

The *Laudatio Turiae*: A Valuable Source for the Political and Social History of Triumviral and Early Augustan Rome

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Abstract: This paper aims to provide an in-depth study of the late first century BC epigraphic source, the *Laudatio Turiae*, otherwise known as the *Eulogy of Turia*. This oddly under-studied document and artefact, this paper argues, can give us great insight into the social and political environment of the turbulent triumviral period, and also into that of the newly-formed Principate. The *Laudatio Turiae* is also valuable to modern scholarship as an example of the genre of *laudatio funebris*, providing us with one of only three surviving examples of this genre dedicated to women. As such, it can also be argued to be a significant source for our understanding of Roman women, both in terms of their role within the specific and pivotal period in which this source was created, and also in terms of more universal and enduring attitudes towards women and their place in society throughout the Roman world. This article looks to address the historical value of the *Laudatio Turiae*, and also to consider the ways in which its genre alters or limits this value.

Dedicated in the early Augustan period, the *Laudatio Turiae* (LT) is a significant epigraphic source for historians studying many aspects of Roman history in the late first century BC. It is a eulogy dedicated by a husband, probably from the equestrian class, to his late wife, and is remarkable for being unusually long and for containing information about the political and social background of a period from which very little contemporary writing survives.¹ However, the LT stems from a genre which is very much shaped by convention and liable to misrepresent the truth in favour of rhetorical effect and personal intent, and may therefore be limited in its reliability as a source. This study will look at the LT as a physical document, as a source for social and political history – particularly that of the triumviral period, Augustan values, and Roman concepts of women and gender - and it will also question whether the limitation of this unusual source affect its value for modern historians.

Before studying the specific text of the *laudatio*, it is important to look at the ways in which it is limited or of value as an epigraphic document. The fact that this funeral speech, or *laudatio funebris*, is preserved as an epitaph is significant, as it means that we have access to it as a primary source, and do not need to take into consideration the possible editing of the text by writers through the ages. However, it could also be argued that the fragmentary nature of the physical document means that our interpretation of the text is at risk of becoming ‘history from square brackets’,² that is that missing sections in the text are filled by editors, and we cannot always be sure that the assumed words are, in fact, correct. One example in the LT is a section in which the same chunk is missing in two lines, between the words *ac* and *similia* in the first line, and *essent* and *fortuna* in the second³. This has divided translators and editors as to whether the passage in which these gaps occur pertains to the *fortuna* of women alone or of mankind in general.⁴ Granted, this is only a minor concern, and Bodel argues that the missing words in most epitaphs are probably insignificant⁵, but it does highlight one of

¹ Fergus Millar, “Epigraphy,” in *Sources for Ancient History*, ed. Michael Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 104.

² John P. Bodel, “Epigraphy and the ancient historian” in *Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient History from Inscriptions*, ed. John P. Bodel (London: Routledge, 2001), 52.

³ *Laudatio Turiae*, 1.30-6

⁴ Kristina Milnor, *Gender, Domesticity and the Age of Augustus: Inventing Private Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 215.

⁵ Bodel, “Epigraphy,” 52.

the main problems of the LT: that a large proportion of the inscription is missing, making it difficult to make definite claims about the whole document.

