

**THE POLITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN OF THE
ROMAN ELITE, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION
TO THE AUTONOMY AND INFLUENCE OF THE
JULIO-CLAUDIAN WOMEN (44BCE TO CE68)**

ILONA ZAGER

**THE POLITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN OF THE ROMAN ELITE, WITH
PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE AUTONOMY AND INFLUENCE OF THE
JULIO-CLAUDIAN WOMEN (44BCE TO CE68)**

by

ILONA ZAGER

submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

CLASSICAL STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: DR M E A DE MARRE

JUNE 2014

Student Number: 32188943

I declare that

**THE POLITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ROMAN ELITE, WITH
PARTICULAR ATTENT TO THE AUTONOMY AND INFLUENCE OF THE
JULIO-CLAUDIAN WOMEN (44BCE TO CE68)**

is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated
and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SIGNATURE

(MS I ZAGER)

DATE

.....

- SUMMARY -

Many accounts, both ancient and modern, have maintained that the Julio-Claudian women had unprecedented influence in their spheres. This dissertation attempts to determine the degree of autonomy and influence that the Julio-Claudian women had and to examine the factors that may have contributed to their exceptional influence.

In trying to establish the extent and nature of the influence of the Julio-Claudian women, the ancient sources (literary, documentary and iconographic), in conjunction with modern scholarly views, were critically examined throughout. In attempting to determine the factors that influenced such weight and autonomy as these women had, the dissertation looks at the influences on women of earlier times, in particular the late Roman Republic, from a legal and a socio-historical angle. Whether the Julio-Claudian women could be considered, for example, to have been part of a “super-elite” in comparison with aristocratic women of earlier, and even later, times, was discussed and evaluated.

On the surface the Julio-Claudian women did seem to enjoy a wider range of freedoms, power and influence than their counterparts, or the Roman women before or after them. Yet it is clear from the sources that these women also had restrictions laid upon them and that the patriarchal framework still curtailed their influence. When they over-stepped the accepted bounds, they were invariably vilified by the ancient historians, and often came to be negatively portrayed by subsequent generations. Whether these women truly deserved their vilification, or whether it can simply be ascribed to the bias of the ancient writers, was also explored throughout.



- KEY TERMS -

- Julio-Claudian Women -
- Octavia Minor, Livia, Antonia Minor, Agrippina Major, Agrippina Minor -
- Women's influence and autonomy -
- Augustan Social Transformation -
- Augustan Principate -
- Julio-Claudian Dynasty -



– CONTENTS –

I.	Introduction	1
II.	The Ancient Sources	13
III.	Roman Women of Note before 44BCE	26
IV.	The Augustan Programme of Social Reform	40
V.	The Public Gaze, Patronage and Popularity	48
VI.	Diplomats and Power Brokers	65
VII.	The Succession and the Kingmakers	83
VIII.	Conclusion	111
Addenda:		
	Julio-Claudian Family Tree	116
	Timeline	117
	Bibliography	120
	List of Plates	129



CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

The subject of this dissertation is the degree of autonomy and influence enjoyed by the Julio-Claudian women of first century CE Rome and the political power they wielded in their respective spheres. Many accounts, both ancient and modern, have maintained that the Julio-Claudian women had unprecedented influence in the Roman world.¹ This dissertation attempts to investigate and determine the degree of autonomy and influence that the Julio-Claudian women had and to examine the factors that may have contributed to their exceptional influence.

Since it would have been beyond the scope of this dissertation to treat all of the female members of the Julio-Claudian family in detail, the following women were chosen as representative of the larger family group, particularly since the largest amount of evidence exists for them: Octavia Minor, Livia, Antonia Minor, Agrippina Major, and Agrippina Minor.

The foundation of our knowledge is the literary accounts written in antiquity, but sometimes coins, inscriptions and non-literary remains also offer valuable evidence. The latter are of particular interest because it is usually primary evidence, whereas the literary sources are mainly secondary sources, writing well after the events occurred. In most cases in the present study the non-literary evidence corroborates the literary sources, but this too can be useful in establishing the ancient writers' overall reliability on the issues under discussion.

In order to examine this topic profitably a very useful source of information for the Republican period is the laws that were passed concerning inheritance rights, *patria potestas*, the formation of kinship relationships, factors such as divorce, mortality and remarriage and the lawful structure of what constituted a Roman *familia*. The rights of women or rather the lack thereof were mentioned in these legal documents.² But, as we can attest today, what is law is not always practice, and the following chapters have borne this proviso in mind.

Republican women of the early Republic apparently did not have the freedoms that women of the late Republic enjoyed.³ Yet since the advent of Roman territorial expansion after the Punic Wars, it can be seen that women are mentioned more frequently by ancient writers, and the expansion brought with it many social changes, many of which our sources reflect.⁴

¹ For example, Gagarin, 2010: 147; Burns, 2006: 2 and 93; Bartman, 1999:413; Huntsman, 1997:1

² Kleijwegt, 2002:52

³ Burns, 2007:124-140

⁴ Claassen 1998:72

In spite of the fact that the majority of all extant Roman writing concerns the doings of men, not women, a few women in antiquity were studied, idealised, or despised, at least to the extent that we have gotten to know something of their lives within Roman society. Almost without exception, these women held both moral or real power and political influence; they were invariably from the upper classes (or married or connected with men who were).

Any study of ancient Roman women must focus on two problems: only male historians and writers speak about them, and those men are focused single-mindedly on the ruling class of Republic and Empire.⁵ For our purposes it is of course not problematic that the "short and simple annals of the poor" have little or no place in historical analysis before the 19th century, but the overwhelmingly and exclusively male perspective is something which cannot be ignored. References to women must be analysed to understand, and sometimes discount, the male perspective that produced them.

The lack of information and resources remains a significant problem in the study of any women in antiquity and the Julio-Claudian women of Rome are no different. Especially the lack of literature written by women is problematic, as pointed out by Moses Finley in his article *The Silent Women of Rome*.⁶ His view that by studying Augustus and his family relations one can learn much of relations between the sexes in ancient Rome creates an argument of its own i.e. "Augustus and his family personify most of the complexities, difficulties, and apparent contradictions inherent in the Roman relations between the sexes."⁷ One must question whether women of the Roman elite, and super-elite, can be taken as representative, in any case.

Modern scholarship

It is only in the last thirty years that research on women in ancient times has been conducted with serious intent, even though it was the women's liberation movement of the 1960s in the western world that gave impetus to research on women and specifically on their roles in antiquity. As Balsdon noted already in 1962, "intriguing as ancient Roman women may have been, they are the subject of no single work of deep and learned scholarship in English or in any other language".⁸

Part of the reason why scholars have for centuries been studying the ancient world without

⁵ Finley, 2002; Kleijwegt, 2002:51. For lower-class women, we know only what can be gleaned from archaeological finds, grave inscriptions, burial artefacts, and from this we can gain a working knowledge of their culture. This field of historical inquiry is expanding and much may yet be written and rewritten in the decades ahead as we seek to find the authentic voices of Roman women in their own times.

