents' concern over Tullia's far more obvious marital break-up. Both parents had for some time been increasingly worried about their daughter's poor health, as Cicero noted in *Fam.* 14.19 (November 27, 48). By July 47 Tullia's unhappy marriage had totally broken down. The recalcitrant son-in-law was also a valued member of Caesar's coterie, whom the beleaguered parents could not really afford to antagonize.³⁷ Some of his carefulness of expression and ambiguity of reference in letters to Atticus during 49 and 48 were explained by Cicero as due to fear of interception (*Att.* 10.18, May 49, and 11.2, March 48). A similar situation, relating more directly to Dolabella and Tullia, and consequently only obliquely to Caesar, may have continued to obtain, prompting the somewhat cryptic style of some the letters.³⁸

³⁵ Terentia had apparently tried to sell some of her property to pay the next instalment. Dixon (1984=1986:104) shows that application to a mother was unusual in Roman context, and considers the thanks very formal, as if to a family friend.

³⁶ Considered by Shackleton Bailey *Comm. ad loc.* to be genuine. For a negative view of the letter, see Dixon (1984=1986:104).

³⁷ Although extremely dubious about Dolabella and considering undertaking divorce proceedings on Tullia's behalf, Cicero paid up the second instalment of her dowry in 48, *Att.* 11.2, 11.25.

³⁸ E.g. *Fam.* 14.10 and *Fam.* 14.13.

At this time Cicero did not take Terentia into his full confidence on other family matters either. Plans were made for young Marcus to go to Caesar. These were somewhat high-handedly announced (in the first person plural) and then cancelled (*Fam.*14.11 and 15, both June 47). This may be ascribed to the usual authority wielded by a Roman *paterfamilias*, but we have seen the Cicero family as different, and have noted Terentia's earlier authority.³⁹ Circumspection could have served to shield Terentia's fortune in the event of a financial disaster, as ignorance of her husband's plans would have given her a certain protection from accusations of complicity. Cicero did not give her much in the way of political news either. Political developments, including Caesar's pardon, were briefly reported (*Fam.*14.23 and 24), but the burden of each letter is concern about Tullia's affairs.

THE ROLE OF PHILOTIMUS

So, while Cicero was waiting for Caesar's permission to return to Rome, after Pompey's defeat, Terentia was treated as a trusted support in financial matters. She in her turn entrusted the practical running of her affairs to a freedman steward, one Philotimus.⁴⁰ A letter from January 48 B.C. (*Att.* 11.1) is taken by some to indicate severe criticism of Terentia.⁴¹ Cicero referred to himself as *credens ei, cui scis iam pridem me nimium credere ...* The pronoun *ei*, being in the dative case, unfortunately gives no indication of gender. Yet earlier in the letter he had been complaining about *qui eas* (his affairs) *dispensavit*, where the masculine relative is usually taken to refer to Philotimus, who had apparently gone missing. His name is inserted in Winstedt's translation. Shackleton Bailey, *Comm. ad loc.* more carefully suggests 'perhaps Philotimus', but does not negate the interpretation of Corradus, whom he quotes as thinking that Terentia was meant, explaining that '*ei*' suited her better than Philotimus, 'of whose dishonesty Cicero had convinced himself two and a half years before.' This is of course true. *Att.*6.5.1 of June 50 B.C. had contained a request, carefully phrased in Greek, that Atticus go into the possibility that the freedman could have been lining his pockets from Milo's estate. Shackleton Bailey *ad loc.* therefore discounts the present allusion as also referring to Philotimus. I cannot see why.⁴² On at least one other occasion, Cicero had uttered doubts about Philotimus. For example, at *Att.*7.1.9.6, March 49, he coined the first of his sarcastic nicknames for Philotimus, calling

³⁹ See Hallett (1984:29-30) n. 46 on the debate on real and apparent power of Roman women as it relates to Terentia, also p.68, esp. n.8.

⁴⁰ To be distinguished from Cicero's own librarian, also Philotimus (*Att.* 10.7.2, 13.33.1).

⁴¹ Assumed to indicate Cicero's uncovering of 'Terentia's dishonest interference in his affairs' by Dixon (1984=1986: 103).

him a *'merus phuratês, germanus Lartidius'*, with the implication that he was sly and underhand.⁴³ His opinion did not improve over time. In July or August 46, long after the fateful split with his brother and nephew, the two Quinti, Cicero waxed sarcastic about young Quintus and Philotimus both being enrolled among the enlarged college of Luperci (*Att.*12.5). This would imply a vacillation in political allegiance in Philotimus, who would have (along with the Quinti), at least temporarily, joined Caesar's camp, and had later again changed sides. At *Att.*12.44.3, May 45, a contemptuous *'Favoniaster'* (a bad copy of Favonius) suggests that Philotimus' ardent republicanism is upstart pretension.

