Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Clare A Reid April 9, 2019

Femina Princeps: The Life and Reputation of Livia Drusilla

by

Clare A Reid

Dr. Niall Slater
Adviser

Department of Classics

Dr. Niall Slater

Adviser

Dr. Katrina Dickson

Committee Member

Dr. James Morey

Committee Member

2019

Femina Princeps: The Life and Reputation of Livia Drusilla

By

Clare A Reid

Dr. Niall Slater

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Classics

2019

Abstract

Femina Princeps: The Life and Reputation of Livia Drusilla
By Clare Reid

Livia Drusilla is not a figure many are intimately acquainted with outside the field of Classics, but, certainly, everyone has heard of her family. Wife of Augustus, the founder of the Roman Empire, mother of the emperor Tiberius, grandmother of the emperor Claudius, great-grandmother of the emperor Caligula, and great-great-grandmother of the emperor Nero, Livia gave rise to a brood (all notably not from Augustus but descended from her children from her first marriage) who shaped the early years of the Roman Empire. She and Augustus were happily married for more than fifty years (in contrast to almost every other member of the Julio-Claudian imperial family) and she was Augustus' lifelong companion, confidante, and advisor. Yet Livia, who at home and abroad was presented as and in the latter case worshipped, in the guises of goddesses of peace and concord, was maligned after her life as a conniving wife, a manipulative mother, an unfeeling stepmother, and even a power-hungry murderer, and this reputation of avarice and antagonism still follows her today. In popular culture, such as Robert Graves' "I, Claudius" or the HBO series "Rome," Livia's character is based mainly on this negative legacy, often disregarding facts about her life and literature on her from her own time. How, then, did this happen? Through research of Livia's portraiture, writings about her in her lifetime as well as throughout the early Empire, and examinations of what scholars still write about her today, I seek to answer these questions of who Livia Drusilla was, and, perhaps more importantly, who people say she was; and I argue that perhaps the Roman world was simply not ready for a woman to wield the power and influence that Livia did.

Femina Princeps: The Life and Reputation of Livia Drusilla

By

Clare A Reid

Dr. Niall Slater

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Classics

2019

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dr. Slater for his invaluable guidance and support throughout this entire project, Dr. Dickson for her expertise and encouragement, and Dr. Morey for his continued involvement and attention to detail. Additionally, special thanks to all of my family and friends who cheered me on and listened to endless hours of talk about Livia and the Julio-Claudians over the course of a year. There is not much to say except that I could not have done it without you.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Much was said and written about Livia Drusilla, wife of Augustus, first emperor of Rome, during the 86 years of her lifetime. Certainly, even more has been said about Livia Drusilla in the nearly two thousand years since her death. She has also become somewhat of a magnet for pithy phrases that have attempted to describe her. She garnered epithets, both positive and negative, such as *femina princeps* (first among women), *parens patriae* (parent of the country), and *Ulixes stolatus* (Ulysses in skirts). Suetonius spoke of her as the one woman that Augustus "loved and esteemed … to the end without a rival."[1] Tacitus, on the other hand, called her "as a mother, a curse to the realm; as a stepmother, a curse to the house of the Caesars."[2] In our own time, fascination with and criticism of Livia, both scholarly and in popular culture, has not necessarily waned within the field of Classics. Robert Graves referred to Livia an "abominable woman"[3] in his landmark novel *I, Claudius*, and the Home Box Office series *Rome* called her as a "vicious little trollop."[4] In the world of academia, the picture is a little bit kinder, but still not without its complexities. Anthony Barrett, a popularizing classicist, notes that Livia was "revered and admired"[5] during her own life and for years after her death, but that she has also "been surprisingly neglected in the English-speaking world"[6] when it comes to objective biography. Matthew Dennison, another more popularizing historian, writes rather succinctly, "Livia is a villain, Livia is a victim."[7] Elizabeth Bartman, who conducted the first in-depth analysis of Livia's portraiture, calls Livia "an agent of … transformation"[8]

---

[1] Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars,* trans. Rolfe, *Augustus* 62.2
[2] Tacitus *Annals,* trans. Moore et al., 1.10.1
[3] Graves, *I, Claudius* (1934) 4
[4] *Rome,* created by Milius et al., 2.10 "About Your Father"
[5] Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (2002) x
[6] Barrett (2002) xi
[7] Dennison, *Empress of Rome: The Life of Livia* (2010) 7
[8] Bartman, *Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome* (1999) xxii

within Roman society, carving a path that many women within and without the Imperial families would follow in.

Perhaps Dennison best sums up the complexities of how we talk about Livia, both the good and the bad, when he writes this: "Livia acquired two lives, that emerging from the scant evidence of the surviving contemporary sources, advanced by scholars, and … the Livia of the popular imagination. In seeking to create a portrait of Livia, it is necessary to steer between the two."[9] Indeed, this thesis will seek to not only steer between the "loved and esteemed" Livia and the "abominable" Livia, but will also examine both of these versions of Livia created by time, a lack of concrete evidence, and the human imagination's love of scandal. Most portrayals of Livia by both Roman historians and popular historical fiction writers go much too far, that is for certain: Livia is implicated both in these histories and by Graves and others in a number of murders throughout her life, including those of heirs to Augustus such as Marcellus, Gaius, Lucius, Agrippa Postumus, and even of her own husband Augustus, and there is no evidence that she had anything to do with any of these deaths. However, we must also rein in the impulse to reclaim Livia entirely and turn her into a triumphant ruler, a perfect wife and matriarch, or even just an entirely blameless witness to the rise of the Roman Empire. Even to call her "Empress of the Roman Empire" (as she is called quite prominently in her Wikipedia page) is a bit of a stretch. Livia did not rule Rome at any point, no matter how much influence she wielded over her husband and her son (This thesis, for purposes of both ease and honesty, will often refer to Livia as "empress consort" in an attempt to accurately reflect both her influence and her actual powers). In reality, she had no official title other

[9] Dennison (2010) 3

than “Augusta,” the feminine version of her husband’s title, only given to her after his death. Even the name in the title of this thesis, “femina princeps,” was never awarded to Livia in any official capacity but is instead an honorific the poet Ovid calls her in his writings. The reputation of Livia, being as polarizing as it has become in the past 2,000 years, is a volatile topic, and one in which conclusions are hard to come by.

It is impossible to know who Livia Drusilla really was (How often the author has daydreamed about going back in time to meet her and get the real story!). She may very well have been a murderess extraordinaire, or a completely innocent woman who was minimally involved in the operations of the young Roman Empire. This thesis seeks not to find the truth about Livia, as that is impossible until the day time travel is invented (yet has still been attempted countless times over two millennia), but rather to examine her reputation and explore why it has come to be as it is. Why was a woman seemingly well-liked and popular during her lifetime, and then maligned in nearly every possible way after that? Of course, some obvious answers lie in Livia’s family ties. She is, to borrow a Roman word, *genetrix* to a line of emperors who were each plagued with problems — her son Tiberius, her great-grandson Caligula, her grandson Claudius, and her great-great-grandson Nero. Certainly, connection to people so infamous will do some damage to one’s reputation. Additionally, her troubled relationship with her son Tiberius meant that many of the rituals and honors expected with the death of a parent were never carried out or awarded to her at the time of her death. No doubt, this did Livia’s public image some harm. Yet these things alone cannot explain Livia’s infamy, her ill-repute, the accusations that have been lobbed at her for two thousand years.

The fact of the matter is that the vast majority of accusations against Livia have to do with ambition: she is made out to be a conniving mother, a cruel and unfeeling

stepmother, a manipulative wife, and a woman who will do anything — even kill — to get herself and her children into the ideal political position. Livia certainly may have been ambitious. That we cannot know. Her portraiture and depiction throughout the Empire during her lifetime show little indication of this ambition, and more demonstrate a woman thrust into the spotlight due to the status of the man she fell in love with. Yet even if she were to be ambitious, that does not necessarily convict her of the things she is accused of. Instead, when we take a closer look at Livia's life and reputation, something quite interesting becomes apparent. Livia was breaking very new ground for women, at a time when women in general were breaking a lot of ground. As Bartman writes in the very first paragraph of her book on Livia's portraiture, "under Augustus … the status of women, along with social attitudes and virtually all aspects of Roman life, changed dramatically … without predecessors, Livia was forced to invent new modes of behavior and representation."[10] Being arguably the most prominent woman in Rome, particularly after Augustus' sister Octavia's death and his daughter Julia's exile, Livia was pushed to the forefront of the changes occurring for women, and can even be seen as the forerunner of many of these changes. She was in a position no woman had ever been in before, as wife of the very first emperor of Rome. It seems, unfortunately, that many people in Rome were not ready for that.

No man in Rome so fiercely pushed back against Livia's influence as her son, Tiberius. Upon his ascension to rulership of Rome, he repeatedly kept Livia away from the influence she had previously wielded under her husband's reign, supposedly citing that her being so prominently involved was "unbecoming a woman."[11] If Tiberius was not

[10] Bartman (1999) xxi
[11] Suetonius *Tiberius* 50.3

ready for a woman to hold the power that Livia did — an advisor to the emperor, a prominent public benefactor, and even a goddess abroad — then certainly it stands to reason that others may not have been so keen on this kind of female power either. A woman who reaches too much for power — let alone actually gets it — is something that hadn't particularly been seen prior to Livia, and it seems that this newness made Livia somewhat threatening. Dennison, again, puts it quite clearly: "Livia's true 'crime' was not murder but the exercise of power. In a society so assertively masculine that its historians avoided mentioning women save as exemplars of outstanding virtue or vice … Livia created for herself a public profile and a sphere of influence … But any power she exercised was always circumscribed …That she won public plaudits for her contribution to Roman life was in itself enough to condemn her — in the eyes not only of contemporaries but also of later influential writers."[12] In short, it seems that a great many people in Rome were not ready for Livia in 27 BCE when her husband became *Augustus*. They would not be ready by the time of her death in 29 CE, nor would they be ready by the times of Tacitus or Suetonius or Dio, and one could argue that they were still not ready by the time of the publication of *I, Claudius* in 1934. For nearly two thousand years, Livia Drusilla has been vilified in her exercise of power, and while we cannot fully refute this without details of her life that we will never get, we still cannot ignore the reasons for this vilification.

In Livia's portraiture, her function in Augustan propaganda, her role in the Imperial cult in Rome and abroad, her treatment in both historical and literary writings within the Roman era, her status during the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors as well as many other emperors, her reputation is deeply complicated. The lack of sources written

[12] Dennison (2010) 2-3

within Livia's own lifetime as well as the bias of the Roman sources we do have complicate this matter. The current climate of scholarship on Livia is also just as complicated, as works of fiction are now intertwined with both mainline scholarship as well as more popularizing classical thought. Furthermore, popular depictions of Livia, no matter how unflattering, are central to how we talk about patterns of reception for her and other women of the Empire, and are thus deeply important. As such, we must start at the beginning and work our way through her life in the late Republic and early Empire, her posthumous legacy in the Roman Empire, and finally to her depictions in modernity to get a full picture of this reputation. Along the way, perhaps a clearer picture of what Livia's reputation actually has been throughout the years and how and why it has changed will come into view.