⁶ Finley, 2002:147-156

⁷ Finley, 2002:150

⁸ Balsdon, 1962:10

paying much attention to the female sector of society, is that the ancient authors themselves did not pay much attention to it, at least not for its own sake. Thus scholars of antiquity tended to ignore the women of Rome; only women of mythology such as the Sabine women and Lucretia received attention, and occasionally those women who served as *exempla* (either good or bad) in the ancient sources: Fulvia, Hortensia, Sempronia and Cornelia of the Gracchi. In addition, most modern historians also seem to follow the lead of the ancient historians, and their (mostly hostile) opinions on the women of the imperial household in 1st century Rome, especially the Julio-Claudian women, were hardly ever questioned.

Scholarship can be broadly divided into two groups, those who follow the ancient sources rather closely and sometimes uncritically, and those who take an alternative approach and discount, or deal creatively with, the cultural bias within which the accounts were created.

When using art and sculpture to illustrate their points on Roman women in *I Claudia II*, *Women in Roman Art and Society*,⁹ Diana Kleiner and Susan Matheson follow conventional lines in their approach toward the Julio-Claudian women. For example, their introduction clearly states that they believe Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio,¹⁰ when they wrote that Agrippina the Younger did murder her husband Claudius. There is no concrete evidence to the contrary, yet Josephus is less sure of the veracity of the murder claim.¹¹ The bias of the ancient historians(both in terms of their literary aims as well as the gender bias of their time) must also be taken into account and their allegations must be regarded with a certain amount of scepticism. Treggiari also follows the trends of the ancient sources by defining the women in relation to the men in their lives i.e. husbands, brothers, sons and fathers, in her article *Women in the Time of Augustus*.¹² In addition, we can see clearly from the epigraphic evidence that women of the Augustan period also saw *themselves* in relation to their male relatives.

In this discussion a less traditional approach to the ancient source material will be taken, which is to examine the positive attributes of the Julio-Claudian women, as well as discussing any power they may have had in their own right; Anthony Barrett and Jasper Burns are both modern sources which provide valuable insights for this perspective. Barrett is a prolific writer on the Julio-Claudian dynasty, in particular on the women. In his work titled *Agrippina, Mother of Nero* he follows the trail of the ancient sources concerning Agrippina, but he delves deeper to look for

⁹ Kleiner & Matheson, 2000:32

¹⁰ Kleiner & Matheson, 2000:20

¹¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.8.1

¹² Treggiari, 2005

possible motives.¹³ Barrett continued his work with *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* where he gives a useful perspective on what may be termed the start of female influence on male dominated spheres in Imperial Rome.¹⁴

In his book, *Great Women of Imperial Rome: Mothers and Wives of the Caesars*, Jasper Burns discusses Livia, Antonia and the two Agrippinas.¹⁵ He gives a positive yet matter-of-fact rendition of the lives of these women and the sources he uses to support his arguments are of great value to the researcher.

The ancient literary sources should never be taken at face value, and often a study of the authors' lives and background is necessary to ascertain the reasons why and how they wrote what they did. Their motives and indeed their texts, should be questioned, as was done by Gunhild Vidén in her work *Women in Roman Literature: Attitudes of Authors under the Early Empire*.¹⁶ She questions Tacitus' agenda in vilifying Livia the "stepmother" which even today evokes sinister images.¹⁷ In contrast, when discussing Tacitus' criticism of Agrippina the Younger, Vidén establishes that Agrippina's foul reputation seemed to have been entrenched before Tacitus' openly critical view of her.¹⁸ Vidén goes on to discuss the portrayal of the same imperial women in Suetonius and Pliny the Younger, also including a discussion of the philosophical views on women by Seneca.

To give research on the increased autonomy of the Julio-Claudian women any credence and validity (what freedom, if any, they enjoyed during the Augustan Principate, or even whether they made their own opportunities for influence), one must also look at the women of Late Republican Rome to see whether any changes in influence and power can be established. In discussing the general roles of women from Republican times until after the reign of Nero, Richard Bauman in his *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* used a thematic approach, including both political changes that affected women and as well as those that were caused by women,¹⁹ and the study of the effects of this social and political change for women is also highlighted by Syme in his *The Augustan Aristocracy*: "the monarchy brought out and enhanced the political importance of women".²⁰

¹³ Barrett, 1996

¹⁴ Barrett, 2002

¹⁵ Burns, 2007

¹⁶ Vidén, 1993

¹⁷ Vidén, 1993:19

¹⁸ Vidén, 1993:27-31

¹⁹ Bauman, 1992

²⁰ Syme, 1986:74

When looking for positive images of a Julio-Claudian woman of power, one has to go no further than Antonia Minor. She stands out significantly as being the only Julio-Claudian woman not unmercifully censured in the ancient sources.²¹ Even Tacitus had nothing negative to say about this woman.²² This may not be because Antonia was such a paragon of virtue, but because she was the mother of the beloved and famed general Germanicus, a man who was greatly admired by most of the ancient historians. Tacitus may have had a hidden agenda by elevating Germanicus and by proxy his mother, for the purpose of portraying Tiberius in an evil light. Nikos Kokkinos' biography of her, *Antonia Augusta, Portrait of a Great Roman Lady*, follows in the tradition of Tacitus and emphasizes the interesting contrast to the other Julio-Claudian women.²³

The literary sources for the imperial women and their lives are often condemnatory of the women themselves, portraying them as power-hungry and amoral, usually for specific reasons. Tacitus for example was known as a staunch supporter of the Republic and holds up an idealised version to compare it with the later rule under the emperors. He lamented the Principate and tried to point to all its flaws. This is not surprising when considering that he lived and worked under the emperor Domitian, who by all accounts was a despot. He often used women to illustrate and emphasize the decay of the Principate and its rulers.

*“Tacitus’ concern is the ever-shifting power-struggle on the Roman political field; and he perceives the ‘demonic’ within that struggle... This awareness of irrationality as a moving force is more striking in Tacitus’ narrative than in that of any historian of Rome, and the intrusions of the imperial women in matters of such import as emperor-making form one of the elements of unreason... In Tacitus’ Roman empire, as in Juvenal’s satire, a malicious but smiling female advances her unworthy favourite, places him well and uses all her wiles to protect him.”*²⁴

Thus the problem that confronts the ancient historian where it regards the women of the Julio-Claudians, is to try and ascertain the validity of Tacitus' statements.

The dissertation has been divided into 7 chapters plus a summarising conclusion. After Chapter I, the present chapter, which introduces the subject and approach to the famous women of the Julio-Claudians in the modern sources, the second chapter is devoted to an overview and discussion of the primary and secondary ancient literary and non-literary sources, their shortcomings and strengths, and what sort of evidence we can expect for a study of the women of the Julio-Claudians, and for the elite Roman women's sphere of influence in general.