Cicero's letters of January to June 48 (*Att.* 11.1 to 4a) all touched on Tullia's dowry and the payment of the second instalment. There were also hints that Tullia was unhappy, and that a divorce might be imminent. Some money seemed to have gone missing and Philotimus was not to be found.⁴⁴

Shackleton Bailey argues for Terentia's complicity, on the strength of Cicero's use of the word *iniuriis* (11.2.8) as '[too] strong' to refer to Philotimus. He interprets a letter to Terentia (*Fam.*14.6), roughly contemporaneous with *Att.*11.4, as 'cool', but we have seen above that the letter expressed gratitude for the mother's care of their daughter. Its brevity may be ascribed to political circumspection. Dolabella, the one person who had clearly inflicted injury on the family through his treatment of Tullia, was a Caesarian that still was to be conciliated.

In June 47, a year later, the question of Terentia's will was first mooted. Cicero wanted Terentia to finalize her will, for the sake of 'those to whom she owes it' (*ut satis faciat quibus debeat, Att.* 11.16.5), that is, presumably, her children, not himself. A Roman woman who was *sui iuris* had control of her own money, but the Roman law of intestacy did not apply to women: their offspring were not considered their natural heirs. A will had to be made.⁴⁵ The interests of young Marcus and the unfortunate Tullia needed safeguarding in an official document. Here critics pounce on one of the only truly negative comments about Terentia until long after the divorce. Philotimus was once more involved. Cicero sounded dubious about Terentia's good intentions, and referred to so-called 'devious

⁴² It could by no means have been an oblique allusion to Quintus, whose defection became known a full year later.

⁴³ Quint. *Inst. Or.* 6.3.96: *ut Cicero in Lartium, hominem callidum et versutum.* Cf. Shackleton Bailey, *Comm.* at *Att.* 9.7.6: 'Cicero believed P. to be a swindler'.

⁴⁴ Dixon (1984=1986:103-7) thoroughly discusses the implications of both Cicero's implicit suspicions and the financial arrangements involved. While inferring that it was Cicero's agent who had gone missing, she considers it is 'highly probable' that he suspected Terentia. See Shackleton Bailey (1965-70), Vol I, Introduction, p.46.

⁴⁵ Ulpian D.50.16.195.5. Cf. Dixon (1992:49 and nn. 50 and 51), Corbier in Rawson (1991:52-3), Thomas (1992: 99).

machinations' *scelerate quaedam facere*, giving no direct proof of such, but discussing a report by Philotimus, which he questioned.⁴⁶

There were other, later allusions to Terentia herself in the letters to Atticus which continued to attest to a warm relationship. On July 5, 47 Cicero asked Atticus to sell what he could, in order to raise cash (*Att.* 11.25.3), perhaps also intending to safeguard Terentia's money from the depredation following a possible political and financial crash, as in the matter of the manumission of slaves in 58. His suggestion that Atticus go over the proposed sale with Terentia gives an indication of his continued trust in her judgement, and his acknowledgement of her right to participate in decision-making about a matter of common concern.

Family matters predominated in the correspondence between the spouses at this time. Tullia was in poor health, and her divorce had to be arranged. Money matters, when discussed, related to the arrangements for the return of Tullia's dowry.⁴⁷ A note to Terentia written on July 9, 47 (*Fam.* 14.10) showed no breath of suspicion, and did not refer to the will. Cicero's assertion that Pomponius (Atticus) 'knew what he wanted and would discuss it with her' related to a divorce notice from Tullia to be served on Dolabella, as he made clear in a note penned on the next day (July 10, *Fam.* 14.13). No word was uttered about peculation.

Cicero continued to voice suspicions of the steward, who was clearly difficult to pin down. In late July 47 Cicero was awaiting Philotimus' arrival on the Ides of August (*Att.* 11.19), clearly in connection with the will, but on August 6, even before the steward's projected arrival, he complained that Philotimus was attending to his own affairs, presumably in stead of those of his mistress (*Att.* 11.24). This letter adumbrates later conjugal suspicion in a complaint about peculation of a small amount on the part of Terentia, but hinting at worse, the most direct piece of evidence of deteriorating relations. Here Cicero expressed the fear that he would have nothing to give to Tullia, and admitted to mistrusting his wife. In the context of the role that Philotimus would have played as steward in the physical despatching of money, one may query whether the shortfall of money Cicero complained about to Atticus should not perhaps have been laid at his door? He seems to have been very high-handed in his treatment of the

⁴⁶ Dixon (1988: 230 and n. 24) quotes Crook as suggesting that Terentia may have been slow in paying up the next instalment of Tullia's dowry, which she had pledged to do.