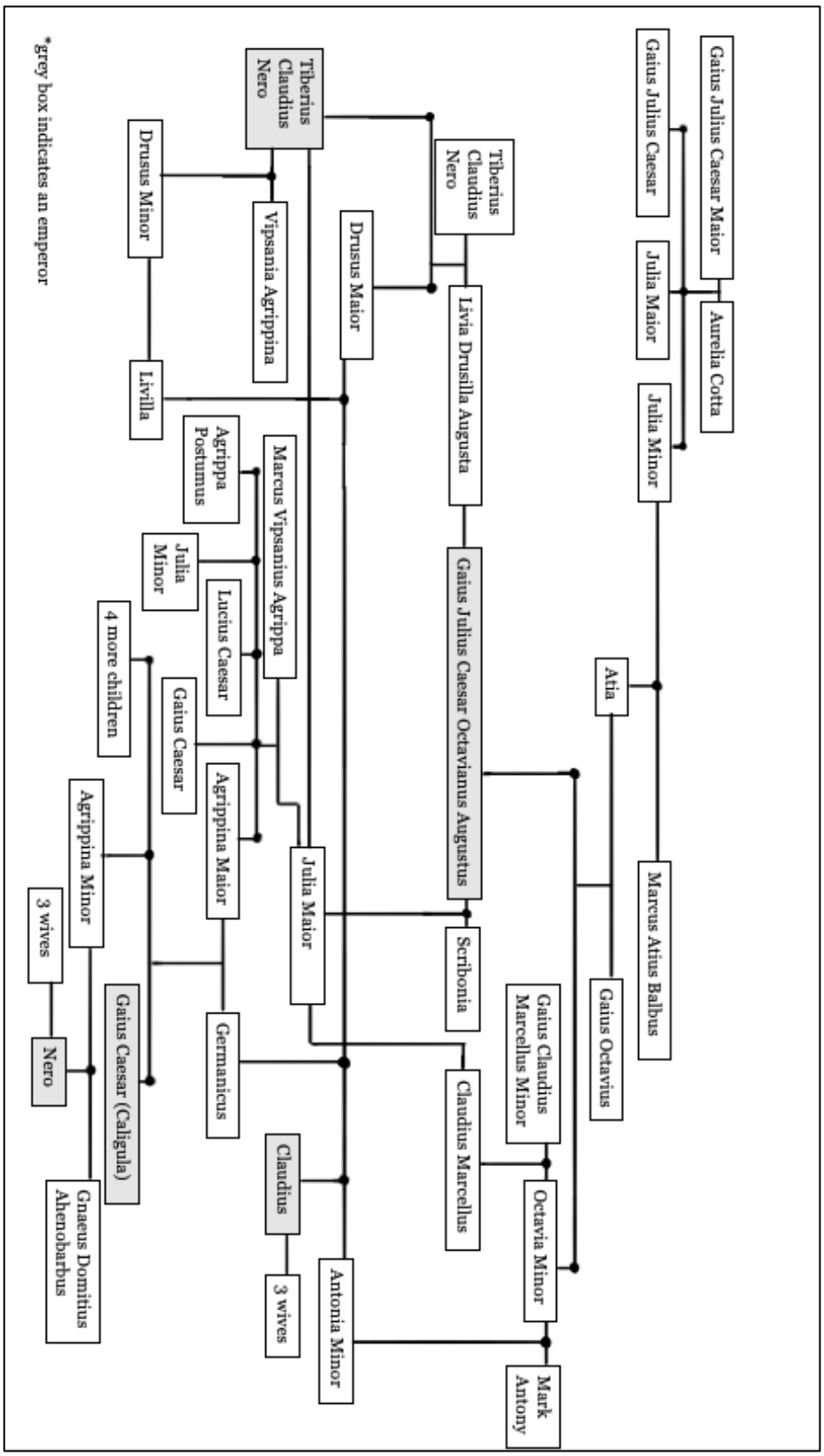
Timeline

63 BCE	23 September: Gaius Octavius Thurinus (Octavius) is born to Gaius Octavius and Atia Balba Caesonia.
58/59 BCE	30 January: Livia Drusilla is born to Marcus Livius Drusus Claudianus and Aufidia.
44 BCE	15 March: Julius Caesar is assassinated. Gaius Octavius Thurinus is posthumously adopted by Julius Caesar and becomes Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (Octavian).
43 BCE	Livia and Tiberius Claudius Nero marry.
42 BCE	23 October: Battle of Philippi. Brutus and Cassius are defeated. Livia's father Marcus Livius Drusus Claudianus is among those who commit suicide.
	16 November: Livia's son with Tiberius Claudius Nero, named Tiberius Claudius Nero (Tiberius) is born.
40 BCE	Octavian and Scribonia marry.
39 BCE	Octavian meets Livia. Livia and Tiberius Claudius Nero divorce.
	30 October: Octavian and Scribonia divorce. Octavian's daughter with Scribonia, named Julia Maior (Julia), is born.
38 BCE	14 January: Livia's son with Tiberius Claudius Nero, Nero Claudius Drusus (Drusus), is born.
	17 January: Octavian and Livia marry.
31 BCE	2 September: Battle of Actium. Cleopatra and Mark Antony are defeated.
27 BCE	16 January: Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus officially becomes sole ruler of Rome and becomes Imperator Caesar Divi Filius Augustus (Augustus).
23 BCE	Octavia's son Marcellus dies.
11 BCE	Augustus' sister Octavia dies.
9 BCE	Livia's son Drusus dies.
2 BCE	Augustus' daughter Julia is exiled from Rome.

2 CE	20 August: Julia's son Lucius dies.
4 CE	21 February: Julia's son Gaius dies.
	26 June: Livia's son Tiberius is adopted as heir to Augustus.
14 CE	Augustus' daughter Julia dies in exile.
	19 August: Augustus dies. Tiberius is named Caesar.
19 CE	10 October: Drusus' son Germanicus dies.
29 CE	28 September: Livia dies at the age of either 86 or 87.
42 CE	Livia's grandson Claudius deifies her.

Julio-Claudian family tree

*for purposes of clarity and brevity, some members of the gens either nonessential to the line of succession or less relevant to this work have been omitted from this diagram.



I. Livia in her own lifetime

Livia's path through life was certainly not one that pointed obviously to her later role as the first empress consort of Rome, particularly considering the political careers of the men in her life. Her father, Marcus Livius Drusus Claudianus, who committed suicide after the defeat of Brutus and Caesar's assassins at Philippi in 42 BCE, was certainly on the "wrong" side of history, insofar as her second husband would be concerned. And her first husband, Tiberius Claudius Nero, would align himself with Mark Antony and later cause Livia and their infant son to flee through burning forests, smuggling the child on boats and living in exile for a number of years, all in attempts to escape the man who would soon marry Livia and make her the most powerful woman in Rome. Tales of Livia's hair and dress being singed while on the run from her future husband, carrying the child who would later become emperor himself, appear in Suetonius' *Life of Tiberius* — an almost picture-perfect Cinderella story, from literal rags to riches. This image of Livia as the humbled, fatherless refugee is obviously not one that became popular during her reign — her misfortunes early in life can all be traced back to the campaigns of her own future husband, which certainly does not make for good propaganda. It is, however, an image that we must consider as we attempt to examine why Livia becomes the poster child (or rather, poster stepmother) for arrogance, selfishness, haughtiness, and pride in the works of Dio, Suetonius, Tacitus, and many others, reaching all the way into the current media depictions of Livia. This image of her has stayed rather cemented since a few hundred years after her death, despite the fact that the tide of modern scholarship has moved in the direction of reclaiming Livia's reputation and insisting that her detractors were not

truthful in their depictions of the emperor's wife. Livia is certainly not present in popular history as a woman of the people, a humble woman who experienced hardship in her life or related in any way to the people her husband ruled over. Yet historically, and, in fact, in her portraiture, we may find a clearer view of Livia as a more down-to-earth woman, engaged with the people and as earnest as her husband was in her pursuit of a humble image.

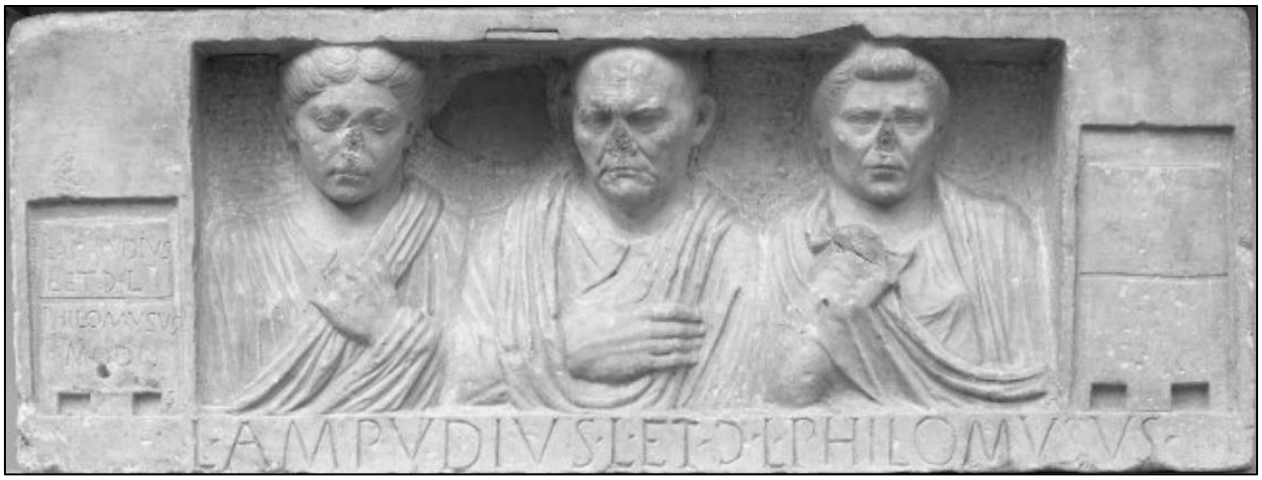
Augustus, was, of course, exceptionally focused on making himself more appealing to the people as "one of them," most notably by insisting on the title *princeps* rather than *dictator* or *imperator*, and continually asserting that he was merely restoring the Republic rather than establishing an empire. Augustus' entire propaganda program was centered around his being an "everyman" (who just happened to also be the *divi filius*) who lived moderately, just like the other citizens of Rome. Livia and the rest of the imperial family were certainly not exempt from this programming, and there is ample evidence that they played into it fully — Livia especially. Supposedly, she, like her husband, shied away from dressing extravagantly or spending too much time on her appearance and even had her own recipe for homemade toothpaste[13] — truly, a "Pioneer Woman"-esque move. The palace also asserted that Livia and the other women of the family spun wool at home during the day to make the simple clothes that the emperor wore,[14] a clever piece of propaganda since this made both Livia and Augustus look particularly down-to-earth. These rumors of Livia's supposed humility are interesting,

[13] Friesenbruch, *The First Ladies of Rome: The Women Behind the Caesars* (2010) 48-49
[14] Friesenbruch (2010) 49

but what is perhaps more persuasive as well as more tangible is the humble way that Livia is depicted in her portraiture.

Livia rather consistently wears the *nodus* coiffure in her Marbury Hall and Faiyum types,[15] a particularly conservative and Republic-reminiscent style favored by both the empress consort[16] and her sister-in-law Octavia.[17] This hairstyle is also crucial to examining Livia's supposed humility as part of the imperial family due to its ubiquity. Strikingly, if one stands beside a particularly well-preserved Faiyum-type portrait of Livia that now stands in the British Museum, one will find themselves staring directly at a freedman's plaque that features a woman wearing an almost-identical *nodus* coiffure hairstyle.[18] This hairstyle adopted by Livia was one that hearkened back to more traditional Republican styles, and clearly was, although somewhat complex, achievable for a non-imperial woman to wear.[19] By embracing a more down-to-earth hairstyle that even a freedwoman can copy, Livia seems to be signaling: *Look, I'm just like you* — a sentiment that stands in direct contrast to the reputation she will later gain as her power grows.

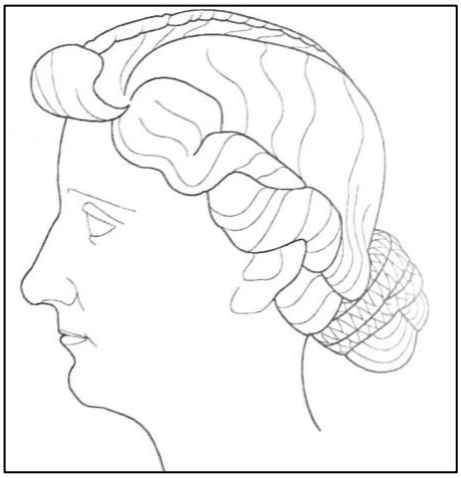
[15] Wood, *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images* (1999) 144-145
[16] Wood (1999) 95
[17] Wood (1999) 51
[18] British Museum Collection Online items 1856,1226.1722 and 1920,0220.1, both in Room G70
[19] Bartman (1999) 36-38



Above: Stone funerary relief of Lucius Ampudius Philomusus

Right: Marble bust of Livia

Images courtesy of British Museum Collection Online Image Service



Left: Livia's hairstyle as seen in her Marbury Hall type

Right: Livia's hairstyle as seen in her Diva Augusta type

Images from Bartman (1999) 144-145

Additionally, it seems that this particular hairstyle is particularly humble — or perhaps humbling — as it is specifically the style that Ovid deems most flattering for women with round, plump faces,[20] a trait that anyone looking at a portrait of Livia will see that she undeniably possessed and perhaps wished to downplay with her hairstyle. It seems that Livia's use of the *nodus* coiffure is also particularly consistent, as she wears the style across four decades of portraits,[21] therefore not necessarily following trends as one would assume she might do as her role grew. Instead, even when she assumes the Kiel portrait type or even her final type, the Diva Augusta, her hairstyle is actually simplified despite her advanced role in society and politics. A reduction of adornment, shedding even the simple braids seen in the Marbury Hall, Faiyum, and Kiel types, does not point in the direction of the proud and attention-seeking woman that Livia supposedly became as she gained more and more power. Instead, it seems to convey a further desire to identify with commonality. Upon Livia' death, the Senate chooses to vote an arch to her, not because it is what they are expected to do for a former empress consort, but because "she had saved the lives of not a few of them, had reared the children of many, and had helped many to pay their daughters' dowries."[22] Clearly, Livia, even after she gained power, still looked out for those outside of her immediate family.

Of course, there can be no question about the fact that as Livia grew older and became the *Diva Augusta*, she simultaneously became further from the average woman — there must have been little point in pretending that she and Augustus and, later, she

[20] Wood (1999) 98
[21] Bartman (1999) 27
[22] Dio *Roman History,* trans. Cary et al., 58.2.3

and Tiberius were anything like the common people as they had claimed to be at the beginning of their collective rise to power. Nonetheless, the fact that there seems to be even some effort at maintaining an "everywoman" persona in portraiture — from a woman who carries the title *Diva Augusta* and would be later offered the title *parens patriae*, no less — is worth noting. It may indicate that Livia was not, as popular history would suggest, entirely consumed by a hunger for power and riches. The Cinderella story is more endearing, after all, if Cinderella still remains as queen the same sort of woman she was when she was down on her luck, and Livia's path to power may seem ripped straight from a fairy tale.

In this context, we must begin to search for reasons why Livia gets the reputation she does — and why it happens so quickly. Of course, a particularly obvious answer may lie with her son Tiberius. Their relationship, notably strained, is a major source of tension in the lives of both parties, and Tiberius' handling of Livia's legacy in the immediate aftermath of her death is less than delicate, as is his perpetual denial of the honors the Senate attempted to vote to her. Coupled with the fact that much of Livia's legacy was tied inherently to her having given birth to Tiberius, a man who would later be somewhat unpopular among the Roman populace, it seems plausible that this may be a great source of Livia's dive in popularity. With each future emperor related to Livia, each of them having less-than successful reigns and certainly none of them living up to the glory of Augustus — the notoriously unlucky Claudius being the most successful, and Caligula and Nero being veritable disasters — it follows that with each unsuccessful emperor, their progenitor's reputation would take something of a hit. Unfortunately, all of this is rather

dependent on conjecture, as we essentially have no historians writing detailed biographies of the people surrounding Livia for some time, meaning that we have very little on what was being said about Livia until Suetonius, Dio, and Tacitus give it to us, the earliest of these coming a hundred years after her death.