Such a long narrative epitaph is very unusual, and this is valuable to an extent as it provides us with far more information about the lives of the individuals concerned than the majority of epitaphs, along with a surprising wealth of historical context. However, the limited number of other long epitaphs is also problematic, since it means that we are unable to know for certain whether the experiences of the people that they concern are typical or unique⁶. In the case of the LT, this issue can be studied through comparison to literary evidence (see below), but the lack of similar accounts to the *laudatio* in the field of epigraphy does make such comparisons more difficult. The abnormal length of the epitaph could also prevent it from benefitting from some of the statistical analysis that can be made with most epigraphic evidence—it is an anomaly. Another problem with the physical LT is one which can be easily overlooked. As an inscription forming part of a funerary monument, it would almost certainly have been accompanied by a sculpture, either of ‘Turia’ alone, or of ‘Turia’ and her husband⁷. The fact that this statue is not available to us could be dismissed as of only minimal importance, but, when originally set up, the sculpture would have been a focal point of ‘Turia’s’ monument, and so should not be left out of our consideration of the LT not just as a text, but as an archaeological artefact. In fact, with the veristic features and bright colouring typical of late Republican statues, it is probable that the statue would have attracted as much attention as the *laudatio* itself,⁸ particularly since, given the immense size of the inscription alone (over two metres tall), we can assume that the figures would have been correspondingly impressive. The fact that we do not and will probably never have such a significant piece of the archaeological puzzle is, in itself, a serious limitation to the value of the LT as a source. Without the part of the monument which would have made it an artistic experience rather than just an epigraphic one, we may well be cut off from appreciating what meaning the monument as a whole might have held for an ancient viewer, particularly in a society where average literacy rates have been estimated at rarely exceeding ten per cent.⁹

One of the remarkable things about the LT is the amount of historical information it provides for the triumviral period, a turbulent page in Rome’s history which, after the death of Cicero in 43BC, is noticeably devoid of contemporary accounts of its events.¹⁰ One of the most infamous features of the triumviral period, the proscriptions, are the subject for a surprisingly large section of the second column of the inscription, describing how ‘Turia’ ‘prepared a safe hiding place’¹¹ when the husband was proscribed (this is inferred), and, in the most dramatic section of the text, her encounter with the triumvir Lepidus. In this section, the writer claims that ‘Turia’, having received news that Augustus (then Octavian) had restored the citizenship of her husband, went to Lepidus to plead for his agreement in the matter. Then, in what at first seems a completely disproportionately violent response, the author claims that she was ‘dragged away and carried off brutally like a slave’, and had to ‘listen to insulting words and suffer cruel wounds’.¹² Although this could be seen as an

⁶ Richard Saller, “The Family and Society,” in *Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient history from inscriptions*, ed. J. Bodel (London: Routledge, 2001), 117.

⁷ Peter Keegan. “Turia, Lepidus and Rome’s Epigraphic Environment,” *Studia Humaniora Tartuensia* 9 (2008): 2.

⁸ Keegan, “Rome’s Epigraphic Environment,” 2-3.

⁹ W.V. Harris in Bodel 2001, 15

¹⁰ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 194.

¹¹ *LT*, 2.4-11

¹² *LT*, 2.11-9

incident not out of keeping with ‘one of the darkest moments in the late republic’,¹³ as the proscriptions are often seen, historians have also argued that this does not seem to fit with historical evidence for the character of Lepidus.

Lepidus, the third triumvir along with Octavian and Mark Anthony, had a reputation as a fair, moderate politician who initially tried to prevent civil war after the death of Julius Caesar, and the likelihood of him allowing or even ordering such *crudelitas* as is mentioned in this passage seems fairly slim.¹⁴ It could be argued that, given the context, Lepidus’ ‘insolent cruelty’¹⁵ was not entirely unjustified—Octavian’s decision to restore ‘Turia’s’ husband to citizenship could well be seen as a challenge to Lepidus’ authority. ‘Turia’s’ encounter with Lepidus has been dated surprisingly specifically to late November or December 42BC, due to the mention of ‘the absent Caesar Augustus’.¹⁶ From the battle of Philippi in October 42BC onwards, Lepidus’ position in the triumvirate became consistently weaker as Octavian’s became more powerful, and it is not surprising that Octavian’s edict allowing the husband’s restoration would have been a source of irritation for him, since by making this decision independently from the other two triumvirs Octavian was asserting his dominance, and effectively treating Lepidus’ consent as ‘a mere formality’.¹⁷ There is some debate over certain aspects of this passage. Octavian’s pardoning of a proscribed man without waiting for a consensus among the triumvirs was not legal (although any concept of ‘legality’ amongst the triumvirs could be argued to be superficial), and historians are unsure as to whether the restoration mentioned in this passage was definite or simply a recommendation.¹⁸ If it was more than a recommendation, then Lepidus’ irritation can be seen not only as understandable but even legally justified.