⁴⁷ Cicero had agonized over whether to disburse the third instalment, but did so and then later had problems getting it back. *Att.* 12.5c (June 46) reports Tiro's success in getting a promise of return from Dolabella. A detailed discussion of the political and personal ramifications of this divorce would entail a separate paper.

husband of his *patrona*. Could it be that Philotimus was a mischief-maker who drove a wedge between the spouses for his own nefarious purposes?⁴⁸

TERENTIA'S WILL

At the last, when concern for Tullia was racking Cicero's consciousness more than concern for the state, the matter of Terentia's will cropped up frequently. Cicero's chief complaint was that the will had not been finalized. This is often interpreted as a sign that Cicero feared that their mother would do badly by the children. It may merely indicate concern about the uncertain political position of both parents. Six months earlier, in the context of his daughter's miseries, Cicero had expressed the fear that Terentia was in as much danger of losing her property as he was himself, and that Tullia would consequently lose all means of support.⁴⁹ Shackleton Bailey Comm. *ad loc.* *Att.* 11.16.5 (June 47), ascribes Cicero's concern to a desire to forestall the threat of confiscation that hung over him.

There need not necessarily have been bad blood between the marriage partners. Roman divorce among the elite was frequently prompted by financial considerations. Securing some remnants of their fortune could perhaps have been more easily achieved if the parents were divorced, if Terentia were given back her dowry, and if she then willed it to their children. This tentative explanation cannot, however, be construed into fact from the text of *Att.* 11.16.⁵⁰ Yet it is tempting to carry the speculation even further. Perhaps Cicero originally had no intention of remarrying. The early history of the divorce shows little friction, none appears in the letters to Terentia. Petersson (1920:518) one of Cicero's more sensible biographers, has pointed out that the divorce was 'less harrowing' than the quarrel Marcus Cicero had with his brother Quintus, who had redirected his loyalty to Caesar, even making scurrilous attacks on his brother in letters to common friends.⁵¹ To this heartache Marcus Cicero was to return again and again.

⁴⁸ Fau (1978:10) suggests that the balance of power between the spouses was such that Cicero had to accept the detestable Philotimus.

⁴⁹ *Att.* 11.9.3, January 47. The major concern of this letter was the defection to the cause of Caesar by Cicero's brother Quintus.

⁵⁰ Cf. the arrangements Cicero mooted to secure Terentia's dotal slaves from confiscation during his exile, *Fam.* 14.4. See Dixon 1992: 184 n.3.

⁵¹ Atticus, as Quintus' brother-in-law, was in a position to help. *Att.* 11.9.2 indicates that these friends reported back to Marcus, who apparently had access to other letters, which he then opened and read. He was eager to suppress them, as reflecting badly on Quintus. He sent the packet to Atticus, who was to forward it to his sister to seal and give to her husband.

In sum, Cicero's letters to Atticus about the matter of Terentia's will coincided with the time of Tullia's divorce, and also with the last notes to Terentia. All but the last of these show no great change of attitude.⁵² Strangest is the fact that Cicero never dealt directly with the topic of her will, which was clearly in his mind, in these notes to Terentia. Again there may be reasonable explanations: loss of more important letters, which had been filed separately, or fear of interception. Dolabella's attitude to Tullia might have made it dangerous for the spouses to correspond directly on a matter aimed at rescuing Terentia's money from their common budget. Tullia's dowry would have been returned to her father, but at least part of this had then to go to her mother, who had provided the funds in the first place.

VALETUDO IN THE LAST LETTERS

Except for Cicero's somewhat formal use of the plural when referring to himself in some of the letters of the time,⁵³ there are almost no signs of conjugal strain in the extant correspondence between Cicero and Terentia. Every letter ended with scrupulous, almost formulaic injunctions that Terentia should take care of her health. Even in the context of normal epistolographic practice, this is no mere formality: Terentia suffered from severe rheumatism, and appears often to have been laid up. The first of the letters to Atticus (*Att.* 1.5.8, May 68) reported a bad spell. Loving messages in the early letters to Terentia referred to her rheumatic condition, but so did the next to last, written on the first of September 47, in the dying days of the marriage, if not shortly before the formal divorce (*Fam.* 14.22). This note reported that Cicero was expecting *tabellarios nostros*, and indicated that he would let her know immediately what he planned to do. The note is cryptic: the expected letters may have referred to Tullia's business, or may have related to a potential reconciliation with Caesar. That the allusion indicates divorce between the partners cannot be read here.