Another possible explanation for this decline actually comes from Tiberius himself, and his continuing reticence to grant honors to Livia. Suetonius is decidedly harsh toward Tiberius when he describes how Tiberius denied titles and honors and even income to Livia, and the consensus between Suetonius and Dio seems to be that Tiberius thought that it was unbecoming for a woman to garner honors such as these — that it was certainly going too far, even after all of the progress that women (at least upper-class ones) had made during the years of the Republic, to call a woman "parens patriae" or to name a month after her or to give her an arch or to call her son by her name. If Tiberius thought that these honors were too extreme for his own mother, there can be little doubt that this sentiment was shared by at least some other members of the Roman populace — and therefore Livia's slide into becoming maligned may have come from the fact that some of Rome was simply not ready for her to have the power and respect that she did. Indeed, even later in the Empire, powerful imperial women would constantly be viewed under intense scrutiny, from Agrippina all the way through Julia Domna.

Just as there are paradoxical elements in Livia's personal life and history, we also may see conflict quite clearly in the way Roman authors handle Livia within her own lifetime— many of them seem as if they are not quite sure what to do with her. Ovid is one of the few writers who is, essentially, unilaterally kind to Livia. He praises her a number

of times throughout his poems, and the *Consolatio ad Liviam* (whose authorship is disputed and has been attributed to a "pseudo-Ovid" figure who, for the purposes of this paper, will be referred to as [Ovid]) is, of course, directed at her in the wake of Drusus' death. Ovid's writings on Livia are essentially the only literary texts we still have about Livia from her own lifetime — as Syme has noted, it seems that other poets steered clear of mentioning her. Only Ovid, whose post-exilic writings on Livia can be seen as desperate pleas for reinstatement into life in Rome, "had not been afraid to invoke Livia."[23] Syme does argue that this lack of Livia in poetry other than Ovid's means that "the frequent intrusion of Livia cannot have been to the liking of the Princeps … Horace, the personal friend of the ruler, had shown proper tact and reserve. He nowhere names Livia."[24] Whether this omission of the empress consort was indeed showing "proper tact and reserve" is to be seen — there is no concrete evidence from any historian of the time on whether or not mentioning Livia in poetry would have actually been taboo. However, if Ovid, who wrote about Livia, was exiled and other poets, who were still in the emperor's good graces, were not, this is certainly not an unfair conclusion of Syme's.

Still, whether the references to Livia were welcome or not, they do indeed flatter her. Ovid encourages his wife to "pray to Caesar's spouse, who by her virtue gives surety that the olden time conquers not our age in praise of chastity; who, with the beauty of Venus, the character of Juno, has been found alone worthy to share the divine couch."[25] These words are quite clearly an attempt at flattery, and, as Johnson points out, quite a

[23] Syme, *History in Ovid* (1978) 44
[24] Syme (1978) 44
[25] Ovid *Ex Ponto*, trans. Wheeler, III.I.114-8

clumsy one — Ovid follows this up with a long list of horrible people that Livia clearly is not, and so she should not be feared because she is not Scylla or Medusa, simply the empress consort. This comparison is, in a word, unhelpful — full of "possible ironies,"[26] considering that one could easily take this to mean that Ovid is actually poking fun at Livia by the way of negative comparisons. It seems that many of Ovid's praises of Livia open him up to negative interpretations. Ovid, comparing Livia to a Vestal Virgin, may actually compare her to a disgraced Vestal, as Johnson notes,[27] arguing that the woman invoked by his reference is actually Licinia who was executed for having a number of lovers. If this is so, one could potentially argue that it is a mistake on Ovid's part. Yet Ovid seems to be too calculated, too knowledgeable about his subject matter, to have let this be a slip-up. He also makes another unfortunate allusion in saying that Augustus and Livia were fit for none but each other, and that they had might as well be chaste if not married to each other, writing, "as in union with thee Livia may fill out her years—she whom no husband but thou deserved, but for whose existence an unwedded life would befit thee and there were none other whom thou couldst espouse."[28] This is, of course, particularly unfortunate, because both Augustus and Livia were both previously married to other people, and, more than that, had much more fertile marriages with others than with each other. To say that Augustus and Livia only deserved each other, while flattering in theory, is actually again not quite on the mark when one considers their prior relationships.

[26] Johnson, "Ovid's Livia in Exile." (1997) 415
[27] Johnson (1997) 409
[28] Ovid *Tristia* II.161-4

These unfortunate references to Livia are the focus of much discussion — whether they are "totally ironic [or] totally non-ironic"[29] being the main question. Johnson, for her part, argues that "such disagreement is exactly what Ovid hoped to provoke among his ancient readers,"[30] making his work just flattering enough to perhaps put him back in the good graces of the emperor, but just subtly critical enough to catch the notice of his old friends back in Rome. Yet, whether there is a touch of irony or not in Ovid's work, the positivity of other mentions of Livia is undeniable. His reference to her as "femina princeps"[31] is indisputably important — this is amazingly strong language, and a phrase that colors so much of Livia's reputation. Being the female version of her husband, first among women as he is first among men, not just worthy of being married to him but worthy of equivalent honors as him, is a critical idea, and one that will still be controversial when Tiberius denies his mother honors after his death. The idea of a "femina princeps" is radical in its own right. The fact that this "femina princeps" would be Livia, with all of her unconventionalities, is even more interesting. Yet Ovid presents this idea without argument, as if it is something that is readily accepted. It likely was not, based on Tiberius' unwillingness to vote similar titles like "parens patriae" to his mother even many years later, but that it is apparently a given for Ovid to call Livia as such is critical.

[Ovid] also sets Livia up as an ideal mother and wife in the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, calling her "optima mater"[32] among other praises. The entire poem is aimed at both

[29] Johnson (1997) 404
[30] Johnson (1997) 405
[31] Ovid *Tristia* I.VI.25
[32] Ovid *Consolatio ad Liviam*, trans. Mozley, 341

complimenting and reassuring Livia, and thus within its lines she appears almost unilaterally as über-sympathetic and über-praiseworthy. She even usurps a bit of the consolation that should go to Drusus' widow, calling her "worthy daughter-in-law of Drusus' mother"[33] — which rather belittles Antonia's role in the matter, but nonetheless Livia is still seen as central and incredibly important.

Finally, [Ovid] elevates Livia even further when he refers to where Drusus will be buried — Livia herself in the poem says, "in this tomb shall we be laid together, Drusus, nor buried shalt thou go to the sires of old; I shall be mingled with thee."[34] By insisting that Drusus will not go with his paternal family, but rather with his mother, she essentially usurps all other male ancestors for him — she becomes both mother and father to Drusus, and pulls him along with her into the Julian gens, to leave the Claudians behind. While Livia may lose some of her maternal agency to Augustus when he adopts her children, she certainly does not lose any ground to her ex-husband. Even Drusus' name as he is referenced in the poem (although his full name was Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus) mirrors Livia and her family as a member of the Livii Drusii, rather than the family line of Tiberius Claudius Nero.

Through these continual affirmations of Livia's dominance, respectability, and prominence as the perfect model *uxor*, *mater*, and *matrona*, [Ovid] is able to show his approval for the empress consort, despite any missteps that may crop up in the *Ex Ponto* and *Tristia*. While Ovid might not have been perfect in his praises of Livia, he is still overwhelmingly positive and hands her titles and honors that even Tiberius will soon be

[33] Ovid *Consolatio ad Liviam* 300
[34] Ovid *Consolatio ad Liviam* 160-2

unready to give her. Livia's positive appearance in Ovid gives us some indication that, even though Ovid's appeals to her may be considered propaganda, Livia was somewhat well-liked in her own time, even among those who were not afraid to be critical of the imperial family.

Attempts to please the imperial family were certainly not limited to those living in exile — rather, all those within the entire larger Roman sphere of influence are prone to flattery. No form of flattery is more obvious than deification and worship, particularly while the person being worshipped is still alive. Indeed, like the rest of the imperial family, Livia found worshippers abroad long before her official deification in Rome — and these religious practices surrounding Livia may further betray a sense of confliction in how to portray her.

[35]While it was certainly taboo to worship a living figure in Rome proper, that same restriction did not necessarily exist in the rest of the Roman world, and, as a result, the members of the imperial cult were worshipped in their lifetimes abroad. In places such as Pergamon, Tralles, Cyprus, and even Athens, Livia was worshipped while she was still alive, gaining titles like *Θεα Λιβια*, having games held in her honor (called the *Λειβιδηα*), or even having a month named after her, *Λιβαιος* (which, ironically, was an honor that Tiberius would later deny her). Perhaps more interesting than her worship under her own name, though, is her worship in the guise of different goddesses, as this can give us some insight into how Livia's image was promoted both in Rome and abroad. By associating

[35] The majority of this section is taken from Grether, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult" (1946) unless otherwise noted

Livia with certain goddesses, a worshipper could send a very clear message about what Livia represented to them.

The most obvious guise of Livia is as the Juno to Augustus' Jupiter. As a pair who were a particularly good example of a happy marriage, and with Augustus as ruler of the Empire, it was a logical choice to put Livia in the role of the Queen of Heaven. Indeed, at El Lehs there is an inscription from a dedication to *Junoni Liviae Augusti*, and there are statues of Livia in households in Italy and France that associate her with Juno of the household gods. The *Ara Numinis Augustae*, dedicated on the anniversary of Livia and Augustus' marriage, is linked to evidence that the cult this altar mentions includes "the Juno of Livia." At Pergamon, there are both coins and inscriptions featuring Livia as Hera. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, Ovid on multiple occasions puts Livia in the guise of Juno when flattering her, just as he refers to Augustus as Jupiter.

Juno is not the only goddess who seems to come with the position that Livia holds, however. Venus Genetrix, as foundress to an extraordinarily important family (and particularly Livia's husband's family, a *gens* Livia herself would later be adopted into), can be easily associated with Livia —as mother of Tiberius and Drusus, grandmother of Germanicus and Claudius, great-grandmother of Caligula, great-great grandmother of Nero, her influence through her issue is clear. Even at the time, though, Livia was lauded as particularly motherly. Given the special honors of a woman who bore three sons even though she only bore two, and lauded because she gave birth to the man who was, at least by Augustus' death, next in line to rule the Empire, Livia was particularly honored for being an ideal Roman mother. And indeed, there is a relief of Livia as Venus Genetrix at

Ravenna, indicating that the Romans made this connection from one important mother to another as well.

On the flip side of this portrayal, Livia is also deeply associated with Hestia and Vesta. At Athens, she and Julia apparently shared a temple and a priestess with Hestia, and in her own life Livia had many ties to Vesta. In her late life, she reportedly sat with the Vestal Virgins when she went to the theater (and apparently, it was more of an honor for them than for her). Augustus built his own temple to Vesta on the Palatine, and, reportedly, in her old age, Livia got into some trouble with Tiberius for attempting to help fight a fire that threatened the temple of Vesta.[36] This virginal image of Livia, while it might seem antithetical to her imagery as a fertile mother, is not out of character for Livia. Another part of being an ideal Roman *matrona* was being chaste, and Livia excelled in this position while many other women in her family did not. Reportedly, she once came across some naked men at a bath, and they were supposed to be put to death for having exposed themselves in front of the empress. Livia pardoned them on these charges, saying that for a chaste woman such as herself, a naked man was nothing more than a statue.[37] Clearly, Livia (or at least the Livia that historians present to us) prided herself on modesty and chastity, making her association with Vesta rather logical.

Livia is also found in the guise of Demeter, Ceres, and Euthenia, indicating some relation between Livia and goddesses of grain and plenty. At Pergamon and Alexandria, Livia (and sometimes Augustus paired with her) features as a goddess of plenty on coins, with cornucopiae. On a fountain in the Vatican, Livia is also portrayed with similar

[36] Suetonius *Tiberius* 50.3
[37] Dio *Roman History* 58.2

harvest-related imagery, surrounded by pine cones, grain, cornucopiae, and fruits, implying some sort of relationship to harvest goddesses. This imagery of abundance (indeed, the Roman equivalent of Euthenia was Abundantia) could be related to the image of Livia as a fertile woman, but is more likely a reference to the age of plenty ushered in by the Pax Augusta as well. This is not the only time that Livia is tied to the concept of peace — indeed, she seems almost inextricable from it, in actuality.

Livia is time and time again presented in the guise of Pax and Concordia. The Ara Pacis, Augustus' masterful altar to peace, was dedicated on Livia's birthday — the actual date of her birth, January 30th, not her state birthday on September 21st — and this was likely no accident. Around 7 BCE, a shrine to Concordia was set up bearing the names of Drusus and Tiberius, Livia's two sons, and Ovid mentions a *magnifica aedes* to Concordia that may have been set up by Livia. For any other empress consort, we might be able to dismiss this as basic imagery, that the wife of a ruler must of course exude peace and concord, and end our analysis of these images there. However, Livia is somewhat of a special case. Any person who has read even a little about the Julio-Claudians knows about the acrimony that pervaded so many relationships in the family, and Livia is no exception. Her relationship with her own son, Tiberius, can be categorized as nothing less than antagonistic, and it is apparent that she did not get along with Julia or Germanicus either, just to name two major figures. Even in modern portrayals of the Julio-Claudians, Livia is at the center of great animosity — in HBO's *Rome*, one of the final scenes of the entire series features the culmination of a long-running feud between Livia and Atia, and Livia

is clearly portrayed as the instigator.[38] For in a family so emotionally dysfunctional as the early Julio-Claudians appeared to be, the idea of someone — let alone the woman who became, in so many depictions of the family both ancient and modern, the archetypal evil stepmother — being portrayed as Pax or Concordia is almost laughable.