However, despite the offence that Octavian’s edict may have caused, the extent of the violence towards ‘Turia’ described here seems implausible. When added to this the fact that the enforcers of such violence would have been the lictors, who were not allowed to harm *matronae* like ‘Turia’, it seems likely that the author’s account must be somewhat exaggerated.¹⁹ This exaggeration could be simply a rhetorical device designed to alarm the audience to whom the husband was relaying this speech, but it is also possible that the purpose of this misrepresentation of Lepidus ran deeper. As the rifts among the three triumvirs became more pronounced, ‘slandorous propaganda campaigns’ between rivals became a key weapon,²⁰ and although the majority of these occurred between the two arch-rivals, Mark Anthony and Octavian, it stands to reason that Lepidus would have been victimised as well, particularly by Octavian, with whom Lepidus developed a mutual dislike towards the end of his time as a triumvir.²¹ On top of this, once Octavian had become Augustus, it was essential to his power that history should be shaped to fit the idea that the best man had won.

Evidence for this ‘history written by the victor’ can be found by looking at particular phrases and words used in the LT. The most transparent piece of Augustan propaganda is the

¹³ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 189.

¹⁴ Josiah Osgood, *Caesar’s Legacy: Civil war and the emergence of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 72.

¹⁵ *LT*, 2.19-22

¹⁶ Alain M. Gowing, “Lepidus, the proscriptions and the *Laudatio Turiae*,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 41 (1992): 284-5 and *LT* 2.11-9

¹⁷ Osgood, *Caesar’s Legacy*, 72-4.

¹⁸ Gowing, “The *Laudatio Turiae*,” 287.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 294.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 291.

²¹ Osgood, *Caesar’s Legacy*, 71.

author's use of the phrase 'the Republic was restored',²² an Augustan slogan used in the famous *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. More clues can be found in the use of the word *clementia* when describing Augustus, and its antithesis *crudelitas*, 'cruelty', for Lepidus. These two words were often used together when comparing good and bad, so the use of these terms instead of any equivalents suggests a deliberate projection of the Augustan perspective.²³ More subtly, the LT's earlier passage describing a similar plea 'Turia' made on her husband's behalf to Julius Caesar could also be read as an attempt at flattery,²⁴ as the depiction of Augustus' adopted father as possessing the same *clementia* that it ascribes to Augustus (despite the reality that Augustus' *clementia* was, in fact, somewhat questionable) puts a positive slant on a familial link that Augustus was not always keen to emphasise. It could be argued that this pro-Augustan leaning is not surprising, as the passage describing 'Turia' and Lepidus' confrontation suggests that the author of the LT owes his life as much to Augustus' pardon as he does to his wife.

The insight which the encounter between Lepidus and 'Turia' can give us is a prime example of the LT's value as a source for the political history of the triumviral period. However, as with many other historical accounts of this period, the information it provides should not be taken at face value, and is limited by a need to conform to an acceptable presentation of a controversial period of Roman history. In the context of Imperial Rome, the period before Augustus' establishment as emperor is problematic for ancient writers, as the picture it provides of the emperor is, at best, mixed. Thus, many of the accounts of the period focus on the stories of individuals affected by the proscriptions, rather the proscriptions as a whole, and where possible appear to attempt to 'absolve' Octavian of his responsibility for this very negative aspect of his pre-imperial activity²⁵.

The LT also appears to use this approach, and although it describes 'Turia's' protection of her husband during the proscriptions, it does not suggest that the proscriptions as a whole were wrong. In addition, the comment made by the *laudator* that Lepidus' handling of 'Turia's' appeal 'was soon to prove harmful for him'²⁶, despite almost certainly overestimating the impact of this single incident on Lepidus' career, is evidence for this shaping of history through hindsight. An Augustan audience would, of course, be aware that Lepidus gradually faded into 'anonymity' following 36BC²⁷, and by implying that his downfall was at least partially related to this instance of brutality, the LT is both defaming Augustus' rival and, in comparison, creating a more positive representation of Augustus himself. This means that although the LT is a valuable source for the political history of the triumviral period, it is also limited by the need to conform to the tradition of writing history to suit the victor²⁸, and thus must be treated with caution. However, it could be argued that this in itself means that the LT can also be used to develop our understanding of Augustus' portrayal of himself in the early Principate, providing valuable evidence for the falsification of history which was a necessary part of early Augustan propaganda—for Augustus' imperial power to be justified, the false steps made by Octavian needed to be swept quietly under the rug.