²¹ Galinsky, 2005:8

²² A detailed discussion of the main ancient literary sources for this study will follow in Chapter 2.

²³ Kokkinos, 1992

²⁴ Rutland, 1978:29

Chapter III will examine not only some of the more prominent women of the Roman Republic before 44BCE, but also assess the literary contexts in which they appear, and how women steadily became more prominent in these sources.

The next chapter, Chapter IV, will review Roman marriage legislation introduced by Augustus, which ostensibly gave greater autonomy and influence to some Roman citizen women, which will form part of the discussion on the autonomy and influence of the Julio-Claudian women in the following chapters.

Chapter V will discuss the Julio-Claudian women of note themselves, with specific reference to Octavia Minor, Livia, Antonia Minor and Agrippina Minor. Noteworthy events as recorded by the sources will be used to indicate their growing prominence in the Roman world, especially with regard to patronage, diplomatic missions and public iconography. In Chapter VI the use these women made of their familial connections will be analysed, with specific reference to their power-brokering amongst the powerful families of the Roman empire, particularly Octavia Minor, Antonia Minor and Agrippina Minor. In Chapter VII the focus will be on the succession after Augustus and how particularly the mothers and wives of the emperors were instrumental in placing the successors on the throne, and the consequences of their involvement.

Chapter VIII will form the conclusion, where the most prominent threads of the dissertation will be summarised and drawn together.

The above divisions and the discussion preceding it are intended to show what will be studied in this dissertation, to establish how much autonomy was given - and taken by - the Julio-Claudian women of the first century CE, and to what extent were they able to influence the Roman political landscape and the course of history.

A brief introduction of the specific Julio-Claudian women that will be analysed and discussed, follows:

Octavia Minor (69 – 11BCE) was the elder sister of the emperor Augustus, born in Nola, Italy to Gaius Octavius, a Roman senator and Atia Balba, the niece of Julius Caesar.²⁵ She married for the first time in 54BCE, to Gaius Marcellus and had three children with him. Her husband died in 40BCE, and later that year in October, she was forced by Senatorial decree to marry Mark Antony to cement the Second Triumvirate. She played an important part in her brother Octavian's

²⁵ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 4.1

campaign to claim the Roman empire, especially in his conflicts with Mark Antony. She brokered peace between the two men in 37BCE, but it was short-lived. By 35BCE, Mark Antony had ordered Octavia to leave his house, and divorced her in 32BCE to marry Cleopatra. By 31BCE, after Antony's suicide, Octavia was a widow again.²⁶ She never remarried and raised all her children, and Mark Antony's children (even the twins he had with Cleopatra), in the Julio-Claudian house where her brother also resided. She has been lauded by ancient historians as the perfect Roman *matrona* and was the first lady of Rome during her lifetime. There have been hints that she was an active rival of Livia's, as they both sought to have their offspring inherit the mantle of Augustus, but no definite evidence is available to support this claim.²⁷

Livia Drusilla (58BCE – CE29) was the third and last wife of the emperor Augustus. She was from an old patrician family, the Claudii and was married in 43BCE to her cousin Tiberius Nero and had two sons with him, Tiberius and Drusus. Her first husband fought against the forces of Octavian, and they fled the proscriptions of 40BCE. In 39BCE they returned to Rome during the general amnesty and she was introduced to Octavian. According to ancient sources it was “love at first sight”, and Octavian divorced his wife Scribonia, on the day she gave birth to his only child, Julia. Nero was then persuaded by Octavian to divorce Livia and did so while she was six months pregnant with their second son Drusus. Three days after giving birth to Drusus, Livia and Octavian were married on 14 January 38BCE. Despite having no children together, they remained married for 51 years and she was considered Augustus' closest confidante and advisor. She also played a significant role in the succession after Augustus and it was ultimately her elder son Tiberius, who became emperor after Augustus died in CE14. It was only after Octavia's death in 11BCE,²⁸ that Livia seems to have become more prominent in politics, at least visibly, and contrary to her sister-in-law, she has often been vilified by the ancient writers, especially Tacitus.²⁹ She received numerous honours before and after her death and her influence on the Julio-Claudian clan and the future of Rome, cannot be denied.³⁰

Antonia Minor (35BCE - CE37) was the niece of the emperor Augustus, daughter of his sister Octavia and Mark Antony. Only six years old when her illustrious father died, she grew up with her mother and in her uncles' household. Promised from a young age to Drusus, the younger son of Livia, they were married when Antonia was seventeen years old and their love was attested to by most of the ancient writers.³¹ When Drusus died from his injuries in 9BCE, she refused to

²⁶ Plutarch, *Mark Antony*, 31-35

²⁷ Seneca, *On Anger*, 3.16.3-21

²⁸ Barrett, 2002:28

²⁹ For example: Suetonius, *Augustus*, 65; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3; Dio, 55.33.4

³⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 5.1

³¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.180; Valerius Maximus, 4.3.3; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 34

remarry even though her uncle Augustus pressurised her to do so. It has been suggested by ancient writers that she was his favourite of all his sister's and daughter's children. Lauded for her beauty and dignity, she was like her mother Octavia, described by the ancient writers as a perfect Roman woman.³² She bore three children that reached adulthood to her husband Drusus, the ever-popular Germanicus, Livilla and the later emperor Claudius. She was the grandmother of Caligula, the third emperor in Rome, her son Claudius succeeded him, and her great-grandson Nero (through Agrippina Minor) succeeded Claudius. She had great wealth and power behind the scenes and raised two emperors of Rome. She even starved her own daughter Livilla to death, after she uncovered treason against Tiberius which implicated Livilla.³³ Antonia committed suicide in CE37, after the madness of Caligula became plain for all to see. It was said by the ancient writers that she rather died than see her house fall into indignity.³⁴

Agrippina Major (14BCE - CE33) was the daughter of Julia and Agrippa, the granddaughter of Augustus, and the wife of the general Germanicus. She was said to have been a proud and strong-willed woman who never let anyone forget that she was the granddaughter of Augustus. Only her devotion and loyalty to her husband Germanicus, a favourite of the populace according to the ancient historians,³⁵ saved her from being vilified as Livia had been. She bore nine children to Germanicus, six of whom survived to adulthood. She was the mother of the later emperor Caligula, and also of the future empress Agrippina and grandmother of the emperor Nero. She accompanied her husband on all his military campaigns and was an inspirational sight for the legions. While with her husband on campaign, she quelled a mutiny and held a bridge in retreat and was lauded by her grandfather Augustus as the perfect Roman mother and wife.³⁶ When Augustus died in CE14, Tiberius became emperor and recalled his brother's son to Rome. From there he sent Germanicus and Agrippina to the eastern provinces, where Germanicus died in Antioch in CE19, under mysterious circumstances. Agrippina believed that he had been poisoned and when she returned to Rome with her husband's ashes, she saw Tiberius as her main rival and obstacle. After Livia's death in CE29, Tiberius banished Agrippina to the island of Pandateria where she died of starvation in CE33.³⁷ Although she never saw her dreams of becoming empress realised in life, her son Caligula became emperor four years after her death.