It may not be so simple as this, however. While it is easy to dismiss Livia as Pax and Concordia as a blatant piece of propaganda that does not fit the person she actually was, there is perhaps more to it. Livia, after all, is one of the only figures in the entire Julio-Claudian dynasty who manages to have a long, successful, and apparently loving marriage that does not end in tragedy of any sort. Livia and Augustus were married for more than fifty years, and their marriage ended only with the natural death of old age of one partner. For any marriage to last that long in this period was remarkable. What was even more remarkable was the context this marriage survived in. Each spouse had at least one previous divorce, as did most of their close families. Octavia, Julia, Tiberius, Claudius, and many others were notable for their misfortunes in love and divorced multiple times in their lives. And those who seemed happily married, like Drusus or Germanicus, for example, died young and tragically. Livia and Augustus, then, would seem doomed to share in this fate. Yet they remained married, and apparently very happily so. Despite reports of extramarital flirtations, Livia was supposedly the one woman Augustus loved all his life, and there is absolutely no evidence that Livia had any desires for any man outside her marriage to Augustus. Livia was Augustus' advisor, his confidante, and someone he deeply trusted and loved. It seems, then, that Augustus and Livia had one of

[38] *Rome* 2.10 "About Your Father"

the only non-tragic, non-discordant relationships in their entire family. Perhaps, then, it is not so unusual to hold up Livia as a paragon of concord and peace, if she was one of the only Julio-Claudians able to find concord and peace in a personal relationship. Livia as Pax has personal as well as public and political basis.

Livia's portraiture also betrays a complexity which is representative of the complex nature of her life and reputation. In both portrait types and the development of said portraits, depictions of Livia forge ground that is seen little elsewhere for women prior to her accession to power.

Livia, as the wife of Augustus, can be expected to feature prominently in Roman portrait finds — as Bartman notes, there are more identifiable portraits of Livia in existence than of any other Roman woman.[39] Identifying Livia is no simple task, as she's never reliably identified on the inscription of any portrait from her own time, and her typically imperial hairstyles can lead to confusion with her sister-in-law Octavia or her stepdaughter Julia. Interestingly enough, on the topic of identification, Bartman notes that even though Livia is given statues to console her after Drusus' death, she is not *ever* identified as the mother of Drusus in any inscription — perhaps an example of the iconographic isolation of Livia from her children which will be discussed shortly — although this could, of course, be due to a lack of inscriptions that survived, but still is worth noting. Drusus aside, Livia's portraiture can be sorted in to four types: Marbury Hall, Faiyum, Kiel, and Diva Augusta. Across all of these types, though, it is still easy to find a few identifying factors — the wide-set, round eyes, the round face, the tall nose, the

[39] Bartman (1999) 3

small mouth. One can easily look through a handful of Livia's portraits and find a general homogeneity that indicates what she might have looked like — or at least what she wanted to look like. Notably, Livia does not really age all that much in any of her portraits — even in the Diva Augusta type, named after a title only granted to her a number of years after her death and which would likely have been associated with a much more mature version of the empress consort. She, like her husband, remains forever in her twenties or thirties, further demonstrating of the end of veristic portraiture.

Indeed, Livia and Augustus together signal quite a few changes in Roman portraiture, especially that of the upper class. The veristic portraiture of the Roman Republic was popular essentially up until the moment that the seventeen-year-old Octavian, unable to rely on the tradition of making himself look older in order to emphasize that he had reached the requisite age to hold the various positions along the *cursus honorum*, decided to model his image on the youthful portrait tradition of Alexander the Great. Unlike Alexander, however, Octavian did not die young — but one would not be blamed for thinking that he had, based solely on his portraiture, considering that, as Kleiner writes, "in life, Augustus grew old, but in his portraits he never aged."[40] In a moment — well, actually, in the lifetime of a single, extraordinary man — the veristic tradition was gone and a new tradition of perpetual youthfulness appeared. Similarly, it seems like Livia may have had some effect on portraiture of the era as well. Strong writes at length about the stark differences between women in portraiture in the Republic versus in the Empire, saying that the portraits of women have little expression comparative to

[40] Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (1992) 68

their male counterparts, and that "it is not until the Augustan era, it seems, that the grave reliefs include really interesting studies of females."[41] It is interesting that Strong, in his lengthy examination of the difference between women in the Republic and in the Empire in portraiture, never ventures to say that perhaps the newly influential and prominent women of the Augustan imperial family are the catalysts for this change. He states that "it is not until the Augustan era" that things begin to change, but I would argue that this might be better represented as "not until the era of Octavia, Julia, and Livia" that these changes happen. If there is some change in the way that women are depicted in portraiture, it follows that there is likely some change in the way that women are being treated and thought of in society, and the biggest changes are happening within the imperial household.

Livia, along with Octavia and Julia, signals a transition to an entirely new era for women. Certainly, the wife or mother of an important figure may have garnered some interest in her own time, but a dynastic method of rule immediately paves way for increased maternal and uxorial influence. Prior to Augustus' rise, the women in Rome were seldom notable on their own — take Lucretia, notable only for her rape, or Cornelia, tied mainly to her sons, the Gracchi. Besides these two women, there are few Roman women who remain in the lasting historical memory before the imperial period. The women surrounding Augustus, however, become immortalized — Atia, Octavia, Julia, Livia, and Agrippina, just for starters. These women wielded power in ways that were unseen before, influencing a number of emperors as well as the public. Livia, specifically,

[41] Strong, *Roman Art* (1976) 46

though, maintains the spotlight for a spectacularly long amount of time, and wields particularly close influence over two emperors. She is explicitly described in both Suetonius and Dio to be a close adviser to her husband and to have possessed what both historians perhaps thought was an inappropriate amount of power during the early years of her son's reign.

This increased female influence is not exclusive to Livia or the other royal women — women are gaining traction and greater recognition across the board, something that is particularly visible in extant works like the *Laudatio Turiae*, a funeral oration from the Augustan era in which a man praises his wife at length. The fact that a husband would dedicate such a long inscription to his wife specifically for her achievements — not the achievements of the other men in her life, as is often what women are lauded for in ancient times — is an indication that the climate towards women was changing. The woman referred to by modern scholars as Turia (as her name does not survive in the extant portions of the inscription) never bears a child to her husband, yet is exalted as an ideal wife[42] — certainly a notable bucking of the norms for the perfect Republican *matrona*. These changes, however subtle, are indicators of the "more emancipated female society"[43] that Strong sees in the portraits of women at the time. To argue that these changes in society and thus in portraiture began with the imperial women and particularly with Livia is not too much of a stretch — Strong himself identifies correctly the *time* of the change, as it is indeed the Augustan era, but it is more correctly identified as the imperial era — and perhaps it should be noted exactly who the new women of the imperial era were.

[42] *Laudatio Turiae*, trans. Wistrand, 31-48
[43] Strong (1976) 46

To ignore the cultural and particularly aesthetic influences of Livia, Julia, and Octavia is, put simply, erasure, and this concept quickly becomes unsurprising when it comes to the way that Livia (and the women around her) are portrayed by and remembered in history. Indeed, Livia's "look" was so influential (*nodus* coiffure aside) that Bartman notes that some identification of her portraits has been made difficult due to the fact that Roman citizens were eager to look like the empress consort in her portraits, something Bartman aptly calls "emulation of the imperial trendsetter."[44] Imperial trendsetter, indeed — Livia's influence went far beyond other women copying her hair style or even her portrait types. It seems that she, along with other prominent imperial women, may have sparked a lasting change in the way women were portrayed just as her husband did with men. After the Augustan era — after *Livia* — there was little more of the "air of gentle resignation"[45] in women's portraits. The post-Livian women are in their portraits, as in their real lives, finally becoming "really interesting"[46] in the minds of men, both in their own time and in ours.

This playing-down of Livia's role in the great changes that occurred during the early Empire is not limited to modern scholarship by any means. In fact, Livia's importance to the Julio-Claudian gens was downplayed significantly within her own lifetime, and by her husband Augustus of all people.

Livia's roles as a stepmother and mother are central to her identity, both in the view of her contemporaries and in the view of historians. Her most examined relationship

---

[44] Bartman (1999) 14
[45] Strong (1976) 47
[46] Strong (1976) 46

is with her eldest son, Tiberius, and this relationship was notoriously strained, but a somewhat more neglected relationship (while still very interesting) is with Drusus, her younger son. Drusus, having died young, is not a character of particular interest to historians outside of the fact that his death leaves Augustus with one fewer viable heir, and that he would be the progenitor of every Julio-Claudian after Augustus with the exception of his brother Tiberius. Since he never lived to see any of this happen, though, it seems that history focuses more on his death than his life — even the most famous piece of contemporary literature about Drusus is [Ovid]'s *Consolatio ad Liviam*, which is exclusively about his death and funeral. Yet Drusus' life and death in relation to Livia is particularly interesting because of the mystery surrounding it. We know little about his life in detail, and particularly nothing from those who knew him personally. Apparently, Augustus wrote a biography of Drusus which is now lost,[47] which indicates some degree of closeness between the emperor and his stepson — Augustus' willingness to inter him in the family mausoleum and eulogize him in the senate, as described in Suetonius, certainly confirms what the historian says as "lov[ing] him so dearly."[48] This affection of Augustus' for Drusus (perhaps favoring him over his older brother Tiberius) is a point of interest, particularly because it was apparently a popular theory at the time that Drusus was actually the son of Augustus and not of Tiberius Claudius Nero. Suetonius lends credence to this theory by including it at the very beginning of his biography of Claudius, and he notably does not employ his usual "this is only a rumor, I don't endorse this" spiel as he relates this information. Presumably, this rumor gained some traction due to the timing

[47] Suetonius *Claudius* 1.2-5
[48] Suetonius *Claudius* 1.5

of Drusus' birth as well as due to the emperor's affection for his stepson, but this affection is not particularly unusual considering the circumstances surrounding Drusus' upbringing. Born in Augustus' home, and living with the imperial family since he was no more than five years old, there is no question that Augustus could easily have seen young Drusus as his own child, perhaps more than Tiberius, who was a few years older when he came to live with Livia and Augustus after Tiberius Claudius Nero's death. Therefore, the possibility of a deeper connection between Augustus and Drusus is certainly possible. The reason that this relationship is particularly important — and any relationship between Augustus and a descendant of Livia, for that matter — that eventually, Augustus would bring both Tiberius and Drusus, along with a host of other children scattered throughout the family, particularly close to him legally through adoption.

This investigation into the role of adoption — and thus how Augustus usurps Livia's relationship to her own children and ultimately the entirely Julio-Claudian dynasty — is particularly compelling. In the portraiture of Tiberius, Drusus, and Germanicus, when they are adopted into the Julian gens, their image becomes more Julian as well — and particularly Augustan. Prior to adoption of almost any child — Gaius and Lucius, sons of Julia and Agrippa, included as well — they have more individualistic portraiture. Immediately after their incorporation into the dynasty, and once they become part of the direct line of imperial succession, they look more and more like Augustus.[49] Augustus is pulling his successors into further resemblance of him, which I would argue is a manifestation of the Hellenic *καλός κάγαθός* ideology, that the beautiful and the good

[49] Wood (1999) 95

go hand in hand. Augustus is known to have enhanced his good looks in his own portraiture, so we know that he believed to some extent that a person's outside appearance mirrored his or her inside virtues. It seems, then, that by making his heirs look more like him on the outside, he is not only legitimizing their potential succession by either inventing or emphasizing family resemblance, but he is also indicating that looking like him on the outside means looking like him on the inside — that a man who looks like Augustus will also rule like Augustus. What this also does, unfortunately, is completely co-opt these children from their actual immediate families — and this happens to no woman so much as Livia. Her involvement in the foundation of the dynasty is diminished, even buried, and her own offspring are co-opted from her and ascribed to her husband. Yes, adoption was common in the Roman period and did not necessarily mean that the adoptee was no longer a member of his or her original family — as Augustus certainly did not forsake his relationships with his mother Atia or his sister Octavia upon his adoption in the will of Julius Caesar — but this adoption, coupled with a distinct change in portraiture, is somewhat troubling in how it relates to Livia's legacy, and her exclusion from most of popular history except in the role of antagonist. Yes, it is easy to argue that Livia's exclusion from the legacy of the glory of the Roman Empire and the Julio-Claudian dynasty — I say this in context of the fact that almost no historian, ancient or modern, would consider her the "founder" of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, despite the fact that she is closely related to and the direct ancestor of more emperors than any other figure in the family, since every emperor beside her own husband is directly descended from her — cannot be blamed solely on the historians who maligned her in the later years of the

Empire, but also must come from her own husband, who was supposedly her greatest supporter and the man who loved her most. Augustus, for all his encouragement and promotion of Livia, is the first person to chip away at her legacy by minimizing her place as mother of the dynasty.