²² *LT*, 2.25

²³ Gowing, "The *Laudatio Turiae*," 288.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 296.

²⁵ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 189.

²⁶ *LT*, 2.17-8

²⁷ Christopher Pelling, "The Triumviral Period," in *The Augustan Empire*, ed. Alan K. Bowman *et al.*, vol. 10 of *Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. Alan K. Bowman *et al.*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 36.

²⁸ Gowing, "The *Laudatio Turiae*," 296.

The early Augustan era saw a boom in epigraphic activity, providing an ‘empire-wide vehicle’ for the transmission of Augustan ideals,²⁹ and the LT can be used as a valuable source for the understanding of these ideals and their effect on individual citizens. Towards the end of the inscription, the LT includes an unexpectedly personal passage concerning ‘Turia’ and her husband’s inability to have children, something which was a significant concern in Augustan Rome. The *laudator* describes how his wife was so concerned that he should not ‘forfeit hope of children’ that she suggests an amicable divorce to enable him to find a fertile wife and father a child, with ‘Turia’ taking up the role of ‘a sister and a mother-in-law’.³⁰ This remarkable offer reflects the Augustan view that the primary purpose of marriage was procreation, a concept reflected in the *Lex Julia* of 18BC, legislation which made marriage and childbearing mandatory for Roman citizens up to the age of fifty (for women) or sixty (for men), and although it is likely that these specific laws may not have applied to the ageing couple of the LT,³¹ the ideals behind them were probably a major feature of the return to traditional values promoted by Augustus as a way of distinguishing the new regime from the social chaos of the late Republic.³²

The willingness of ‘Turia’ to sacrifice her marriage can be used as valuable evidence not only for the complex and sometimes contradictory ways in which the Augustan ideal of marital fertility could affect the lives of Roman citizens, it also points to the importance of these ideals as a way of affirming a person’s reputation as a virtuous citizen. The *laudator*’s inclusion of this section could be seen as a way of reinforcing his depiction of his wife as an ideal Augustan *matron*.³³ This passage has also been the subject of debate amongst historians, due to ‘Turia’s’ husband’s ‘horrified’ reaction to her offer,³⁴ and his decision to continue their marriage. Some historians feel that this attitude is ‘irreconcilably anti-Augustan’,³⁵ and Milnor goes so far as to suggest that through the inclusion of this anecdote in a public and lasting document, ‘Turia’s’ husband was deliberately going against ‘imperial mandate’, and choosing his wife over Augustan ideals.³⁶ However, given the generally pro-Augustan tone of the majority of the LT, it seems more likely that this anecdote was intended instead to highlight the *fides* and *pietas* of both husband and wife. ‘Turia’s’ self-sacrificing offer is matched by the husband’s piety in forfeiting his hopes of continuing his line by faithfully refusing to divorce a good wife.

The issues raised by this passage demonstrate one of the main values of the LT as a source; it provides us with an unusually intimate look into the marital affairs of a couple in the early Augustan era,³⁷ and suggests that the supposedly straightforward ideal of marital fertility was not as simple as it appeared when applied to everyday life. However, the uncertainty surrounding the purpose of this anecdote also highlights one of the persistent limitations of the LT due to the difficulty of determining how much of it is a reflection of the truth, and how much is merely designed for rhetorical impact.

²⁹ Bodel, “Epigraphy,” 7.

³⁰ *LT*, 2.31-5

³¹ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 316.

³² *Ibid.* 186.