Agrippina Minor (CE15 - 59) was the daughter of Agrippina Major and Germanicus and the great-granddaughter of Augustus. In many ways she seems to have been like her mother, proud and

³² Suetonius, *Caligula*, 15.2; Dio, 59.3.4

³³ Dio, 58.11.7

³⁴ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 23.2

³⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.33; 4.50-53

³⁶ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 48.1; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.41-44; 1.64-68

³⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 5.3

willful but with a certain ruthlessness, as described by the ancient historians. She was married at thirteen to her second cousin Domitius Ahenobarbus and they had one son together, the future emperor Nero. Not much is known about Agrippina's life until the death of Tiberius and the ascension of her brother Caligula as emperor of Rome. Caligula gave many honours to his three sisters and even had coins minted with their images.³⁸ After the death of Drusilla in CE38, Caligula became increasingly unstable, and he banished both his sisters, Agrippina and Livilla, to the Pontine islands accusing them of treason. With the death of Caligula in CE 41, Agrippina's uncle Claudius, the son of Antonia and Drusus, became emperor and he recalled his two nieces from exile.³⁹ By this time Agrippina was a widow, but she soon married Gaius Crispus, a descendant of Sallust. Agrippina was said to have kept a low profile in those years while Claudius was married to Valeria Messalina, to avoid running afoul of the then empress, as her sister Livilla had done. Crispus died in CE47, leaving his whole substantial estate to Agrippina's young son Nero. Messalina was forced to commit suicide due to treason in CE48, and Claudius needed a new wife. Changing the incest laws, he married his niece Agrippina in CE49 and she became the new empress of Rome. Her influence over her uncle and husband was said to be extensive,⁴⁰ and Agrippina used that influence to facilitate her own influence and power and to place her son Nero on the throne. Nero was adopted by Claudius in CE50⁴¹ and made him his son and heir, above his own blood son Britannicus. Claudius died in CE54, from a plate of mushrooms and the ancient historians accused Agrippina of poisoning him.⁴² Nero now became emperor of all Rome, with his mother at his side. During the first months of Nero's reign, Agrippina was placed on equal footing with her son, receiving kings and supplicants in her own right, and Tacitus informs us that the Roman empire was at that time, ruled by a woman. Relations between Agrippina and Nero soon deteriorated however, and in CE57 she left Rome to live in Misenum.⁴³ Her supporters such as Pallas, were dismissed from the palace and Burrus and Seneca had turned against her, advising Nero to be rid of his interfering and domineering mother. After several failed assassination attempts, Nero finally succeeded in having his mother Agrippina killed in CE59. It would apparently haunt him until his death in CE68. Most ancient Roman sources are exceptionally critical of Agrippina Minor, because she dared to step outside the conservative Roman ideals regarding the roles of women in society.

The reason these five Julio-Claudian women are specifically used as examples, is their prominence and influence, especially when the ancient sources are considered. No other Roman women are as discussed or visible in the sources, both literary and physical remains, as these five

³⁸ Dio, 59.3.4

³⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.2.4

⁴⁰ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 26

⁴¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.8

⁴² Dio, 60.34; Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.66; Suetonius, *Claudius*, 44-6

⁴³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.14

Julio-Claudian women are. It does suggest that not only are the information regarding them most abundant, but also that their prominence and influence garnered the most discussion and recording amongst ancient sources.



– CHAPTER II –

THE ANCIENT SOURCES

The Julio-Claudian women seem to have been among the most controversial women in the ancient world and certainly the most-mentioned by the ancient historians of the Early Empire. The sources providing information about the lives of these women are at best biased, mostly giving a negative picture of their characters and actions.

The examination of the available literary evidence (of varying quality and usefulness in their provision of information) will help to determine the impact the transformation of the Roman world under Augustus had on the roles of the Julio-Claudian women.

The first problem we encounter when we study the history of the ancient Romans, is that we have only scraps left of the histories and literature that were written in antiquity.⁴⁴ Especially where it concerns women, the literature of the period yield little, yet what they yield is of utmost importance and provides us with the best information we have.⁴⁵ In studies of the imperial family in this period, three writers are prominent: Tacitus, Suetonius and Cassius Dio, each with a different approach. Tacitus and Dio wrote in a narrative framework, and in an analytical format. Suetonius wrote biographies, not histories; the difference in genre is significant, but the opinions expressed by the authors represent the most dramatic divergence.

The ancient sources cannot be taken at face value, however, and I shall now critically assess the most relevant literary sources as these concern the Julio-Claudian women of Rome.

Although **Polybius** (200-118BCE) lived and wrote his *Histories* before the rise of the Julio-Claudians, his knowledge of pre-Augustan society, politics and even mythology is invaluable in any discussion concerning the development of female autonomy and influence in the Roman world. While Polybius' historiographical methods are inadequate by modern historiographical standards, his *Histories* continue to be valued by historians for their detailed and perceptive treatment of the period they cover. His thoughts on politics and on the writing of history have been a recurring focus of critical attention throughout the centuries since his death. Later Roman writers criticized his writing as stuffy and pedantic, but nonetheless used him extensively as a source; the statesman and philosopher Cicero was influenced by his theory of mixed constitutions, and the historian Livy derived much of his material about the rise of Rome from the *Histories*.

Polybius was a commentator on morality and he saw any interference of women in the male

⁴⁴ Smallwood, 1967:41

⁴⁵ Cameron & Kuhrt, 1983:x-xiii; D'Ambra, 2006:3-6

province of public life as a sign of moral decay.⁴⁶ But Polybius dealt mainly with war and politics and hence women are particularly marginalised in his work. He does, however, provide quite detailed descriptions of individual women and their personalities and according to Eckstein his descriptions are often surprisingly positive. He praised women who were proper Roman *matronae*, those of virtue and good moral standing.

About women in general, however, Polybius was less flattering. He considered women to have uncontrolled emotions, given to periods of “frenzy” and easily overcome by excessive passion.⁴⁷ Eckstein argues that these portrayals of women in general probably are more representative of Polybius' attitude to women.⁴⁸ Those he praised were “exceptional”.

Polybius remains the major source of historical information about the rise of the Roman Empire and he continues to invite critical commentary and analysis. Historians still debate his attitudes towards the events he recounts as well as the exact nature and insight of his views on the purpose and methodology of history.