Interestingly enough, the question of Livia as mother of the dynasty — and particularly *parens patriae*, mother of the state, was not neglected by any number of people in Livia's time. Rather, it was quite the topic of interest whether or not Livia should be considered as the mother of the state if she was also the mother of the emperor — and the answer, as with most matters relating to the elevation of her status in relation to her son the emperor, was no. Tiberius himself patently objected to the use of this name for Livia when it was proposed by the Senate, and his reasoning for this denial is clear — the only other people to who this title seems to be applied by this point in time are Cicero, Julius Caesar, and her husband Augustus heroes of the state, and the title would later be applied to almost every other emperor — with the exception of Tiberius. For Livia to join the ranks of these men who had changed the course of Roman history and were exalted as people who at one time or another had saved or "restored" (to use Augustus' language) the Republic was understandably unconventional, and it is clear why Tiberius, who was already incredibly cautious about the amount of power to allow his mother, would deny her such an honor. But still, the fact that Tiberius would deny his own mother the title of parent of the state without being worried that this would signal him as not being equated with the state means that he, like Augustus had intended, put more stock in his adoption by Augustus than his blood relation to his mother, when it came to who he considered his

most important parent. Nowhere to be found in the rhetoric of Tiberius' parentage, of course, is his biological father, Tiberius Claudius Nero, whose parentage of both Tiberius and Drusus is erased easily upon his death without a second thought. Tiberius Claudius Nero aside, the fact that Tiberius does not see his denial of the title of *parens patriae* to his mother as a weakening of his own legitimacy speaks volumes about the role that Tiberius believed his mother to play in his suitability to rule. Just like his adoptive father, Tiberius takes Livia's legacy of progeny away from her, and considerably more intentionally than Augustus did.

II. The posthumous Livia in Rome

Livia's relationship with her son Tiberius is perhaps her most famous — and most acrimonious. It is clear from almost every ancient source that Livia and Tiberius were not particularly fond of each other (as Dio so perfectly puts it, they "cordially hated"[50] each other), as many an author has the two collaborate only for the purposes of murder — Tacitus blames the duo for the death of Agrippa Postumus,[51] and Dio implicates them in the demise of Gaius and Lucius,[52] and the two are "thoroughly pleased"[53](although absolved of any involvement) together at the death of Germanicus. In the minds of many a Roman historian, it seems as if the only thing that Tiberius and Livia had in common was that they quite enjoyed the downfalls of their political rivals.

In all other aspects of life, however, it seems that Livia and Tiberius did not get along. For one reason or another — whether it be his disdain for her pursuit of power, or the fact that he was forced to divorce his beloved Vipsania for the sake of the Imperial family, or the fact that he thought that women should not be in a position of such power as Livia was, or simply that he didn't particularly like his mother — the two had one of the rockiest relationships in the entire Julio-Claudian gens (which is quite the achievement, considering some of the other Julio-Claudian relationships), both during Livia's lifetime and after her death. Ancient Roman authors were not shy about disclosing the animosity between the two. Suetonius writes at length about the strained relationship between the two, blaming the majority of it on Tiberius' coldness:

---

[50] Dio *Roman History* 57.3.3
[51] Tacitus *Annals* 1.6.1
[52] Dio *Roman History* 55.10a.10-11.1
[53] Dio *Roman History* 57.18.6

> "Vexed at his mother Livia, alleging that she claimed an equal share in the rule, he shunned frequent meetings with her and long and confidential conversations … he was greatly offended too by a decree of the senate, providing that "son of Livia" … should be written in his honorary inscriptions. For this reason he would not suffer her to be named "Parent of her Country," nor to receive any conspicuous public honor. More than that, he often warned her not to meddle with affairs of importance and unbecoming a woman … he reached the point of open enmity … during all the three years that she lived after he left Rome he saw her but once, and then only one day, for a very few hours; and when shortly after that she fell ill, he took no trouble to visit her."[54]

Dio, for his part, says much of the same:

> "[The voting of honors to Livia] vexed him, and he would neither sanction the honors voted her, with a very few exceptions, nor otherwise allow her any extravagance of conduct … he removed her entirely from public affairs, but allowed her to direct matters at home; then, as she was troublesome even in that capacity, he proceeded to absent himself from the city and to avoid her in every way possible; indeed, it was chiefly on her account that he removed to Capreae."[55]

Clearly, Tiberius had major issues with his mother being prominently in the public eye, and it seems that, as Suetonius notes, it had at the very least a little bit to do with him thinking that this prominence was "unbecoming a woman"[56] — and in Dio's words, Livia already "occupied a very exalted station, far above all women of former days."[57] It seems, then, that Tiberius would have objected to any woman having been in her position — the fact that it was his own mother, with whom there was clearly some other underlying animosity, certainly did not help.

This animosity does not seem to have abated with Livia's death. For some, nostalgia may soften old grudges — this was not the case with Tiberius. Instead, after her death, Tiberius did a level of damage to his mother's legacy that would not be paralleled

---

[54] Suetonius *Tiberius* 50.2-51.2
[55] Dio *Roman History* 57.12.5-6
[56] Suetonius *Tiberius* 50.3
[57] Dio *Roman History* 57.12.2

until the composition of Robert Graves' *I, Claudius*. By refusing to allow the Senate to vote any honors to her, refusing to execute her will, and even refusing to return for her funeral, Tiberius insisted that, despite the sentiment of the public, Livia was not worth honoring — and when a message like this comes from the emperor, it is not easily forgotten. According to Suetonius and Dio, the Senate attempted to award Livia the following honors: renaming the month of October after her,[58] building an arch in her honor,[59] referring to her as "parens patriae,"[60] and, most importantly, deifying her.[61] All of these were either expressly denied by Tiberius, or, in the case of the arch, accepted but then kept from being accomplished (as Tiberius insisted on funding the construction himself so that it could not be done by the public, and then never built the arch). He also refused to execute Livia's will, leaving that to his successor Caligula.[62] Finally, and perhaps most concerningly, he refused to return from Capri to Rome for Livia's funeral, and, while the funeral was delayed in hopes he would come, eventually Livia had to be interred without her son present "because the condition of the corpse made it necessary."[63] In short, Tiberius did not try to hide his disdain for his mother, not even after her death — a concerning display of apathy, even from an emperor who was famous (or perhaps infamous) for his dislike for public displays of any sort. There is no question that a treatment like this must have done significant damage to Livia's reputation, particularly if even authors who are rather unkind to Livia such as Suetonius and Dio feel

[58] Suetonius *Tiberius* 26.2
[59] Dio *Roman History* 58.2.3
[60] Dio *Roman History* 58.2.3
[61] Dio *Roman History* 58.2.1
[62] Suetonius *Tiberius* 51.2
[63] Suetonius *Tiberius* 51.2

compelled to comment on Tiberius' level of indifference towards his mother. While there were certainly issues with Livia's reputation in her own lifetime regarding her marriage to and relationship with Augustus, or her inability to bear him any children, or even the level of power she attained, it is undeniable that the real issues begin when we look into Livia's reputation through the eyes of the reign of Tiberius. Without Augustus, a man who loved her, in charge of Rome, Livia's reputation was guaranteed to begin to decline.

Livia's relationship with the Julio-Claudian emperors that succeeded Tiberius was, while not nearly as dramatic, still quite important. After all, since Tiberius refused to either deify Livia or execute her will, a lot of responsibility surrounding Livia's estate was left to his successors. Indeed, out of the entire dynasty, only Nero was born too late to have ever known his great-great-grandmother, and even his non-Julio-Claudian successor, Galba, was supposedly fond of Livia, who apparently returned the sentiment so much that she willed him fifty million sesterces upon her death.[64] Each emperor would have been remiss not to pay homage to Livia, their decidedly notable matriarch, and so each did — in their own ways.

Caligula, having been seventeen years old when Livia died, supposedly knew the empress consort to some degree, having lived in her household for some small amount of time during his mother's exile.[65] He, not yet of age but still the ranking male in the family, delivered the funeral oration for Livia, although Bartman is careful to note that this does not and should not indicate any degree of personal closeness between the two.[66] In fact,

[64] Suetonius *Galba* 5.2
[65] Suetonius *Caligula* 10.1
[66] Bartman (1999) 122

all of Caligula's kindness towards his great-grandmother, while rather extravagant compared to his predecessor's actions, is actually somewhat standard in terms of reverence towards an ancestor. It is Tiberius' direct refusal to, say, execute his mother's will or celebrate her birthday, that make Caligula seem like an ardent supporter of Livia: in the grand scheme of things, Livia's great-grandson "initiated no special honors"[67] for her, and Suetonius is careful to note that Caligula is not particularly kind to Livia in his later years, having insinuated that Augustus was unfaithful to her with his own daughter and thus was the real father of Agrippina Maior,[68] or that Livia's grandfather was of low birth.[69] He also, quite famously, referred to Livia as *Ulixes stolatus* — Ulysses in skirts — something that Suetonius clearly saw as an insult[70] despite the fact that we today may find it easy to reclaim such a phrase as a compliment of her powers of strategy, reasoning, and persuasion. It seems that the young emperor (or at least Suetonius some time later) viewed this comparison as a reference to her character as conniving, manipulative, and quick to lie — a much less flattering reference to the more unlikable side of the great mythical sojourner.

The most important thing Caligula did for Livia's legacy, however, is something he did not actually do for her at all: his promotion and, in the case of Drusilla, deification of his sisters. By introducing a deceased imperial woman as a goddess — a *diva* — Caligula was able to pave the way for Livia's subsequent deification. Indeed, Caligula's granting of honors to his three sisters — Livilla, Drusilla, and Agrippina Minor — also somewhat

[67] Bartman (1999) 122
[68] Suetonius *Caligula* 23.1
[69] Suetonius *Caligula* 23.2
[70] Suetonius *Caligula* 23.2

allows for a similar elevation of Livia. The public reaction to this elevation also provides us a parallel for what was said about Livia as well. Caligula was famously accused of committing incest with all three of his sisters and most of all with Drusilla (naturally, as she received the most honors from her brother).[71] Whether these accusations are true or not, they are exactly the sort of thing one would say about a ruler they did not care for, particularly one who was a little too close for comfort with his sisters. The correlation is rather clear between Livia and Livilla, Drusilla, and Agrippina Minor: a woman was given dedications, inscriptions, and honors above any other living woman, and thereafter was swiftly condemned as having performed unspeakable acts. In the case of the sisters of Caligula, it was incest; in the case of Livia, the accusations were of cruelty, political conniving, and, of course, any number of murders. While of course correlation does not equal causation here, the parallels cannot easily be overlooked. Condemnation of Caligula's relationship with his sisters and what this may signal about the development of Livia's reputation aside, Caligula's main contribution to Livia's legacy was his paving the way for later Julio-Claudians to give honors to the family's matriarch — and that they did.

Claudius, next in line, expanded greatly his grandmother's role in the imperial cult. Born in 10 BCE, he was 39 years old when Livia died, making it quite likely that the two had some sort of significant relationship, particularly when one considers that Claudius lived in Livia's household "for a long time"[72] and the empress consort was only in her late forties when Claudius was born. The likelihood that Livia and Claudius were fond of each other in even some small capacity is significant in light of the honors that the emperor

[71] Suetonius *Caligula* 24.1
[72] Dio *Roman History* 60.2.4

granted his late grandmother, and made more so by the fact that Claudius is the only Julio-Claudian after Tiberius with whom Livia could have reasonably cultivated an adult relationship. Claudius went beyond the traditional baseline of honors that would have been expected of him in reverence to his grandmother, particularly when he approved the deification of Livia, giving her what is arguably her most important title: that of *Diva Augusta*. As *Augusta*, she is the first person to bear the feminine version of her husband's title, she certainly gains enormous political, social, and religious stature with this name change, as well as making her only the second *Diva* after Drusilla who, as has already been addressed, may have earned this title under some rather unsavory circumstances. Even more important, though, is Livia's incorporation into the imperial cult. Now, with her name on the rolls of the Arvales and likely worshipped right alongside her husband, she grows into the full stature of the deified empress of whom glimpses were seen abroad when she was called *Θεα Λειβία* along other names. This is also where we begin to see her final portrait type come in to use, known aptly as *Diva Augusta*. Notably, this change in facial portraiture comes with a change in dress and pose — Livia is often shown with a diadem after this point symbolizing her divinity, and is often seated alongside Augustus, a clear indication of great power and respect. At Leptis Magna and Rusellae in this period we get an elegantly-draped Livia who is seated — and at Rusellae, Livia is the only figure out of fifteen extant statues that is seated, save for her husband.[73] Additionally, Livia is seated on a bronze coin of Claudius at this time as well in a similar pose to the Rusellae statue, leading Bartman, following the reasoning of C. Brian Rose, to propose that the

[73] Bartman (1999) 129-130

Rusellae statue and the coin "both reproduce Livia's cult statue in the Palatine temple she shared with Augustus."[74] The idea that the deified Livia would be seated — perhaps even enthroned, we might say — alongside Augustus is a very interesting concept, indicating that she wields an enormous amount of power and also commands an enormous amount of respect, and this cannot be ignored in our examinations of Livia's role in cult at the time. To have Livia seated alongside her husband is to say that she is much more than a consort, a spouse with no true power. Rather, she is clearly somewhat of an equal to Augustus, or at least on his level to some extent, and the fact that she appears seated *without* Augustus on the reverse of the coin in question, alone and identified as *Diva Augusta*, is certainly something. To have Livia seated beside her also-seated husband is one matter — it implies that her power is tied to that of her husband. To have Livia by herself, still seated, identified clearly and reverentially, on the back of a coin that would have been seen and used by many, is quite another matter, one that implies a clear presence of reverence toward the empress in her own right.