The last letter to Terentia (*Att.* 14.20) followed a month later, written on October 1, 47. It appears abrupt and peremptory, with no affectionate additions. In unconscious 'ring composition' the word *valetudinem* occurred in its usual place toward the end of the note, but this time it was a command that she should make sure that all comforts be prepared for the writer and his guests. There were, significantly, no expressions of joy at the possibility of seeing her, mere commands, as if to a flunky. As far as correspondence with Terentia is concerned, the rest is silence.

⁵² The first is *Att.* 11.16.5, June 47, followed in order by (*Att.* 11) 25.3; 23.1, 3; 24.2; 21.1; 22.2, July 47 to 1 September 47. See Shackleton Bailey *ad loc.* 11.16.

⁵³ Shackleton Bailey Comm. *ad loc.* *Fam.* 14.11. The 'we' could have been inclusive, referring to a joint decision by the spouses, or could have meant 'Cicero and Atticus'.

POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF QUINTUS CICERO'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS BROTHER

Again we may ascribe this curtness to mere haste, but the note did differ in format and tone quite considerably from even the briefest of earlier missives. The question is, what had occurred in the intervening month to prompt such a discernible increase of coldness in conjugal relations? We need to turn to the correspondence with Atticus once more, picking up the story a little earlier. On August 25, 47, Cicero reported, very pleased, that Terentia had promised money, just as he had suggested, but now, almost nine months since he first heard of it, he was again bowed down with woe at Quintus' political and personal defection (*Att.* 11.21). Cicero's happiness throughout his life had partly stemmed from his relationship with his brother. Now Quintus had not only joined Caesar, but had maligned his brother to friends (first reported in *Att.* 11.9.3, 3 January 47).

We have seen Marcus Cicero in despair before: during his exile, and again when he was agonizing about which side to support in Caesar's standoff with Pompey. Here we may be justified in postulating a period of increasing depression, brought on, not by his wife's non-cooperation (for she appeared very cooperative) nor by Tullia's miseries (for the divorce appeared at this time to be in hand) nor by politics (for Caesar had pardoned his hapless opponent) but by the breakdown of relations with a beloved brother, which had occurred almost a year before, but the memory of which had returned to haunt Cicero. His heart yearned over his brother.

This topic features again in the next letter, a week later, which conveys an impression of Cicero's determination to steel himself against all feeling, either negative or positive: '[whether Quintus is harmed by or cleared of blame for his treatment of his me] *mihī molestum non est*' (*Att.* 11.22). Cicero took long to recover from his brother's treachery. Treggiari (1991a:40) comments that, after the last letter to Terentia (October 1, 47), letters to Atticus reflect a greater and greater deterioration in the relationship between the spouses, but there is an hiatus in the correspondence with Atticus from 1 September 47 (*Att.* 11.22, a week after the revival of Cicero's memory about Quintus' treachery, and a month before the last note to Terentia) to April 46 (*Att.* 12.5). About the actual divorce, which presumably occurred in this period, we have no direct information, and its date cannot be ascertained.

In July 46 came a letter scoffing about the fact that the younger Quintus and the freedman Philotimus had both been enrolled among the Luperci (*Att.* 12.5). Cicero had reason to feel wronged by both these parties. The tone of this letter was ironic but cheerful: the patient had recovered, but bitter scars remained.

MONEY MATTERS AGAIN

So the consular couple split up, and money matters continued to obtrude, not so much as a cause, nor as a symptom, of the breakdown, but as its result. Cicero married his ward, thereby gaining control of her fortune, so Plutarch. The next letters to Atticus which referred to Terentia were all from 45, after the divorce and death of Tullia, and reflected all the agonies of financial wrangling attendant upon the obsequies of a marriage, complicated by the fact that by this time *three dowries* were involved: those of Tullia and Publilia as well as Terentia, and their disentanglement from Cicero's own erratic finances.