The *Parallel Lives* of **Plutarch** (c. 46BCE – 120CE) are in similar to the work of Suetonius, since Plutarch wrote them as biographies of individual paired Greeks and Romans, to illustrate their common moral virtues and vices. Again, recording history and major historical events were not his main aim, but rather to convey those sketches and anecdotes which illustrated his moral theme. In his *Moralia*, he includes a section 'On the Bravery of Women', which is of interest because the selection shows quite clearly that Plutarch's commendation of their brave deeds was applauded precisely because they were of limited duration. Generally, Plutarch is considered to have had a rather low opinion of women, to which the deeds of bravery, like his praise of his wife on the death of their daughter, were an exception to the rule.⁴⁹

Livy (59BCE – 17CE) in his *History from the Foundation of the City* discussed the Roman Republic in depth and also commented on the social reforms of Augustus. Since his work is so vast and covers such a long period, it provides a large amount of commentary on laws, reforms and their consequences throughout the Republic and Principate. According to Collingwood's interpretation, Livy saw Rome as the “heroine” of his narrative with Rome as the agent whose actions he is describing. Therefore Rome is presented as a static substance, therefore changeless and eternal. From the beginning of the narrative Livy's Rome is ready-made and complete. To the end of the narrative she has undergone no spiritual change and his women are also portrayed as immutable, subject to a specific and set pattern of behaviour.⁵⁰

Collingwood's interpretation of women in Livy was supported by Smethurst, who also

⁴⁶ Walbank, 1972:167

⁴⁷ Polybius, 10.4.7

⁴⁸ Eckstein, 1995:152

⁴⁹ Walcot, 1999:183

⁵⁰ Collingwood, 1946:43-44

thought that women were mere “puppets” in Livy’s history.⁵¹ They were “*incapable of positive action, except when impelled by base motives*” and their role was that “*of foils illustrating the almost entirely masculine virtues that Livy wished to instil.*”⁵² Such a black-and-white view sees Livy’s narrative as a kind of reflex patriarchal response to contemporary anxieties about real women. Certainly their roles are primarily public, but with political consequences. The motives ascribed to them may in some cases be read as well intentioned (e.g., the Sabine Women, Lucretia) or at least uncertain (Rhea Silvia, Tarpeia, Horatia); and Livy makes the point that both Tullia and Tarquin are evil.⁵³ Stevenson maintains that the women in Livy served as *exempla* of how the ideal woman should behave in public, and support the efforts of her man.⁵⁴ He further argues that the women generally fall short of the ideal and that Livy gives an overall picture of women as unstable, a warning that men should be wary of influential women.⁵⁵

Similarities between women in Livy's writings and with later ancient historians such as Tacitus, cannot be considered coincidence. The specific similarity between Tanaquil and Livia in the manner that they proclaimed the next ruler(s), is striking and can be seen as later historians following the example of Livy by using the example of women to make an ideological point.⁵⁶

Many later historians thought that Livy was pro-Augustan, since he wrote during the reign of Augustus, while others thought that he gave veiled critique on the Augustan Principate, but perhaps the most acceptable argument was presented by T.J. Luce, who argued that Livy was in actuality an impartial recorder of history, and that his ambivalence towards Augustus was genuine.⁵⁷

Smethurst wrote that Livy focused on the dubious quality of women’s advice and the problems that can flow from this. One notable feature of the civil wars was the intrusion of prominent women into political and military deliberations, and the consequent targeting of them by opposition forces. Contemporaries were in particular shocked by the disturbing roles played by women such as Fulvia, Octavia and Cleopatra during the tumultuous years of the 40s and 30s BCE. Indeed, if Livy’s first *pentad* was completed by 27BCE, it was written in the years that were more “Actian” than “Augustan,” so that he would surely have had these women in mind, along with others at various levels of a shaken society.⁵⁸

Marcus **Velleius Paterculus** (19BCE - 31CE) is probably our most contemporary literary source for the period under discussion, since his *Roman History* covered the history of the Roman

⁵¹ Smethurst, 1950:82

⁵² Livy, 1.43

⁵³ Livy, 1.46.7

⁵⁴ Stevenson, 2011:175

⁵⁵ Stevenson, 2011:176

⁵⁶ Claasen, 1998:76-78

⁵⁷ Luce, 1977:xxxvii

⁵⁸ Smethurst, 1950:85

world, particularly the late Republic and early Empire up to the death of Livia in CE29. Unfortunately, however, he is so assiduous and hyperbolic in his flattery of the Roman emperors of his time, particularly Tiberius, that his work is less than trustworthy. His attitude to women can be termed standard: he is flattering of what he considers to be female virtue (his description of Livia, for example, reads "*a woman pre-eminent among women, who in all things resembled the gods more than mankind*"), but dismissive of women like Fulvia, of whom he says that her gender was the only feminine thing about her.⁵⁹

Although **Tacitus** (c. 56 to after 117CE) is a secondary source, he is our main literary source of information regarding the Julio-Claudian reign, from the death of Augustus to the death of Nero, often indicating (generally with disapproval) the power of the imperial women.⁶⁰ Tacitus' obvious dislike for the Principate, due to his well-known reverence for the lost Republic, characterises the *Annals*. Livia, to whom he refers as "*a real catastrophe to the nation, as a mother and to the house of the Caesars as a stepmother*",⁶¹ is not portrayed with any objectivity. But, as is the case with almost all his female portraits, negative female portraits are more likely to be a reflection on the emperors with whom they were associated. It is very likely that Livia is portrayed in this extremely negative way because she was the mother of Tiberius, whom Tacitus detested.⁶²

Agrippina the Younger is discussed in particular depth and detail.⁶³ Tacitus clearly disapproved of women who did not adhere or conform to the traditional Republican ideal and especially so of women with unfeminine or "masculine" characteristics.⁶⁴ Tacitus believed strongly that a woman's only interest should centre solely on her husband and children.⁶⁵

Two major areas of critical interest in Tacitus' work concern his style and his reliability as an historian,⁶⁶ and here modern views on Tacitus differ. Although all consider him one of the greatest of ancient historians, there has been much discussion concerning his bias. O'Gorman for instance argues that the *Annals* is an ironic portrayal of Julio-Claudian Rome, a comment on the perversion of Rome's republican structure in the new Principate.⁶⁷ Wellesley argues that Tacitus cannot be wholly trusted and that his work is distinctly biased.⁶⁸ His unrelenting hatred of Tiberius and counterbalanced admiration for Germanicus is well known though Tiberius is generally considered by modern scholars to have been an uncharismatic though very able ruler, who upheld the

⁵⁹ Velleius Paterculus, 130.5 and 2.76

⁶⁰ For example most pertinently in the *Annals*, 1.3; 1.69; 6.25; 12.7 and 13.2

⁶¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.9

⁶² Shotter, 1968:194-195

⁶³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12 ff

⁶⁴ Foubert, 2010:345-6

⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 53

⁶⁶ Hardy, 1976:142-144

⁶⁷ O'Gorman, 2000:178

⁶⁸ Wellesley, 1954:13-33

principate and imperial rule,⁶⁹ while Germanicus was rumoured to have been in favour of a return to the principles of the Republic, a goal to which Tacitus himself subscribed. Thus Tacitus has long been considered biased, an opinion I agree with. Braund argues that the idea of an “open mind” and unbiased view, is a “mirage” and that Tacitus was influenced by his life as a privileged Roman senator who lived under imperial rule.⁷⁰

Woodman (2009) takes a critical look at that which we take for granted, that ancient historians differed considerably from modern ones, and that what the ancient historians wrote is better served by being read as literature, rather than as history. Woodman suggests that Tacitus should be read his poetic language. He is openly sceptical that some of the events reported by him actually occurred.