³³ Emily A. Hemelrijk “Masculinity and Femininity in the *Laudatio Turiae*,” *Classical Quarterly* 54 (2004): 193.

³⁴ *LT*, 2.40-4

³⁵ Horsfall in Gowing 1992, 293

³⁶ Judith Evans Grubbs, “The Family,” in *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, ed. David Potter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 316.

³⁷ Bodel, “Epigraphy,” 46.

One of the most significant ways in which the LT can be valuable to historians is as a means of increasing our understanding of Roman women. The presentation of ‘Turia’ in the text has caused scholars to question our knowledge of Roman ideals about what constituted a ‘good’ woman, and how far this correlated with the reality of women’s lives, particularly during the political and social upheaval of the Late Republic. On first inspection, much of what the author of the LT says about ‘Turia’ is in keeping with the ‘canonical virtues of a wife’.³⁸ Her husband claims that she had ‘loyalty, obedience, affability, reasonableness’, ‘industry in working wool’ and ‘modesty in appearance’ along with other virtues,³⁹ and these *domestica bona* are more or less the same as those lauded by countless other epitaphs dedicated to virtuous Roman women throughout the Republic and the Empire. Even in the more restricted genre of *laudatio funebris*, of which only three dedicated to women survive, these same domestic virtues are repeated. One of these eulogies, that for a woman called Murdia, rattles off the same, clichéd attributes and even appears to apologise for mentioning them, claiming that women’s virtues are ‘simple and similar’.⁴⁰ The formulaic nature of these lists of virtues suggests that they are part of a ‘rhetorical convention’,⁴¹ rather than a reliable indicator of the characters of real women living real lives. This subscription to convention could seriously limit the reliability of the LT.

However, once the author of the LT has fulfilled his duty of listing the conventional matronly virtues of his late wife, he appears to drastically break away from tradition in his representation of her throughout the rest of the text. Instead of focusing on ‘Turia’s’ virtue and proficiency in the domestic sphere, he talks about her in terms of her virtues and actions, accrediting her with *firmitate animi*,⁴² firmness of mind, and even the pinnacle of male qualities, *virtus*.⁴³ In addition to being described as having many of the primary male virtues, many of the things that ‘Turia’ is reported to have done by her husband are far from what might be expected of a traditional, domesticated Roman wife. Her pleas on her husband’s behalf, both to Julius Caesar and to Lepidus, are examples of her taking action in the public, traditionally male, sphere. Furthermore, the passages in which she defended her home from the political agitator Milo’s men⁴⁴ and avenged her parents’ deaths⁴⁵ could undoubtedly be seen by a Roman audience as action ‘improper for women’.⁴⁶ This unexpected presentation of his wife is an important aspect of the LT’s value for modern historians. It allows us to question how far the formulaic domestic virtues of shorter, more common epitaphs actually reflect the true roles and actions of respectable women in Roman society.

Of course, one answer to this might be that ‘Turia’ is indeed an exception to the rule, and that the LT is merely evidence of an extraordinary individual who goes completely against the expectations of her society, and cannot be used as an indication of any wider social truth. However, this perspective fails to take into account the fact that some other representations of women, particularly those by their husbands, also credit them with the kinds of male virtues and actions that are present in the LT. One example of this can be found in the letters of Cicero to his wife, Terentia, during his exile from 59 to 58 BC. In these,

³⁸ Evans Grubbs, “The Family,” 314.

³⁹ *LT*, 1.30-2

⁴⁰ Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1992), 18.

⁴¹ Bodet, “Epigraphy,” 31.

⁴² *LT*, 2.8a.

⁴³ Hemelrijk, “Masculinity and Femininity,” 189.

⁴⁴ *LT*, 2.9a.

⁴⁵ *LT*, 1.3.

⁴⁶ Hemelrijk, “Masculinity and Femininity,” 190.