We shall look at only a few of these last letters.⁵⁴ In March 45 Cicero waxed very irascible about Terentia's reaction to his own will-making, and indignantly compared his procedure with hers (*Att.* 12.18a). Elizabeth Rawson (1979:228) explains that Terentia was upset because Publilius, the brother of the new (ex-)wife had been called in as stand-in witness for Cicero's new will, in case the number should fall short of the usual seven. The will was to provide for their baby grandson Lentulus, the child of Tullia and Dolabella (who could not have survived his mother long).⁵⁵

About the same time Cicero was imploring Atticus to undertake the business of wresting from Dolabella the repayment of Tullia's dowry, and undertaking the return of Terentia's to her, taking into consideration terms set by Balbus (*Att.* 12.12).⁵⁶ The allusion is a little obscure, and may refer either to Terentia's having made over the debt to Balbus, as Winstedt explains,⁵⁷ or to Balbus having given Cicero a promissory note, so Shackleton Bailey *ad loc.*

Att. 12.22 and 23 followed within the same week, redolent with grief, with similar pleas that Atticus should undertake the whole sad business of disbursement to Terentia. These letters were written in the first sad days after Tullia's death, and in better circumstances the bereaved parents could have drawn comfort from each other. Instead, bitter wrangling continued, and the father drew comfort from collecting literary and historical precedents for use in his consolatory *magnum opus*. We must assume that dowry negotiations and possible wrangling consequent upon the second divorce started soon

⁵⁴ Chronologically the complete list, ranging from 13 March 45 to November 44, is as follows: *Att.* 12.19.4; 12.20.1; 12.20.2; 12.12.1 (without Terentia's name); 12.21.3; 12.22.1; 12.23.2; 12.37.3; 13.46.3; 16.6.3, 5.5 and 5.11.

⁵⁵ Petersson (1920:519) considered Terentia's complaint justified. Phillips (1978) construes the incident as deriving from Terentia's anxiety about Cicero's provision for their little grandson. See Dixon (1988:55-6) for full discussion.

⁵⁶ Cf. Gardner (1986:91). On rules regarding recovery or return of dowry, Corbett (1930:82-7).

⁵⁷ So also Evans (1991:15).

after.⁵⁸ Atticus was asked to arrange other money matters as well (*Att.* 12.24, young Marcus' allowance, 12.25, purchase of a suitable property for Tullia's monument).

About a year later Cicero had a windfall: in *Att.* 16.6, 25 July 44, he referred in one line to an inheritance that had helped to clear his financial horizon, and in the next to payments of two sets of dowry-returns,⁵⁹ to Publilius and to Terentia. Atticus was urged to pay the latter before the appointed date. But this was clearly a minor consideration. Cicero's literary efforts concerned him more. He was a free man, psychically and psychologically free. Yet in the very last letter in the entire collection (*Att.* 16.16) the spectre of shortfall again loomed: Tiro thought Terentia's dowry had to be repaid with money coming in from Dolabella, but there had been a mistake, nothing was forthcoming. The tangle muddled on, and would end only with Cicero's life.

A SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY

A chronological study of the correspondence has shown a marriage that initially appeared happy, even by modern standards, and that weathered a great deal of strain, not least the strain caused by the egocentrism of a husband and father, the fluctuations of whose political career influenced the fortunes of his family to a considerable degree. Terentia's wifely support, loyalty, and active co-operation in financial endeavours was consistent over a long period. Apparently uncharacteristic non-cooperation in one case may have been the result of the inefficiency or dishonesty of a clerk. Delays in the final preparation of her will in the end appear as sole disruption of an otherwise smoothly running relationship. Even in the light of the differences of conception between ancient and modern marriage, then, as now, the working out of monetary details could arouse hidden animosities. The most puzzling aspect is perhaps the fact that the letters to Terentia differ in tone from those to Atticus. Even stranger is the complete dearth of direct allusions to either the will or the divorce in the notes written by Cicero to his wife. A possible explanation is that an amicable divorce had been arranged through Atticus as third party to save Terentia's fortune from an expected political crash, safeguarding it for the children, and that the subsequent actions of either or both partners had soured the arrangement. We have seen that Plutarch's explanation is less flattering: the instability of his finances led Cicero to a last desperate resort to bolster his sagging fortune.

⁵⁸ Terentia's dowry had entailed 1.2 million sesterces, Gardner (1986:101). Other letters, not to be discussed here, detail the embarrassment caused Cicero by an accidental meeting with Publilia at her mother's house after the estrangement.

⁵⁹ We might be tempted to term these the ancient equivalent of alimony, but all modern sources are strict about differentiating between the two concepts. See Corbett (1930: 127, 147-166, *passim*).