Woodman further contends that although Tacitus understandably did not write like a modern historian, he also did not write like the other ancient historians, either. Tacitus chose to “pervert the norms of history in order properly to reflect the perversion”⁷¹ which occurred when the republic became an empire. O’Gorman likewise has argued that, when reading Tacitus, it is bad policy to focus solely on either his politics or his style, for “*Tacitus conveys to his readers his conception of imperial politics by enmeshing them in ambiguous and complicated Latin sentences*”.⁷²

Ronald Mellor describes Tacitus's style as carrying a moral and political authority that impresses, even intimidates, the reader;⁷³ that he is unlike Herodotus, who observes and chronicles, that Tacitus is instead a judge, who “*adjudicates morality and politics*”.⁷⁴ He further argues that Tacitus' “*remarkable combination of nobility and intimacy, of gravity and violence, is enormously effective at conveying the underlying sense of fear that pervades the Histories and the Annals*.”⁷⁵

In his conclusion, Mellor also maintains that Tacitus was, above all, a moral commentator on history.⁷⁶ This statement is reflected in Tacitus' treatment of the Julio-Claudian women, as his unflattering descriptions of them were intended to reflect his disapproval of imperial reign in general and of the Julio-Claudian emperors specifically.

The narrative structure that Tacitus inherited is questioned by McCulloch, who asserts that “*whether they be rumours, explanations or attitudes, [they] influenced his contemporaries' perceptions of the Julio-Claudian dynasty*”.⁷⁷ McCulloch also demonstrates how Tacitus resolved any conflict between fact and impression by “*clarifying or qualifying the contemporary explanation*”.⁷⁸

⁶⁹ Dunstan, 2010:280

⁷⁰ Braund, 1985:2-4

⁷¹ Woodman, 2009:16

⁷² O’Gorman, 2000:177

⁷³ Mellor, 1993:2

⁷⁴ Mellor, 1993:3

⁷⁵ Mellor, 1993:3

⁷⁶ Mellor, 1993:167

⁷⁷ McCulloch, 1984:viii

⁷⁸ McCulloch, 1984:9

Santoro L'Hoir states that although most modern historians are aware of Tacitus' rhetorical style and the bias of his moral commentary on imperial rule, the Julio-Claudian women in Tacitus continue to be viewed as power-obsessed individuals with decidedly masculine qualities by most critics.⁷⁹ She further explains that Tacitus was mainly concerned with the appropriation of male *imperium* by a small coterie or even by individuals, and that women's usurpation of male power was a symptom of this more serious problem.

These analyses give insight into the way in which Tacitus wrote, and how he perceived the subjects of his *Histories* and *Annals*. His attitude towards imperial rule and women in particular must be taken into account when we discuss his contributions on the lives of the Julio-Claudian women.

Suetonius (c. 69 – after 122CE) wrote extensively about the imperial women of the 1st century CE, always in relation to the imperial figures which he took as the subjects of his biographies. In his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* he provided fairly detailed descriptions of Messalina, Agrippina the Younger,⁸⁰ Claudia Octavia⁸¹ and Poppaea.⁸² As a biographer rather than an historian his text contained a number of chronological errors and the *Lives* are peppered with scandalous rumours and gossip.⁸³ He was also less critical of his sources than Tacitus (for example the matter of reputed incest between Agrippina the Younger and her son Nero was questioned by Tacitus while Suetonius accepted the rumour as unquestionable truth).⁸⁴ Although he was not as condemnatory of the Julio-Claudian women as either Tacitus or Cassius Dio, and humorous anecdotes can often be found in his work, the *Lives of the Caesars* are slanted towards negative portrayals of women. The biographer's portrayal of Livia and Agrippina certainly subverts ideals espoused on imperial coins and statues.

As secretary to both Trajan and Hadrian, Suetonius had access to Senatorial records, personal letters and records of previous emperors. With the small role that Suetonius writes for Poppaea, he reveals his independence from Tacitus, whose *Annals* were published a few years before his own work.

Pryzwanski argues that, because Suetonius' *Lives* centre on male subjects, his picture of women is fragmented at best and that the biographer uses this fragmentation to manipulate the presentation of his female characters.⁸⁵ Livia, for instance, is cast as a "good" wife in the *Augustus* but as a "bad" mother in the *Tiberius*. Suetonius' often inconsistent drawing of women reveals that he uses them primarily to elucidate certain aspects of the men associated with them. Having a

⁷⁹ Santoro L'Hoir, 1994:5

⁸⁰ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 26

⁸¹ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 24 and Suetonius, *Nero*, 57

⁸² Suetonius, *Otho*, 1

⁸³ Gallivan, 1974:297-318

⁸⁴ Suetonius, *Nero*, 28.2

⁸⁵ Pryzwanski, 2008:10-27

“good” wife, mother, or sister reflects well on an emperor, while having a “bad” one reveals his lack of authority.

Cassius Dio (c. 155 – 235CE), who used Tacitus, Suetonius and Plutarch among his sources, also mentioned the imperial women quite frequently in his *Roman History*. Scholars have interpreted the opening decades of the third century as a period when the imperial women of the Severan dynasty held substantial political power.⁸⁶ It was during this political and cultural climate that the senatorial historian Cassius Dio wrote his ambitious *Roman History*, spanning about 1400 years of largely mythical history, although much of this has been lost. The portrayals of politically involved Roman women were important literary components of Dio’s historical project and the individual Roman women portrayed in Dio’s *History* fulfil several moralizing and narrative functions.⁸⁷ From these representations of women it is possible to gauge Dio’s opinion of the role of women in relation to political power and understand how Dio constructed models of appropriate and inappropriate feminine behaviour. Swan takes a slightly different angle and argues that female power made Dio anxious and this is why he used scenes such as Octavian resisting Cleopatra or Tiberius circumscribing his mother Livia’s power, as “...a harmful exemplum of female ascendancy...”.⁸⁸ Dio expressed great disapproval of the power wielded by Messalina in particular.⁸⁹

Documentary Sources

For the purposes of this study, two main categories of primary documentary evidence will be examined, inscriptions and coins. Non-literary sources provide a wealth of information, but their main usefulness and purpose here is to compare them with the literary accounts, and thus assess the reliability of the latter on particular issues. The value of the documentary evidence also lies in their primary nature, as most of the literary sources are secondary.