Left: Statue of Livia at Rusellae

Right: Livia as Diva Augusta on the reverse of a Claudian coin

Images from Bartman (1999) 130-131

[74] Bartman (1999) 131

Changes in portraiture aside, Livia's connection with her grandson Claudius is particularly important. Her proclamation as the *Diva Augusta* and deification marks her as the first woman who would make her way solidly into the religious life of the Empire, staying on the rolls of the Arvales until the time of the reign of Marcus Aurelius or Commodus, by the estimations of Grether,[75] while others have put her final exclusion coming around closer to the reign of Severus Alexander.[76] Either way, Livia spends at the very least around one hundred years on the rolls of the *divi* of the Arvales, leaving an indelible mark on the Roman religious memory — certainly, exclusion of Livia from the list of *divi* at some point would not have meant that her worship ceased entirely throughout the Roman sphere of influence at that moment, and thus Claudius' elevation of his grandmother to the level of a goddess is the longest-lasting decision any man makes towards Livia's posterity, aside from Augustus' decision to make her his wife. Finally, it cannot be ignored that Livia's reputation in modernity has been massively shaped by her relationship with her grandson, as in the present, the most reliable way to identify Livia is through her infamous role in Robert Graves' *I, Claudius* and the many interpretations of that story. Since 1934, it is difficult to find a historian writing on Livia who does not feel compelled to mention *I, Claudius* when writing about her — a testament not only to Graves' imagination, but also to the intriguing nature of this relationship between the ever-unlucky emperor and his famous grandmother.

By the time of the reign of Nero, the use of Livia's image in portraiture has declined in importance to the Julio-Claudians, as they truly are, by this point, Julio-Claudian.

---

[75] Grether (1946) 252
[76] Grether (1946) 251

Livia's Claudian family, in power, has intermarried enough with Augustus' Julian family that being related to Livia is no longer the best way for any imperial newcomers to secure their spot in power and the public eye. Agrippina Minor, already a great-granddaughter of Augustus, did not need to rely on Livia's image to legitimize herself (although Livia certainly served as an "inevitable model"[77] for Agrippina and many other imperial women as they ventured further into the public eye), and thus neither did her son Nero. It is natural that Livia's role would have been usurped in favor of Augustus' — the emperor is more powerful and better than the emperor's wife, for certain. Additionally, Nero is the only Julio-Claudian emperor who never knew Livia in his lifetime, being born eight years after her death, further distancing the two.

As expected considering these circumstances, Livia is not mentioned at all in Suetonius' life of Nero, even though Suetonius seems rather consistently to have been particularly interested in anything anyone ever said about Livia, nor does she appear in Tacitus' account of Nero's reign in the *Annals*. She is, however, mentioned in Dio's discussions of Nero in his *Histories* exactly once. This mention has nothing to do with anything Nero said about Livia, nor anything anyone in Nero's circle was really saying about her, but is rather an observation on the part of the author, and a particularly interesting one as well. Dio writes of the mother of Nero that "nothing seemed to satisfy Agrippina, though all the privileges that Livia had enjoyed had been bestowed upon her also, and a number of additional honors had been voted."[78] For Dio, a man who in all his past writings of Livia seems to disapprove quite strongly of her use of her power (and

[77] Bartman (1999) 137
[78] Dio *Roman History* 61.33.12

perhaps even the fact that she has such power at all), to say that Agrippina was more greedy, more power-hungry, and more unnecessarily honored than Livia is quite a statement on his part, and says quite a bit about his feelings about Agrippina Minor. Of course, if Dio is drawing these conclusions, it follows that others may have done the same, and compared Agrippina Minor to Livia in her honors — and the way she handled them. We may even wonder if Agrippina's blatant misuse of her influence, which would lead her to put on the throne the man who would later put her to death, might have colored Roman retrospective views on Livia's power. After all, if Agrippina, who was certainly not the first woman to gain power and honor such as this, did such a terrible job of handling such powers and honors, then one could imagine that the first woman to be in her position might have done just as poorly. Livia was never to be so important after the reign of her great-great-grandson: Nero committed suicide in 68, and with his death so ended the line of emperors who could trace lineage to Livia, and Livia's family line seems to die out soon afterwards. Syme, though, argues that her line continues all the way through the 2nd century due to evidence found in an inscription that may or may not refer to descendants of Livia's great-great-granddaughter Rubellia Bassa.[79] He is rather alone in this assumption, however, and it could very well be that Livia's line dies with Rubellia's and Nero's generation. Yet while Livia would never hold the same urgent cultural importance, it is after she is no longer immediately relevant that her reputation and the mythology that springs up around her truly begin to take shape.

[79] Syme, *Tacitus* (1958) 627-8

The end of the Julio-Claudians certainly did not signal the end of emperors who favored Livia, as Galba, the man who would follow Nero, seems to have cultivated quite a close relationship with her. Galba and Livia seemingly knew each other personally and, he having been only a few years younger than Claudius, was around 32 years old when she died. Livia evidently was so fond of the young Galba that she willed him money to the tune of fifty million sesterces (although Tiberius made sure that he did not receive this amount or perhaps any money at all).[80] Livia's fondness for Galba was certainly not forgotten when Galba took the throne almost exactly forty years after Livia's death, and was in fact reciprocated. Galba "issued several series of coins honoring her"[81] in the very short period of his rule. For Livia to have had such a lasting influence on him, even forty years after her death, certainly means something, even if Galba's coinage had a propagandist twist as they attempted to link him to the earlier (and more well-liked) Julio-Claudians, particularly Augustus. Still, his choice of Livia over her husband as his method of cementing his rule is particularly interesting, and indicates that Galba at least somewhat personally revered the late empress consort. It also makes a strong case for those who would revere Livia for reasons outside of attempts to accent their own lineage — reverence for the Julio-Claudian matriarch by a man who had just deposed the last Julio-Claudian is certainly a gutsy move, and yet Galba makes this move because he personally knew and respected Livia. Such fondness further indicates that the people who knew Livia revered and actually liked her — and that later departure from such fondness may have been founded on reasons entirely separate from who she was as a person.

---

[80] Suetonius *Galba* 5.2
[81] Barrett (2002) 223

After Galba, although no emperor ties himself so much to her, Livia certainly does not fade away. As previously mentioned, she enjoys a decently long run on the list of the *divi* of the Arvales, and that is not all. Livia's birthday is still celebrated along Augustus' with games and banquets in multiple parts of the Empire at least until the reign of Trajan,[82] although beyond that, evidence of celebrations are more scarce. The Oxyrhynchus papyri do bear witness to some sort of contest or games in honor of the *Θεα Λειβία* in the year 148 in Egypt, but are unclear on the type of contest or how important it may have been.[83] Most interestingly, though, as a testament to Livia's reputation as a faithful wife and an upstanding Roman *matrona*, Livia's name (as Julia Augusta) appears in marriage vows in Egypt as late as the reign of Hadrian, as it seems that the marriage vows were specifically sworn in front of her statue, with her as a witness to the sacred union being made.[84] To have Livia mentioned in and bearing witness to marriage vows indicates her reputation as a model wife, one who should be emulated and who is worthy of watching over marriages. Certainly, if the prevailing opinion of Livia were of her as a conniving stepmother and a woman who murdered her husband, she would not be the patron and witness of the wedding vows, indicating that she is still even a full one hundred years after her death seen in an (at least mostly) positive light.

Most important to note, however, when we examine the wider range of Livia's posthumous reputation in Rome, is the fact that almost all the Roman written sources on her come from the post-Julio-Claudian period. The majority of the historical record

[82] Barrett (2002) 223
[83] Oxyrhynchus Papyri, P. Oxy. XVII.2105
[84] P. Oxy. III.496

we receive, from Suetonius, writing under Trajan and Hadrian, Dio, writing under Commodus all the way through Alexander Severus, and to a lesser extent Tacitus, writing under Nerva and Trajan is already reception of Livia's life and thus must always be read with this in mind. These historians, all writing at different times but *none* of them writing under a Julio-Claudian (which is important to consider when we think about what their biographies were trying to achieve), were relying on Imperial archives that we unfortunately no longer have, as well as what seems to be loose gossip that they'd heard. As a result, these biographies are, in a word, biased. Any one person's opinion on Augustus or Tiberius will color their opinion on Livia, and particularly in a time when these were still culturally and politically relevant figures and especially in a time when one might legitimize the current dynasty by maligning the members of an earlier one. These histories of Livia's life, though based on archives written in her lifetime, must be considered as part of the later, often politically-motivated, reputation work, which leaves us with quite the gap in scholarship — what exactly happened to Livia's reputation between her death and the composition of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio?

This continued indication of Livia as a good woman, a good mother, a good wife, and a good empress consort, even as little as forty-five years before she is dropped from the rolls of the Arvales, of course raises the question yet again: what happened to Livia's reputation that the negative ideas of her stopped being idle gossip that Suetonius could not help but pass along and started be the prevalent public opinion? Why has an increasingly negative impression of Livia pervaded both popular opinion and historical

scholarship, despite evidence that she was relatively well-liked in her lifetime and in the period afterward? It becomes increasingly clear that we cannot blame this decline on any one thing. Yes, perhaps Tiberius' neglect of his mother's legacy and his refusal to award to her any honors voted to her by the Senate made her reputation slip a little. Yes, perhaps the fact that Livia is the matriarch of a number of emperors who were at best particularly complicated and at worst deeply unpopular did not do her any favors. Yes, perhaps Livia's power was too much too soon for many a citizen of the Roman Empire, her own son first among the people who felt this way. And yes, perhaps Livia was not as wonderful of a person as the propaganda surrounding her sets forth — after all, it is unlikely that she actually wove Augustus' clothes herself, and one does not spend nearly six decades as the most prominent woman in Rome without making a few enemies. Nevertheless, none of these single things can account for why Livia's reputation comes to us throughout history the way that it does — it is a combination of these and many, many more factors, and the result is a spectacularly unclear picture of Livia's life and who she really was, or even how people really felt about her.

III. Livia in modern media and scholarship

For all the intrigue surrounding Livia's life, actions, and character in her lifetime and the better part of the two millennia following her death, just as much if not more lasting damage has been done in the last one hundred and fifty years to her reputation. While scholars have maligned her in their books and articles — the examples abound and will be expanded on shortly — the bulk of the damage has developed in popular culture, namely two hugely popular pieces of media: Robert Graves' novel *I, Claudius* and the media interpretations of the work, and the Home Box Office television series *Rome*, which takes its cues on Livia's depiction largely from Graves' work.

First published in 1934, Robert Graves' novel (later to become a series of novels) is decidedly a work of fiction which takes its characters from history. It at no point claims to be what actually happened in the lifetime of Claudius or any character in the novel. Yet its foothold in the cultural realm of knowledge of the Julio-Claudians is nearly impossible to shake. Most notably, the book was adapted for the small screen in 1976, and this adaptation of Graves' work is particularly pervasive in the cultural memory as well due to its popularity. The concept of *I, Claudius*, the story, is immensely compelling, clearly, and that compelling nature is very much due to the fact that, like any good story, the novel has a larger-than life and rather menacing antagonist. Unfortunately for our empress, that antagonist happens to be Livia Drusilla. Throughout the book, Livia is implicated in no small number of murders and other crimes, and is an undeniable conniving and manipulative force for chaos and general malevolence. Her first mention is as a

"remarkable and — let me say at once — abominable woman,"[85] which despite any sort of hedging from the word "remarkable," is incredibly damning, especially for an introduction. The word "abominable" sets up right from the beginning the fictional Claudius' disdain for his grandmother, and that theme continues quite solidly through the novel. Claudius notes of Livia that "unfortunately she is the chief character in the first part of my story"[86] and that sense of regret for Livia's presence or even her existence is not uncommon in the rest of Graves' work. Claudius disparages Livia, saying that "the crabs outnumber the apples"[87] a number of times when referencing her family — and then explicitly says that while his grandfather, Tiberius Claudius Nero (who, it is important to note, died a full twenty-three years before Claudius' birth, so they never even came close to meeting), was one of the best Claudians, "Livia was one of the worst of the Claudians,"[88] and then goes on to spend a number of pages telling stories about awful things she said and did — before the action of the book even begins.

Most notably, Claudius paints Livia as being continually in control of Augustus — the archetypal conniving woman who is the grand puppet-master of the entire Julio-Claudian gens, saying that "Augustus ruled the world, but Livia ruled Augustus."[89] Furthermore, he blames the imperial couple's inability to produce an heir on Livia, insisting that, although Augustus proved himself perfectly fertile with Scribonia, he was "impotent as a child when he tried to have commerce with [Livia],"[90] emasculating the

[85] Graves (1934) 4
[86] Graves (1934) 13
[87] Graves (1934) 14
[88] Graves (1934) 15
[89] Graves (1934) 19
[90] Graves (1934) 19

emperor and pinning the blame on his wife. Claudius insists that Augustus and Livia's "marriage was never consummated"[91] — a clear red flag of sexual deviance in their relationship. This deviance is immensely important to note, as it is not only present here in Graves' depiction of Livia, but elsewhere in media representations of her. Of course, we know well that Livia and Augustus indeed consummated their marriage. Suetonius indicates that the couple experienced a stillbirth, writing that "one baby was conceived, but was prematurely born."[92] The presence of this child, indicated as male in the Latin text, provides solid evidence against this emasculation, and yet Graves, who is presumably familiar with the text of Suetonius since he draws on it quite heavily, chooses instead to place Livia and Augustus squarely within in the realm of sexual deviance while at the same time further making Livia into an "abominable woman." Claudius also turns Livia into a happy cuckold of sorts, reportedly providing Augustus with "beautiful young women to sleep with whenever she noticed that passion made him restless,"[93] furthering the idea of Livia and Augustus as having an unconventional sexual relationship.