Much of recent feminist research in the Classics concentrates on the sociology of Roman family life. Granting the marked dissimilarity in structure and function between elite Roman marriage *liberorum quarundam causa* and modern companionate marriage among educated middle-class Westerners, one cannot simply translate Roman ideals of marital affection into familiar modern terms. Yet observation of the status and rights of Roman women of the moneyed classes,⁶⁰ particularly of Terentia's management of her own finances,⁶¹ and consideration of Cicero's and Tullia's affairs⁶² tempt one to postulate about the Cicero family that in happier times it was very much like the modern 'equal-partner' or 'companionate' type.⁶³

The question then arises: even if such were granted, would feelings have been expressed in similar ways, and would marital tensions have arisen from the same psychological causes? More: can the more extreme resources of modern sociology be brought to bear on the relationship? Lee and Haas (1992), while pointing out the pitfalls inherent in attempts to compare a single common aspect of two or more disparate societies justify their basic premise as [the fact that] 'social systems and their properties are comparable at some level' (1992:119). Schvaneveldt *et al.* (1992) give a theoretical rationale for the interpretation of documents such as Cicero's letters in research of the history of family coherence. There is, however, a problem in that we have Cicero's reports to Atticus and letters to Terentia, but none from her. Millar and Rogers (1988:96, n.1) emphasize the crucial flaw in analyses of marital dynamics that are based only on information garnered from one of the partners, 'a procedure that presupposes that a part can know the whole.' Christensen (1988: 38-52) stresses that we need the reports of both participants in the interaction process in order to understand marital interaction. In relying solely on Cicero's portrayal of the relationship we are at best engaged in a flawed exercise. Yet the exercise can have its uses, particularly if we explore various sociological models. We can in the end do more than set up a battery of variant interpretations of the tensions within the Cicero family.

White (1990), while rapidly listing three areas to be viewed in research on the determinants of divorce (social macrostructure, life course and demographics, and family process) deplores the dearth of theoretical studies. He calls for particular attention to family processes such as mate selection and

⁶⁰ Cf. Skinner (1983) on Clodia Metelli, whom she largely rehabilitates.

⁶¹ Of recent works, only Delia (1991:208, n. 8) queries the assumption that Terentia was free to act without control of a *tutor*.

⁶² Dixon (1984=1986) *passim* and *ead.* (1988:89), Gardner (1986:23, 41).

⁶³ A century after Cicero the Stoic Musonius Rufus (*fragm.* 13A Lutz) was arguing for precisely such a 'true marriage of two minds'. Cf. Dixon (1992:32) and (1984=1986), also Bradley in Rawson (1991:105-111).

expectations with marriage. He stresses the need for cross-cultural and historical research for the elucidation of modern marriage tensions. A study of the Cicero family may be viewed as an example of a case study that answers this call.⁶⁴ On Roman macrostructure we are fairly clear (most sociological research on the ancient world is directed at portraying the society as a whole), so, too, on life course and demographics, and areas of family process such as 'mate selection'. But processes within ancient marriages are sometimes unclear, particularly as our sources are limited and often one-sided, as the above has shown.

General studies are available, some less useful. Adams and Steinmetz (1992) attempt to give a picture of changing theories of the family in Western thought. They leap from Plato through Augustine to Thomas Aquinas, with pause only on Plutarch's ideas on marriage, and make no reference to Roman thought. Burr (1992), criticizing this approach, makes the point that a history of family theory must include more than sociological perspectives, and suggests recourse to psychological, family science and feminist perspectives on family theory, and also anthropology, history, political theory and human development. According to Street (1994:20) modern family conflict normally focuses on three areas: money, habits of fellow members and relationship issues such as possessiveness. He indicates (p.15) that the individual's conception of 'self in interaction' within a relationship, and also of the terms upon which interaction should be focussed, influences 'symptom behaviour'. The three sordid 'reasons' Plutarch offers together point to three areas of conflict: quarrels about money, about offspring, and neglect or loss of interest by one of the spouses, an aspect today often covered by the elusive term 'irreconcilable differences' (of temperament or outlook).⁶⁵ The 'quarrel about offspring' we have reasonably countered above. Can the other points stand? Are we justified in assuming a gradual temperamental disillusionment between the partners or did Terentia deliberately engineer the divorce when her husband lost his political power, as Fau suggests?⁶⁶ Or was money, after all, the basic problem?

Steinmetz, Clavan and Stein (1990:32-33) draw parallels between Roman marriage after 200 B.C. and the modern world, specifically with respect to family disintegration, but also in the importance of social class and the independent ownership of property by women of the propertied class. They show

⁶⁴ Dixon (1992:xiii) argues cogently for the usefulness for modern sociology of case studies from the ancient world.

⁶⁵ These lie in the three domains identified by White (1990) as macrostructure (economic stress), life course (parenthood) and family process (marital interaction).