Inscriptions:

Epigraphy, the study of words and symbols engraved, painted, or written on any material surviving from Antiquity, from metals, pottery/vases, gemstones, mosaics, and so forth, excepting papyrus, is a valuable source of information. It records not only events and lives of great and important people, but also those of more humble Roman citizens,⁹⁰ and that is of value even for this study, since it provides a large body of material for an understanding of the society from which they originate. Although generally this source material has a number of limitations, fortunately elite Roman women are well represented within this evidence as a whole. One of its limitations is that inscriptions tend to reflect a specific artificial situation, i.e. the ideal rather than the reality, expressed in a particular formulaic style and language. These formulae can also, however, have

⁸⁶ Mallan, 2010:iii

⁸⁷ Mellor, 1993:167

⁸⁸ Swan, 2004:5-7

⁸⁹ Dio, 29.4-6.

⁹⁰ Martin, 1997:7-8 :4-7

meaning when related to universal values, even if they have none for the individual: if not all Roman women were perhaps the modest, chaste and faithful wives and daughters of the inscriptions, this is clearly what Roman society desired them to be. Another limitation is that what we have today often survives by accident and not by design, and conclusions are often drawn on the basis of imperfect evidence, not least being the fact that women are under-represented in epigraphy. Nevertheless, bearing all these limitations in mind, inscriptions have the advantage of often surviving in large quantities.⁹¹

From a collation of inscriptions mentioning women one can soon distinguish that which is formulaic from that which is not. There are many examples of the former, and the ideals held up by Roman society emerge clearly. From the latter one can learn something about how the Romans valued individual relationships. Honorary inscriptions - a far smaller number than epitaphs - reveal how formulae used for men can also be transferred to women. The division between public and private in the majority of cases reflects status, since information about private life and relationships is often derived from lower status groups, on tombstones for example, while honorary inscriptions more commonly stem from the elite. Epigraphic material has both male and female authorship, but reveals that in general Roman women were seen and saw themselves in the light of their relationships with men, usually members of their own family.

Coins:

Coins from the Julio-Claudian period have also been used in this study - the new and emerging dynasty seeking to establish itself in the Roman world produced a fair amount of this type of self-advertisement. Again, the numismatic evidence did not deliver anything that took us in another direction from the literary evidence, but was used mainly as corroboration. The importance of this must not be underestimated, however, since much of the extant literary evidence is often so slanted that it might easily have been dismissed, had there not been corroboration of some kind. Numismatic evidence of course also has the added advantage of being contemporary and hence primary.

Material Remains

Material remains in the form of monuments and buildings, and particularly their iconography, make an important contribution to the study of Julio-Claudian women. As in the case of epigraphy and numismatics, the Julio-Claudian women are comparatively well represented in the evidence. Monuments such as the Ara Pacis, for example, are a significant representation of the idea of family in the Augustan Principate and are of value when one is studying the attempted social

⁹¹ MacMullen, 1990:12

transformation of Augustus.⁹²

Funerary monuments and wall paintings are also of interest, suggesting that the importance of married couples and their private relationships took cultural precedence over male relationship and even, in some cases, over the severe authority of the Roman *paterfamilias*.

Iconographical material does, however, present something of a problem for research purposes, since these artefacts, although they often reside in the many modern museums, are often unpublished and not always accessible. Many generic and iconographic traditions as well as gender assumptions are involved in the assessment of iconography as evidence for the role and position of women.⁹³ Generally images tend to idealize or romanticize reality, but some examples run counter to this tradition and show a startling "warts-and-all" realism. Since no female images have so far come to light which would stimulate a different direction of enquiry or offer a basis for a new theory, iconography, as in the case of the documentary evidence, will be used in this study mainly as corroborative evidence for other source material.

Conclusion

Although it cannot be denied that the shortage of reliable resources, both literary, documentary and material, have been an obstacle in establishing the extent of the autonomy and influence that the Julio-Claudian women enjoyed, we are fortunate to possess such a combination of evidence for the topic at hand, and we are able to cross-check a variety of issues which the sources mention. One shortcoming, however, must be dealt with carefully. While each of our source-types presents its own problems, the shared handicap is that the sources from which our picture of the Julio-Claudian women is made up are either male-authored or dominated by a male value system, including the language in which inscriptions are couched, or artistic representations. This can only be partly overcome by a constant awareness of these perspectives and dealing with every source-extract with the biases of the author in mind. Nevertheless, the perspectives of the patriarchal society from which these women came, and the fact that we have only male writers stating their views, made it difficult to establish the "real" Julio-Claudian women and the lives they lived. While subjectivity varied among literary and non-literary material, all evidence had to be carefully approached to determine as accurate a reflection of these women's autonomy and influence as possible.

⁹² Conlin, 1997:lii; Favro, 1998:19-22

⁹³ Kampen, 1991:219



– CHAPTER III –

NOTABLE WOMEN BEFORE 44BCE

This chapter will examine a few female predecessors that have caught the attention of Roman authors, since it will be used to explain some of the attitudes and perceptions of the period that is the focus of this study, namely the first century CE. Before 44BCE very few women are mentioned by the ancient Greco-Roman authors.⁹⁴ Those that do get mentioned are mostly moral *exempla*, either paragons of virtue, such as Lucretia, or traitors to Rome, such as Tarpeia. Before and during the early years of the Roman Republic, women were restricted in many ways similar to their Greek sisters (excepting Spartan women in the latter case, as pointed out by Pomeroy).⁹⁵

Ideally, Roman women were expected to tend the house and the family and not to involve themselves in politics, war, finances or the pursuit of intellectual learning. There is a strong tendency in all periods of Latin literature to hark back to this 'ideal', the Lucretia-like model.⁹⁶ The Etruscans, who had considerable influence on Roman culture, gave more autonomy to their women than their Latin counterparts, although the Greeks considered them “immoral”.⁹⁷ Etruscan women, like the Roman women, were permitted to dine with their husbands and male relatives, drinking wine and walking in public beside the men in their lives.

Livy is our main source for the women of earliest Rome throughout the kingships and the early Republic. How accurate his descriptions are is to be debated,⁹⁸ and his description of the early foundation of Rome resembles legend rather than history. Yet he is the earliest source we have for the Roman women of legend, such as Lavinia (the wife of Aeneas), Rhea Silvia (mother of Romulus and Remus), Acca Larentia (foster-mother to Romulus and Remus), Hersilia (wife of Romulus), the Sabine women, Tarpeia and Horatia.

The first known woman to wield any political power in the Roman world, albeit through the men in her life, appears to have been the Etruscan Tanaquil.⁹⁹ If there is any accuracy in the writings of Livy, she can literally be considered to have been the first “kingmaker” in the history of Rome, since Rome still had kings before the advent of the Republic. Daughter of a powerful family, she encouraged her husband Lucius Tarquinius Priscus to leave their home city of Tarquinii and

⁹⁴ Although there are female authors from Greco-Roman times, they did not write about women or the female experience and most of their work only survives in quotations by male authors. Their subject matter seemed to have been mostly poetry such as the works of Sappho, or philosophy such as the works of Aspasia (as quoted by notable male philosophers). Nicobule is one of the few female writers quoted, who apparently wrote a history of Alexander the Great, and Pamphile's historical works during the reign of Nero have also been quoted by male counterparts; and some few female authors wrote scientific treatise such as Pliny the Elder's quotations from Salpe the herbalist and midwife. Letters from Cornelia survived where she discussed politics with her sons, the Gracchi brothers. The writings of female authors are mostly lost to us. (taken from Plant, 2004:2-10; 243-249)

⁹⁵ Pomeroy, 2002:137

⁹⁶ Juvenal, *Satire* 6, is probably the strongest and most extensive example.