Graves further intensifies his stereotypical depictions of Livia, continuing with scathing lines such as this: "Most women are inclined to set a modest limit to their ambitions; a few rare ones set a bold limit. But Livia was unique in setting no limit at all to hers."[94] Or further this, a phrase which begins a chapter: "The name "Livia" is connected with the Latin word which

[91] Graves (1934) 19
[92] Suetonius *Augustus* 63.1
[93] Graves (1934) 21
[94] Graves (1934) 25

means Malignity … nobody really liked her: malignity commands respect, not liking."[95] This statement seems to be mostly without merit — the name of the Livii Drusii does bear a passing resemblance to the word "lividus," meaning "bruise-colored," but certainly does not indicate malignity. Upon Livia's death, Claudius writes "I could never have thought it possible that I would miss Livia when she died. When I was a child I used secretly, night after night, to pray to the Infernal Gods to carry her off."[96] Indeed, Claudius spends nearly the first thirty pages of the book almost continuously demonstrating why he personally despises Livia, and then spends the rest of the book continuing to disparage her every few pages. Aside from being implicated in or outright accused of no small number of murders, Livia constantly meddles in the affairs of the imperial family — she refuses to let Claudius write a biography of Drusus,[97] she is implicated in making Julia bald (seemingly related to the tale from Macrobius in which Julia plucks out her grey hairs in an act of vanity and Augustus comments that she must be in a hurry to make herself bald[98] — nevertheless an interesting yet somewhat frivolous accusation),[99] she feeds Julia crushed flies to turn her into a sex-crazed "demented woman,"[100] she insists for no reason other than "how presumptuous it was" that Augustus use a signet-ring of Alexander the Great,[101] she personally has to sign the passports of any person wishing to visit Julia in exile,[102] and she is said to write and circulate an "obscene" song mocking Tiberius and calling him an "Old

[95] Graves (1934) 28
[96] Graves (1934) 324
[97] Graves (1934) 13
[98] Macrobius *Saturnalia*, trans. Caster II.7
[99] Graves (1934) 22
[100] Graves (1934) 71
[101] Graves (1934) 73
[102] Graves (1934) 77

He-Goat",[103] among countless other minor and seemingly petty tales of her interference and callousness. On nearly every page of the novel — which is over four hundred pages long — there lies some comment about Livia, and very few of them are even remotely kind, let alone flattering. Unequivocally, Livia is the central antagonistic figure — her name is mentioned 419 times throughout the novel, and only Augustus' name appears more often than hers. Yet the question still remains: why is Livia represented in this way, and why with such vitriol?

Of course, in Graves' writing, there is a case to be made for needing to have an antagonist, someone to set the events in motion. There must be a force for evil to propel the plot, and to match such great characters and such great forces of power, there must be an equally great antagonist. Livia, as a woman in power, living on the sidelines for nearly a hundred years of absolutely pivotal Roman history, is a good candidate for such an antagonist, and thus Graves cannot necessarily be blamed for choosing her as such. After all, Suetonius and Dio pave the path of suspicion of Livia that Graves writes in. However, what must be examined is his need to use such vitriol in his painting of Livia as an antagonist. It is within reason to make her over-ambitious, even controlling of her husband and the others in her family, even though there may not be sufficient evidence to illustrate this from her actual life. This is a work of historical fiction, after all. However, Graves seems to be determined to paint Livia as irredeemably bad, particularly in her complete and total emasculation of her husband (coupled with her penchant for poisoning).

---

[103] Graves (1934) 268

This single book of fiction in which Livia is maligned would be of little concern if it had not been such a cultural phenomenon. As it is, however, this book has influenced the entire field of scholarship surrounding Livia. There is seldom a scholarly book or article on her that does not mention *I, Claudius*, meaning that one work of fiction has colored what is supposed to be a purely historical and fact-based topic. Friesenbruch, a more popularizing classicist, mentions *I, Claudius* by the second page of *The First Ladies of Rome* and notes that Graves once stated of his depictions of the imperial women, "I have nowhere gone against history."[104] Of course, this seems somewhat untrue even simply examining his claim that Augustus and Livia never consummated their marriage, but holds up in other claims of his as well. Friesenbruch, while acknowledging that Graves is somewhat unkind to Livia and other imperial women, calls his "characterizations … entirely appropriate."[105] Wood, who perhaps has the most conservative and neutral take on Livia of any scholar, has reason to mention *I, Claudius* in her discussion of Livia in her book *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images, 40 BC — AD 68*, saying that Graves' "version of her character [is] perhaps best known to most modern readers including those well versed in Classical history and philology," while calling her portrayal therein and in other media "as darkly compelling as Sir Thomas More's portrayal of Richard III of England"[106] (referring to his 1519 biography of the king which greatly informed Shakespeare's play). Wood's acknowledgement that Graves' novel has somewhat pervaded the field of scholarship on Livia is certainly not the only one. Dennison, in his

[104] Friesenbruch (2010) 2-3
[105] Friesenbruch (2010) 3
[106] Wood (1999) 84

Empress of Rome: The Life of Livia, mentions *I, Claudius* within the first sentence on the first page of his author's note, and states that he sets out to create an image of Livia "more finely balanced" than that of what he calls "the Tacitus-Graves-Pulman triad"[107] — a triad consisting of one actual Roman historian and then two interpretations of *I, Claudius* (Jack Pulman being the writer of the BBC television adaptation). Dennison, as someone writing an entire book on Livia, feels compelled to acknowledge immediately that the field of study is colored by negative portrayals, and that a large percentage of those portrayals are due to *I, Claudius*. And Barrett as well, in the first sentence of the first page of his preface to *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome*, acknowledges that "if the general public has any impression of Livia … it is of the character created by … the highly-acclaimed BBC-TV production of *I, Claudius*."[108] Barrett, like Friesenbruch, acknowledges that Graves has been uniquely pervasive in infiltrating perception of Livia "by pleading that [his portrait of her] rests on impeccable historical foundations" but correctly asserts that "that argument has surprisingly little merit in this specific case."[109] Barrett later in his preface speaks of how "much ink has been spilt in trying to establish the truth about such ancient poisoning cases"[110] as Livia's, and how he will attempt to spill little ink himself on accusations which are impossible to prove. However, he feels so compelled to "spill ink" immediately to address *I, Claudius* — showing that its cultural pervasiveness is almost inescapable.

[107] Dennison (2010) ix
[108] Barrett (2002) ix
[109] Barrett (2002) ix-x
[110] Barrett (2002) xi

One could go on nearly endlessly listing historians who have, for one reason or another, felt compelled to include Graves' version of Livia in their examinations of the historical Livia. Out of the numerous books on Livia sitting on the shelf of the author, four out of the first six pulled off the shelf mentioned Graves' work almost immediately upon beginning discussion of Livia, and others are not at all difficult to find. However, more important work is discovering why Graves' work has so pervaded scholarly inquiry into Livia's life. Much of this rests, as Barrett argues, on Graves' continual assertations that his works are based entirely on historical fact. As the writer of other classical-themed works of fiction as well as a translator of ancient works, Graves was well-enough established in the world of popular classics to have his works taken seriously. Another reason may very well be the gripping nature of Graves' portrayal. The Livia of *I, Claudius* is exactly the sort of person one loves to hate — vile through and through, with limits on neither power nor ambition. In a book so sensational and skillfully written as *I, Claudius*, and one that has lent itself so well to adaptation, the images of the main (and delightfully villainous) antagonist are naturally difficult to shake, nor is the average reader given any particular reason to wish to shake them. At no point is Livia compellingly good in any way that would urge a reader to search for her redemption. This, coupled with the cultural pervasiveness of the novel and its adaptations, leads easily to a widespread public hatred of Livia. The fact that *I, Claudius* has been adapted so publicly and so undeniably well does not seem to help particularly either. Finally, we must consider the relative lateness of this portrayal. Graves' novel is only eighty-five years old, and the BBC television adaptation only forty-three years old. The recent nature of these unflattering portrayals

means they weigh more heavily on the cultural memory. Will, in one or two hundred years, *I, Claudius* be just as influential as it is today? It may seem silly to speak of times that far in the future, but considering that we today are only a decade away from the day when two thousand years will have passed since the death of Livia, it is perhaps prudent to think of her scholarship on so large a scale. Whether the impressions left by *I, Claudius* will last as long as those of Tacitus, Suetonius, or Dio is obviously still to be seen — they may very well, or they may not. However, in today's fields of both popular and academic classical studies, *I, Claudius* is just as (if not more) influential than in 1934.

In HBO's *Rome*, Livia appears in only a few scenes in the final episodes of the series. Yet she makes her undeniable mark as one of a trio of difficult women — Atia and Octavia being the other two — in the life of the young Octavian. While *I, Claudius* portrays an older, wiser, and much more powerful Livia as the person standing in Claudius' way, the Livia of *Rome* is young, newly married to Octavian, and still just as scheming and conniving of a woman. Livia's appearance is most notable in two scenes, one in which she is in bed with her husband and the other being the one of the final scenes of the series, that of Octavian's triumph over Cleopatra. In this triumph scene, taking place within the last ten minutes of the series, Livia has a rather harsh confrontation with Atia over who should take precedence in the parade. Livia rather clearly instigates the argument, and she does so because she wishes to be viewed more prominently in the parade, insisting that she, as Octavian's wife, should walk in front of his mother Atia.[111] Atia, who herself is not particularly kind in return to Livia, retorts harshly that she will likely be around longer

[111] *Rome* 2.10 "About Your Father"

than Livia (The irony of this scene, of course, is that Atia died before Octavian's triumphal parade, and thus Livia did in fact outlast Atia). Still, this insistence upon portraying Livia as confrontational and obsessed with her own public image is unsurprising, but still important, particularly because *Rome* is equally as unkind to Octavian, insinuating that the two of them are a perfect match for each other. The Octavian of *Rome*, unlike that of *I, Claudius*, is absolutely ruthless, and wishes to advance his interests at all costs, and Livia is made unkind, self-centered, and ruthless to match him.

Livia is also, unfortunately, portrayed along with her husband in a wholly unflattering sexual light, one which seems to be one of the important scenes in which she appears. In this scene, Livia, who has already been told previously by Octavian that she will be beaten during intercourse because it brings him sexual pleasure,[112] turns the tables on her husband, slapping and later choking him during their sexual encounters, which seems to please him even more than his previous strategy.[113] This scene may seem to be on the surface just another one of HBO's trademark gratuitous sex scenes, but it actually does a good bit of harm to Livia's image in a few very specific ways. First, it introduces to the viewer the idea of Livia and Octavian as sexual deviants in some way — and even though any viewer of *Rome* would likely know well that this scene, along with many of the occurrences and even many of the characters in the series, is clearly invented, this is not an image that leaves the mind easily. Second, and most important, it establishes the idea of Livia as a domineering, shrewd, and ever-in-control wife. She chokes her husband, showing physical domination over him, and then after their intercourse is finished, she

[112] *Rome* 2.8 "A Necessary Fiction"
[113] *Rome* 2.9 "No God Can Stop a Hungry Man"

lies beside him coolly and calmly while he attempts to collect himself, and immediately begins to talk of their familial politics with him.

This portrayal of Livia is absolutely no mistake — in fact, we see Livia as a good political mind in bed in the writings of Dio. In one of Dio's vignettes of Augustus and Livia's married life, Augustus and Livia spend quite a long time talking and discussing political strategy, and it is Livia who dominates the conversation. Urging Augustus to rule less harshly and forgive those who have plotted against him so that he may enjoy greater popularity, Livia speaks for a full six chapters entirely uninterrupted by her husband while she gives advice. Livia even gives her husband advice on foreign policy and the fortification of Rome, and at the end of it all, "Augustus heeded these suggestions of Livia … it was rather Livia herself, who was chiefly responsible for saving the life of"[114] a conspirator against Augustus. While there may be some subtle commentary present on Livia having saved someone who planned to kill Augustus (particularly since Dio is one of the historians who is more willing to accuse Livia of murdering her husband[115]), the fact remains that here we see Livia in a domestic and vulnerable setting, speaking to her sleep-deprived husband, with a surprising political shrewdness, and we see Augustus take her word immediately — Livia calculated, calm, and in control, and Augustus under her influence. Thus the HBO scene, while unflattering and certainly concocted in some aspects, is still rooted somewhat in history in others.

This portrayal of Livia as almost uncaring and unfeeling, and yet wholly in control, particularly after a non-standard sexual encounter, is still a major red flag for the handling

[114] Dio *Roman History* 55.22.1-2
[115] Dio *Roman History* 56.30.1-2

of her legacy when we look at these scenes in the context of what we already know about her reputation. The portrayal of Livia as sexually dominant is a particularly interesting one, and it seems to be absolutely a conscious and unconventional choice, not an accident while the writers were trying to lend a little sex appeal to the episode.

The portrayal of Livia as a sexual object is not exclusive to the 20th and 21st centuries. Even in Ovid's *Consolatio ad Liviam*, which can be considered wholly complimentary of the empress consort, we see sexual (and perhaps sexual deviance) and power equated when it comes to Livia. Ovid writes, "nec quemquam nervos extimuisse tuos"[116] ("nor to have had your power frightening anybody") when extolling Livia's virtues. Yet the use of the word "nervos" specifically is a reference to sexuality. Its singular form, "nervus," can mean "power," as commonly translated within this context, but also "sinew," "tendon," or "muscle" literally — and, most importantly, can be figuratively "sexual power," "virility," and particularly "penis." This seems to be an intentional association on Ovid's part — surely he would have been aware of the connotation of this word, and thus chose it deliberately. He associates her political power with male sexual power, and while he says that she has not used her power to intimidate others, the fact that Ovid feels the need to make this defense of Livia means there must have been some talk of Livia abusing her power. To tie her to the sexual power and the sexual organ outright of the opposite gender is certainly an unconventional move, a particularly interesting statement, that warrants notice when discussing the portrayals of Livia as sexually deviant.