Cicero praises his wife for many of the same actions as ‘Turia’: she provided him with financial support, made plans with him and alliances with his political friends. She even, like ‘Turia’, ‘suffered hardships and humiliation’ for her actions, but persisted nonetheless.⁴⁷ Cicero describes his wife, and his daughter Tullia as having *virtus*, and these things suggest that, although the LT’s presentation of ‘Turia’ is unexpected, it may in fact be valuable evidence that the traditional norms relating to women’s virtue might be only part of the picture, and that in real life women could be praised for playing a more active role than these norms suggest.

However, it is important to note that the description of women as possessing male qualities was not always cast in a positive light. As in the case of a contemporary to ‘Turia’, Mark Anthony’s wife, Fulvia, male qualities could easily be used as a weapon against the women who possessed them, by claiming that their masculine characteristics caused them to become inadequate in the area of feminine virtues. This depiction as a ‘virago’,⁴⁸ it could be argued, was often a political tool. In the case of Fulvia, it seems that the blackening of her name was part of an established tradition of discrediting political rivals through slanderous propaganda against their wives,⁴⁹ but it stands to reason that being seen as too masculine would have seriously damaged the reputation of any respectable Roman woman, and so it seems remarkable that ‘Turia’s’ husband would have risked public disgrace for his wife (and, indirectly, himself) by discussing her masculine actions and virtues so explicitly. To avoid potential disapproval, the *laudator* emphasises ‘Turia’s’ *pietas* and *fides*, the implication being that her core virtues reflect the supposedly ‘trans-historical’ feminine qualities⁵⁰ such as ‘devotion to your family’,⁵¹ and that the less traditional aspects of her character are a result of the upheaval of the times in which they lived. Looking deeper, however, it might be more accurate to say that, although he attempts to portray them as her core virtues, the clichéd feminine qualities he describes come across as secondary to her ‘very own virtues’⁵² and more as a justification for her unconventional actions than anything else.⁵³

Another way in which the LT can be valuable is for information about the role of women during the triumviral period. Although the interaction between Lepidus and ‘Turia’ has been discussed in relation to the evidence that the LT can provide on the tensions among the triumvirs, this passage, along with other references to ‘Turia’ and her husband’s experience during the proscriptions, can help us understand the ‘unprecedented social upheaval’ caused by the political situation of the time. Roman historians such as Appian, Cassius Dio and Valerius Maximus include in their histories of the time proscription tales which stand out from normal historical accounts in several ways, not least in that they often feature women as the main characters.⁵⁴ In his *Bella Civila*, Appian describes how one wife of a proscribed man ‘travelled in the guise of a slave’ to join him in exile, and how another, in order to smuggle her husband out of the city, wrapped him up in a clothes bag.⁵⁵ Stories such as these featuring virtuous wives doing unfeminine things in order to aid their husbands suggest that ‘Turia’s’ actions and the virtues she displays may well be products of the

⁴⁷ Ibid. 191.

⁴⁸ Hemelrijk, “Masculinity and Femininity,” 191.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 192.

⁵⁰ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 215.

⁵¹ *LT*, 1.30-9.

⁵² *LT*, 1.30-9.

⁵³ Hemelrijk, “Masculinity and Femininity,” 197.

⁵⁴ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 192-3.

⁵⁵ Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 4.39-40.

difficult times in which she lived, and that she was not alone in her unusually active role in the public sphere. Valerius Maximus's tale of how the faithful wife Turia hid her proscribed husband was, in fact, seen to be so similar to the LT's account that some scholars concluded that they were one and the same (hence the title 'the eulogy of Turia'). Although this theory is now largely discredited,⁵⁶ it does highlight the fact that these proscription tales bear a striking resemblance to the LT.

The similarity of the LT to the proscription tales recounted by later writers, however, raises some issues which may either limit or increase the value of this source. The main issue is that, although feats of domestic heroism such as are recounted in the proscription tales almost certainly occurred, the accounts themselves cannot be reliably classed as history. Rather, they are moral stories full of stereotypes of the 'good' or 'bad' wife,⁵⁷ and so have taken on an almost mythological edge. When considering the LT in this knowledge, one argument could be that, as a first-hand account rather than a collection of stories which could have mutated on their journey to the pen of the historians, the LT is not only a more reliable source for the way in which the social upheaval of the proscriptions allowed women to play a more prominent role in public and private events, it also acts as supporting evidence to suggest that the proscription tales themselves should not be dismissed as pure fiction, but must reflect some truth about triumviral Rome.⁵⁸ However, it could also be argued that the LT, as a *laudatio funebris*, is subject to a similar convention of rhetorical embellishment, and therefore may be equally as inclined to distort the facts to create a cohesive narrative that may not accurately reflect reality.