(1990:480-95) that causes of modern divorce are often related to age at marriage, social status and finances. In Roman society, where divorce often led to no more than a realignment of family alliances, we have a rough equivalent of the modern 'no-fault divorce'. In modern society 'no-fault' usually advantages the husband financially. In the Roman system, the opposite may have obtained, particularly in *sine manu* marriage (Dixon 1992:51). I have suggested above that such an advantage may have been envisaged when the divorce was first mooted, and that acrimony evolved later.

Circumspection is needed in any psychological interpretation. Modern 'pop' psychology might reinterpret Plutarch to picture an old man, temporally insane, who thought to regain a lost youth by divorce and remarriage to a girl young enough to be his granddaughter. Worse, it could see the divorce as symptomatic of a dislocation of all feelings of decency in Cicero, brought on by the perilous politics of the time. The attitude of Atticus to Cicero should direct us away from such extremes. In the context of modern marriage counselling, Street (1994:30) advises a marriage councillor to engage in 'non-judgemental active listening', and to exhibit empathy and acceptance, but not 'reciprocal attachment'. Atticus, as the major recipient, over many years, of Cicero's missives on any and every subject and the confidant of his extreme reactions to every crisis, was just such a detached listener. What was Atticus observing in times of crisis? I have elsewhere attempted to show that Cicero's attitude to his exile changed drastically by hindsight (Claassen 1992). He never acknowledged that he was in any way to blame. Miller *et al.* (1986) show that 'locus of control', that is, the protagonist's perception of the degree to which he or she has control over a relationship, plays an important role in coping with stress in the marital domain, and, conversely, that marriage plays a vital role as potential moderator of extraneous stress. This is corroborated by Russell and Wells (1994), with the addition that the tendency to accept responsibility for one's own behaviour makes for a better marriage. They state that pre-existing neuroticism in either partner and lack of impulse control in the husband are major contributors to 'dysfunctionality', even decades after it was first manifested. One would be hesitant to ascribe Cicero's failed marriage of eleven years later to his neurotic reactions to exile in 58, but his continued neuroticism, manifested at every crisis, may have been a contributing factor.⁶⁷ Cicero's virtual apotheosis of Tullia in 45, an extreme reaction to bereavement, has elicited comment.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ See Introduction, above. Fau (1978:56) unconvincingly implies that Terentia sought to regain lost status by this divorce.

⁶⁷ See Claassen (1992) on Cicero's changing attitudes to his exile and his tendency to self-aggrandizement.

⁶⁸ See Boyance (1944).

Street (1994:8) emphasizes that a chronological approach to the uncovering of stress factors is required. Such an approach has shown, above, that the Cicero family weathered many storms over the years. The political stresses of the years immediately preceding the divorce were intrinsically no different from previous tensions, but within the family new stresses had arisen. Today, too, family stress, stemming from addition to or diminishing of family structure (births, deaths) and loss of family morale through internal or external negative factors (divorce, illness and social factors such as job loss, war) is increased through 'life cycle squeeze' (Steinmetz, Clavan and Stein (1990:446-455), Street (1994:8)). Power shifts at such times can lead to family conflict. Cicero and Terentia had between 49 and 47 to cope simultaneously with both familial and political stress. Smith and Apicelli (1982:310-11) ascribe family crisis to three types of circumstances: demoralization after a rapid change of family status (up or down), deprivation resulting from material loss, and 'organizational change', either 'intrafamilial', the loss or addition of a family member, or 'extrafamilial', in times of war and political persecution. These are all factors that served after 49 to make the Cicero family 'dysfunctional'. Extrafamilially Cicero was involved in opposition to Caesar, intrafamilially there was the defection of the Quinti, father and son. Politics had intruded to spoil a long-standing, happy relationship between two brothers. Cicero's failed politics further demoralized him, for he had lost all his status in Rome while he skulked miserably at Brindisi. Terentia was the better manager, but was slow in disbursing. He and Terentia had undergone and were again undergoing material deprivation, i.a. as a result of Dolabella's squandering of Tullia's dowry, payment of which kept falling due. Tullia's health was poor. The need to conciliate her politically powerful husband while disentangling their daughter from an unhappy marriage made for complication. Tullia first returned to the family and then died, causing two sets of organizational change, two more being caused by the birth and subsequent death of her baby son.

Today, older couples' stress is frequently related to 'degree of anxiety' and 'degree of integration of self' (neurotic tendencies of the kind discussed above). Stress in a multigenerational extended family can come from the impairment of a child.⁶⁹ Parents sometimes cope with such stress by 'emotional cut-off', that is, non-co-operation, or non-communication. Christensen (1988: 38-52) reports a study which showed that a pattern of *aggression-retaliation* is most frequent in happy couples, and does not occur at all in 'disturbed couples' where a *demand-withdrawal* pattern is most discernible. Was this perhaps the overriding factor? Cicero had always acknowledged Terentia's power to help. At the last, he felt that the help-meet was being obstructive, but he never told her so. He simply arranged a divorce.