[116] Ovid *Consolatio ad Liviam* 47

Ovid is not the only one prior to the modern age to reference Livia and sexual power, nor did HBO invent the concept of Livia as a sexual object. In the 1784 French Roman-themed pornographic book *Monumens du culte secret des dames romaines* ("Monuments of the secret cult of the Roman ladies," Figure IV prominently features an engraving, made to look like a cameo, of a nude Livia manually stimulating an also-nude Augustus, coupled with an inscription that reads, in part, "La complaisance de cette Princesse pour son èpoux fut extrême. Non contente de lui chercher par-tout de belles filles pour s'amouser, elle ne refusait pas même de prêter sa belle main aux plaisirs & à la lubricitè de l'Empereur"[117] ("The complaisance of this princess for her husband was

Left: Engraving from *Monumens du culte secret des dames romaines*, made to look like a Roman cameo, depicting Livia performing a sex act on Augustus

Text: Auguste et Livie. Gravé sur une Pierre de Cornaline. (Augustus and Livia. Engraved on a coral stone.)

Image from Hancarville (1784) 36

[117] Hancarville, *Monumens du culte secret des dames romaines: pour servir de suite aux Monumens de la vie privée des XII Césars* (1784) 37

extreme. Not content to look all over for beautiful girls to amuse him, she did not even refuse to lend her beautiful hand to the pleasures and the lubricity of the Emperor").

The sexual overtones here are clear, and yet the undertones are much more important. First, here we see Livia as not dominating her husband but rather serving him, and Livia here is clearly written as an object for sexual pleasure. The fact that she is appearing in a pornographic pamphlet notwithstanding, Livia clearly is forgoing her own pleasure in order to please Augustus — something that is present in her other sexual appearances.

In *Rome*, Livia agrees immediately to be beaten by Augustus because it will bring him pleasure, and in *I, Claudius* she is, as here, a happy cuckold for Augustus (although, unlike in Graves' work, she clearly enjoys some level of sexual congress with her husband). This question of Livia as a sort of a female wittol is, quite interestingly, actually present in ancient literature. Suetonius writes, "They say that even in his later years he was fond of deflowering maidens, who were brought together for him from all quarters, even by his own wife."[118] This debauchery of Augustus' seems to have been well-known, as Suetonius (despite the fact that he had previously mentioned that Augustus "loved and esteemed [Livia] to the end without a rival,"[119]) also feels the need to comment "that he was given to adultery not even his friends deny … Mark Antony charged him … with taking the wife of an ex-consul from her husband's dining-room before his very eyes into a bed-chamber, and bringing her back to the table with her hair in disorder and her ears glowing … his friends acted as his panders, and stripped and inspected matrons and well-grown girls … Antony also writes to Augustus himself in the following familiar terms … 'Do you

[118] Suetonius *Augustus* 71.1
[119] Suetonius *Augustus* 62.2

lie only with Drusilla? Good luck to you if when you read this letter you have not been with Tertulla or Terentilla or Rufilla or Salvia Titisenia, or all of them.'"[120] Clearly, it seems that Augustus had a taste for other women — and it seems that Livia was more than willing to turn a blind eye. Dio notes that she kept a happy marriage with Augustus by "being scrupulously chaste herself, doing gladly whatever pleased him, not meddling with any of his affairs, and, in particular, by pretending neither to hear or nor to notice the favorites of his passion."[121] This depiction of Livia as a willing and even happy cuckold, that she would deny herself sexual pleasure in the pursuit of Augustus' pleasure, is an interesting one. On one hand, it paints a positive picture of Livia as the ideal subservient Roman *matrona* — even the inscription below the engraving in *Monumens du culte secret des dames romaines* warns young brides, quoting Catullus, "prenez bien garde, jeun femme, de ne rien refuser à votre Epoux, crainte qu'il n'aille demander ailleurs"[122] ("take good care, young woman, not to refuse anything to your bridegroom, lest he should go elsewhere"). On the other hand, it clearly both denigrates Livia, making her not good enough for her husband, and reduces her to having little sexual agency or desire of her own. This depiction of Livia — as shown additionally in the consistently erotic or downright pornographic depictions of her — reduces Livia to a sexual object with little agency other than for pleasing her husband. It seems that in antiquity as well as in modernity, it is difficult for us to imagine Livia as a powerful woman without either sexualizing that power or taking it away from her in the bedroom — or even doing both.

[120] Suetonius *Augustus* 69.1-2
[121] Dio *Roman History* 58.2.5
[122] Hancarville (1784) 38

Livia's role in modern media and academia illustrates well the wide span of her reputation — how her unique position so easily captures the reputation, and how it can still be so unclear who exactly she was even two millennia after her death. It also often reveals the agendas of those writing about her — the way in which someone chooses to impugn or elevate Livia's character divulges much about how they view the greater issue of Livia's very new position in the Roman government and society. Indeed, the blatant sexualization of Livia, which is clearly visible throughout centuries of scholarship and fiction, seems to betray a further concern about women in power — that their power is inherently connected with their sex. Clearly, even in modernity, there still lies some discomfort around a Roman woman who possessed such power and influence as Livia did, and it shows in the way Livia appears in contemporary works.

Conclusion

In iconography, propaganda, literature, and even the work of historians, there are a number of stories that can be told about Livia Drusilla. A domineering wife, a cruel stepmother, an everywoman, a great beauty, a model of chastity and virtue, a fatherless refugee, a goddess, a sexual deviant, a murderer, a trendsetter, a mother of emperors, Ulysses in skirts, parent of the country, first among women, the original *Diva Augusta* — Livia has been all of these things and countless more over the past two thousand years. Whether any or all of them are correct cannot be determined with any sort of certainty — yet this makes the study of Livia's reputation all that much more interesting. With this many facets of her legacy, it is easy to lose sight of who Livia really may have been. Speculation aside, Livia Drusilla was a woman who, after having a particularly bad bit of luck during the Roman civil wars, got incredibly lucky when she met a man who fell in love with her and decided to make her his wife — because this man would not long afterwards become the first ruler of the Roman Empire, and so thrust his wife and everyone else around him into the spotlight in a way that had never before been done in Rome. All other intrigues can only belong with certainty to her reputation, and not to the woman herself. Yet by examining this reputation, we may better understand not only who Livia might have been, but also the greater socio-cultural status of women at the time, and how it was changing so drastically. The Roman world was not ready for Livia Drusilla to be such a large part of its political, societal, and religious spheres, and no one demonstrates that more clearly than her own son Tiberius.

At the conclusion of a project such as this, one question remains looming large: what now do we do with this reputation of Livia's? Are we to take only the parts that are objectively true with us forward into the future? Robert Graves' work has demonstrated that we cannot, nor necessarily should we. If we cannot separate a work of fiction from Livia's legacy, how can we separate the tales of historians who lived in her own time? We cannot, and at this point, we should not. Livia's reputation as a murderer, while almost certainly untrue and absolutely certainly unflattering, has over the past two thousand years become just as much a part of her as being married to Augustus. Ignoring the ways in which Livia has been maligned would constitute an erasure of the conflicts that stood between her and the positions and honors that people such as Augustus wished to grant to her, and furthermore an erasure of the enormous struggle that would have come with fundamentally changing the status of women over the course of one man's lifetime. In the fifty-one years that Livia and Augustus were married, a society that spanned much of the known world at the time changed in almost every conceivable way. The struggles that Tiberius faced when prompted to give his mother unprecedented honors prove quite solidly that not everyone in Rome was ready for or enthusiastic about these changes. It is not unreasonable that it would have been uncomfortable for many a Roman man at this time to witness Livia's meteoric rise to influence and power — for it was true power that she wielded, not mere influence alone.

Instead of unilaterally condemning these reluctances as a backwards patriarchy of the past, we must understand that they were not unreasonable for the time, and use that as a way to better understand the changes that were coming about for both women

and people in power. Livia, as both of these things, bore the brunt of the criticisms coming the way of both groups, at least among others in the family during her lifetime. After Livia, it seems that there was no shortage of women to fill a similar role, conniving and manipulative, desperate to maneuver those around them into — or out of — power. Agrippina Minor, Livilla, Messalina, Munatia Plancina, Antonia Minor, Lucilla, Faustina Minor, Julia Soaemias, Julia Maesa, and Julia Domna, among others, all were prominent figures in their time, and all were accused of one sort of unsavory behavior or another — and all in the first two and a half centuries of the Empire. That is to say, there was no shortage of women in power with complicated reputations in the Roman Empire, Livia only being the first.

As the inaugural member of this line, and with a period of influence that lasted for more than fifty years, Livia holds a position integral to how we understand our current view of women in power in the post-Augustan world. Without Livia to blaze this trail, none of the Imperial women — those considered good or those considered bad — might have risen to their elevated status. Thus, examining Livia's status throughout history might help us better understand the Roman women who followed in her footsteps, from those who were deified to those who suffered a *damnatio memoriae* and had their faces and names erased from view — and to understand the other women of the history who stood beside husbands and sons who ruled the world.

Livia's reputation has evolved in ways both positive and negative over the past two thousand years, but it has nonetheless weathered the centuries. Livia Drusilla's repute clearly did not die with her, nor with the Julio-Claudians, nor with her last

ancestor, nor with the last Roman who worshipped her. It instead became far larger than one woman, signaling a whole host of cultural changes and the pushback against such changes. Just as Livia Drusilla was a woman entirely new for her time, her reputation carved a new path as well.

Works cited

Barrett, Anthony A. *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome*. Yale University Press, 2002.

Barrett, Anthony A. "Tacitus, Livia, and the Evil Stepmother." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 2001, pp. 171-175.

Bartman, Elizabeth. *Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

British Museum Collection Online.
https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/

Dennison, Matthew. *Empress of Rome: The Life of Livia*. Quercus, 2010.

Dio, Cassius. *Roman History*. Translated by Earnest Cary, Herbert B. Foster. Harvard University Press, 1914. Loeb Classical Library 32.

Flory, Marleen B. "Dynastic Ideology, the Domus Augusta, and Imperial Women: A Lost Statuary Group in the Circus Flaminius." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, vol. 126, 1996, pp. 287-306.

Friesenbruch, Annelise. *The First Ladies of Rome: The Women Behind the Caesars*. Jonathan Cape, 2010.

Graves, Robert. *I, Claudius*. Random House, 1934.

Grether, Gertrude. "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult." *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 67, no. 3, 1946, pp. 222-52.

Hancarville, Pierre d'. *Monumens du culte secret des dames romaines: pour servir de suite aux Monumens de la vie privée des XII Césars*. 1784.

Jenkins, Thomas E. "Livia the Princeps: Gender and Ideology in the *Consolatio ad Liviam*." *Helios*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2009.

Johnson, Patricia J. "Ovid's Livia in Exile." *The Classical World*, vol. 90, no. 6, July-August 1997, pp. 403-420.

Kleiner, Diana E.E. *Roman Sculpture*. Yale University Press, 1992.

Kleiner, Diana E. E., and Susan B. Matheson, editors. *I Clavdia: Women in Ancient Rome*. University of Texas Press, 1996.

Kleiner, Diana E. E., and Susan B. Matheson, editors. *I Clavdia II: Women in Roman Art and Society*. University of Texas Press, 2000.

Laudatio Turiae. Translated by E. Wistrand.

Macrobius. *Saturnalia*. Edited and translated by Robert A. Kaster, Harvard University Press, 2011. Loeb Classical Library 510.

Ovid. *Art of Love. Cosmetics. Remedies for Love. Ibis. Walnut-tree. Sea Fishing. Consolation*. Translated by J. H. Mozley. Revised by G. P. Goold. Harvard University Press, 1929. Loeb Classical Library 232.

Ovid. *Tristia. Ex Ponto*. Translated by A. L. Wheeler. Revised by G. P. Goold. Harvard University Press, 1924. Loeb Classical Library 151.

Oxyrhynchus Papyri. Courtesy of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri Collection, http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/.

Perowne, Stewart. *The Caesar's Wives: Above Suspicion?* Hodder and Stoughton, 1974.

Strong, Donald. *Roman Art*. Penguin Books, 1976.

Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars*. Translated by J. C. Rolfe. Introduction by K. R. Bradley. Harvard University Press, 1914. Loeb Classical Library 31.

Syme, Ronald. *History in Ovid*. Oxford University Press, 1978.

Syme, Ronald. *Tacitus*. Oxford University Press, 1958.

Tacitus. *Annals*. Translated by Clifford H. Moore, John Jackson. Harvard University Press, 1931. Loeb Classical Library 249.

Wood, Susan E. *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images, 40 B.C. — A.D. 68*. Brill, 1999.

Wyke, Maria. "Augustan Cleopatras: Female Power and Poetic Authority." *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus*, edited by Anton Powell, Bristol Classical Press, 1992, pp. 98-140.

Non-print sources

Rome. Created by John Milius et al., HBO.

- "A Necessary Fiction." Season 2, Episode 8. Directed by Carl Franklin, written by Todd Ellis Kessler, 11 March 2007.
- “Deus Impeditio Esuritori Nullus (No God Can Stop a Hungry Man).” Season 2, Episode 9. Directed by Steve Shill, written by Mere Smith, 18 March 2007.
- “De Patre Vostro (About Your Father).” Season 2, Episode 10. Directed by John Maybury, written by Bruno Heller, 25 March 2007.