As previously mentioned, one of the limitations of the LT as source is the fact that it comes from the genre of *laudatio funebris* and was thus meant to solicit the most favorable reaction from his audience,⁵⁹ both at the original oration amongst friends and family and when read by passers-by as an inscription. This means that the account given in the LT is, in theory, designed to portray both the *laudator* and the *laudata* in the best light possible, and also present a version of history which will find approval within contemporary society. The ways in which 'Turia's' husband has shaped the triumviral period to conform to the imperial line in Augustan Rome is clear evidence of this editing of history, and his adherence to a certain set of domestic, feminine virtues in order to excuse his wife's unorthodox behaviour is also telling. In fact, 'Turia's' husband all but tells us that he is aiming at 'immortality' for her,⁶⁰ and by extension himself, and this could be seen as an indication that the representation of her which he gives us may not be as guileless as he would have it seem.⁶¹

However, if the majority of the events specific to their relationship which the *laudator* recounts—her pleas for his life, her offer of divorce to enable him to have children and so on—are accepted to have happened, it might not be a stretch to suggest that, much of the 'embellishment' could conceivably be less of a deliberate, calculated manipulation of 'Turia's' character than a projection, potentially no less distorted, of her as seen through the eyes of the husband himself. Would it be so far-fetched to suggest that, given their remarkably long marriage and the enormous number of obstacles that they have overcome together (apparently mostly due to her efforts), this might be a genuine reflection of a husband's affection for his late wife? His description of his grief in the wake of her death is

⁵⁶ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 214-5.

⁵⁷ Hemelrijk, "Masculinity and Femininity," 190.

⁵⁸ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 193.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 220.

⁶⁰ *LT*, 2.56.

⁶¹ Hemelrijk, "Masculinity and Femininity," 187.

strikingly heartfelt, and in this he seems heedless of the potential criticism he could incur by admitting his lack of ‘self-control’ and to being ‘overwhelmed by sorrow’. Such confessions could lead to his being labelled as effeminate, one of the worst insults a Roman man could suffer.⁶² This argument does not necessarily contradict the view that the LT might be restricted in its ability to provide us with an accurate or undistorted window into life in the Late Republic and early Augustan period, but it does suggest a cause for this distortion which does not seem to have been considered much in relation to this source—the distortion caused by personal sentiment.

The *Laudatio Turiae* is, overall, a complex and problematic historical artefact, bursting full of valuable information about aspects of Roman society and politics from Late Republican and early Imperial Rome, but also riddled with limitations concerning its place within the genre of *laudatio funebris*. This creates uncertainty about how much of this depiction of the life of an apparently remarkable and unconventional individual is a reflection of the truth, and how much is specifically engineered for rhetorical effect. However, even within these limitations, the LT can be seen as ‘a central document for the values of Roman society’.⁶³ We can examine the presentation (real or fictional) of the character of ‘Turia’, along with the presentation of other characters in her life story to better understand the social values and political ideologies of a period characterised as ‘the death throes of the Republic or the birth pangs of the Empire’⁶⁴. Unfortunately, as with the overwhelming majority of ancient accounts of women, we are unable to hear ‘Turia’ through anything but ‘the men’s voice’⁶⁵, but we do at least see her through the eyes of (if we are to believe his account) a remarkably devoted and grateful husband, and it is this intensely personal aspect of the LT which is perhaps its greatest claim to value.

⁶² Ibid. 189.

⁶³ Millar, “Epigraphy,” 105.

⁶⁴ Milnor, *The Age of Augustus*, 187.

⁶⁵ Saller, “The Family,” 104.

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