⁶⁹ See Long and Mancini (1990) on Bowen's 'family systems network' as a series of triangles.

Could 'emotional cut-off' and a pattern of withdrawal in either or both partners be the reason why there was no direct communication between the couple about either the divorce or Terentia's will?

We should consider the degree to which these factors may also have influenced Terentia. She had had years of experience in tolerating her husband's vagaries, but at the last, perhaps, the intrafamilial crises proved too much for her patience. Street (1994:22) postulates an 'interactive life' within marriage that is 'meaning free', that is, neutral or without stress, but with the potential to take on positive meaning, 'recharging' the partners in times of stress, helping them to cope with a given crisis, but with the potential also to become a cause of stress. Nothing is 'stressful' unless it is considered such by the protagonist, who can resort to 'protective mechanisms' to reduce 'risk impact' (p.13). These may include (p.15) the conscious creation of choice, presumably where none has been observed. Could Terentia's delay with her will have been a case of such 'conscious creation of choice'?

Perhaps it was a simple matter of power, rather than creation of choice. Financial instability drives spouses apart in modern society, especially if inversion of traditional 'male and female roles' is involved, and couples may try to restore the equilibrium by wielding informal power, particularly use of delaying tactics (Long and Mancini 1990:41-2, Street 1994: 20). Pollak (1994) shows that distribution of material and emotional 'surpluses' within modern marriages occurs according to culturally determined values. The wife in particular invests in 'marriage-specific human capital', which may include exercise of subtle power, an aspect not always considered by economists in drawing up models of distribution. He postulates that within modern marriages bargaining about 'distribution of surpluses' takes place within marriages rather than by prior agreement. Herein lies a crucial point of difference between the Roman world and modern Western society. In Roman society dowry arrangements are such 'prior agreements', and a woman of means could and did wield financial power without necessarily harming her husband's conception of self. Terentia retained her money. In the Roman value system Cicero could and did depend on his wife's resources and her co-operation in money matters. But at a time of final stress, Terentia's supply of 'marriage specific human capital' may have finally proved inadequate. Her retaliatory strategy would have been to wield such power as she had. She could exercise control over her idealistic but agonizingly irritating spouse by delaying the making of her will, and so she did.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Phillips (1978) rightly emphasizes Terentia's powers of decision-making with regard to Tullia's marriage to Dolabella, but ignores her influence, which Cicero acknowledges, in arrangements for the subsequent divorce.

The quality of marriage experienced by each partner influences the quality experienced by the other, according to the laws of mutual causation (Russell and Wells 1994). Cicero was powerless to control either politics or his family. Today, it is often noted, if one of the spouses assumes more responsibility in a crisis (i.e. wields more power), the other sometimes retreats into dysfunction (Miller *et al.* 1986). May we explain Cicero's divorce as an attempt to control his marriage, because he could not control Caesar, but also because he could not improve the lot of a cherished daughter, and because he felt that a beloved brother had left him in the lurch? According to this scenario, Cicero could exercise control over only one thing: his marital status, and so he did. He divorced Terentia. His situation grew more desperate: he remarried, and then, as the change appeared to be for the worse, he exercised control again and divorced Publilia (Cf. *Att.* 13.34).⁷¹ He was free. The second divorce gave him psychic freedom even if he remained in financial bondage.

The modern reader may choose to accept any, all, or none of the above theories. Whether, on the evidence, the resources of a modern marriage counsellor could have saved the partners a final standoff, no-one can say. Atticus, the 'non-judgemental auditor', did all that was required of him, by one of the partners, no more. In the end we are still left with the fact of a divorce, a handful of letters, and a palpably inadequate deposition by a biographer who wrote well over a century after the divorce took place.⁷²

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⁷¹ Cicero's divorce of the young Publilia may equally be construed as an example of taking control over some part of his life, as he could not control his daughter's death.

⁷² Earlier drafts of this paper were read at an Ancient History workshop at the University of Cape Town, September 1993, and at a graduate seminar at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, October 1993. Thanks to the respective Classics Departments for their hospitality, and to participants in each case for helpful discussion. Comments and detailed criticism by three anonymous readers contributed largely to the coherence of my final revision of the paper. Thanks to the Division of Research Development, University of Stellenbosch, for financial aid.

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