⁹⁷ Theopompus of Chios, *Greek Histories*, 43

⁹⁸ Dorey, 1971:6-9

⁹⁹ Livy, 1.34, 39, 41

migrate to a new *patria* Rome, in search of appropriate recognition for a man of his ability.¹⁰⁰ Tanaquil used her influence with her husband, as well as her religious authority by citing prophecy, to attempt to have two men (in succession) ascend the throne as kings of Rome. The two men concerned were her husband, Lucius Tarquinius Priscus and his successor to the throne, Servius Tullius, who grew up in the court of Priscus under the tutelage of Tanaquil. She also married her daughter to Tullius, and thus gained additional influence with the future king.¹⁰¹

Tanaquil's 'inspirational' role in the Tarquin dynasty was probably a feature of the earliest written accounts.¹⁰² Where at least one portrayal has identified her with female virtues,¹⁰³ Livy emphasises her political skills and makes her a figure of substantial public importance. This has been thought to reflect the higher public profile of Etruscan women mentioned above but it accords with other portrayals of women in Livy's first book.

Tanaquil's patronage of the two kings led to friction with other claimants to the throne and ultimately caused the deaths of both men. Her husband Tarquinius Priscus was assassinated with an axe and Servius Tullius too died horribly, at the hands of one of Priscus' and Tanaquil's natural sons.

The next woman presented by Livy as being politically motivated and a kingmaker in her own right, was Tullia Minor, described as the most evil of women by the ancient sources, as her influential role led to violence and tyranny. The younger daughter of the Etruscan king Servius Tullius, she is said to have propelled her brother-in-law, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud) to murder both her own husband and his wife, Tullia's sister, in order to marry her. She then persuaded her new husband to kill her own father, so that he could become king. Tarquin, according to Livy, was just as bad as Tullia, but "*evil was drawn to evil but the woman took the lead.*"¹⁰⁴

According to Livy, Tullia claimed Tanaquil as her role model, although Livy made Tullia out to be far more evil than Tanaquil. It could be that Livy, in depicting this progressive evil, wanted to emphasise that the overthrow of the kingship was 'just', thereby validating the establishment of the Roman Republic. Tullia did not stay behind the scenes and is described as openly flaunting her power, appearing in public to proclaim Tarquin as king¹⁰⁵ and even driving her wagon over the body of her dead father.¹⁰⁶

While any capacity for leadership was regarded as masculine and unbecoming in a woman,¹⁰⁷ the Romans clearly perceived women to have specific strengths and virtues of a feminine

¹⁰⁰ Livy, 1.34–41

¹⁰¹ Dio, 2.9

¹⁰² Bauman, 1992:2

¹⁰³ Pliny the Elder (8.74.194) recorded that a statue to her had been erected in the temple of Semo Sancus, identifying her (wrongly) with Gaia Caecilia. She therefore seems to have become a female role model for Roman brides.

¹⁰⁴ Livy, 1.46.7

¹⁰⁵ Livy, 1.48.5–6

¹⁰⁶ Livy, 1.48.7–8

¹⁰⁷ Evans, 2000:18–40

nature.¹⁰⁸ Such virtues were celebrated in the next woman discussed by Livy, Lucretia.¹⁰⁹ She was seen in stark contrast to Tullia and Tanaquil, a woman who embodied all that Roman womanly virtue should be. She wielded no political power but her example inspired a whole new political system and brought an end to the kings of Rome.

In contrast with Tanaquil and Tullia, Lucretia is drawn as a chaste and modest wife, whose first appearance is at the loom in her home.¹¹⁰ She is raped by Sextus, the son of the king Tarquinius Superbus, becoming the ultimate victim of tyrannical cruelty, deception and lust. Her subsequent suicide - motivated primarily by concern for her husband and family - takes place after her husband and father have sworn revenge. Before plunging the knife into her heart, she says, in the words of Livy “*no unchaste woman will live with Lucretia as precedent*”.¹¹¹ It is Lucius Junius Brutus who makes the political consequence a reality when he draws the knife from Lucretia's breast and swears a bloody oath to expel kingship from Rome.¹¹²

It is likely that, although Lucretia's motivation was not primarily political but one of family honour, she was aware that political implications would follow her act, for the son of King Tarquin was involved. The moral virtue she is made to represent is in this case incompatible with ongoing tyrannical rule and requires civic freedom (*libertas*). Thus her suicide opens the way for Brutus to become the liberator of the city.¹¹³ Matthes argues that although Lucretia is used as an *exemplum* in Livy's writing, the transition from tyranny (Tarquin) to the Roman Republic had more to do with the importance of the paternity of women's offspring,¹¹⁴ since the importance of virginity in a wife was to ensure that a man's line of inheritance would continue in an unbroken line. She further argues that for Livy the rape of Lucretia showed that under a tyrant, not even the most chaste of women can be safe, while under Republican rule, a man's wife and thus the paternity of his offspring, is protected.¹¹⁵

Through the record of Livy, Lucretia was projected as a manifold example of uprightness and inspiration.¹¹⁶ She had encouraged the sentiment of rebellion against oppressive forces, upheld the significance of feminine integrity, the importance of being chaste, the value of justice and the triumph over evil. The ancient Roman woman would become a symbol for these multiple virtues.

A number of other women of Rome before 44BCE are mentioned by the ancient authors. During the time of the Late Republic, the wives of Roman Senators were honoured and well

¹⁰⁸ Evans, 2000:28

¹⁰⁹ Livy, 1:59

¹¹⁰ Livy, 1.57.9

¹¹¹ Livy, 1.58.10

¹¹² Livy, 1.59.1

¹¹³ Livy, 1.60.2

¹¹⁴ Matthes, 2001:26-28

¹¹⁵ Matthes, 2001:27

¹¹⁶ First set down by Livy in succinct but purposeful historical prose, the story of Lucretia's rape and suicide was then continued by multiple authors and artists that followed the Roman historian such as Augustine, “*The City of God*” 1.19, Chaucer, “*The Legend of Good Women*” Chapter 5, and Shakespeare “*The Rape of Lucrece*” 1240-46.

regarded, as the power of the State belonged to their husbands exclusively. The Late Republican age also saw an increasing emphasis on individuality in both men and women. Men began to compose their autobiographies and noblewomen were given public eulogies at their funerals.¹¹⁷ An awareness was growing that public praise of their wives and daughters brought honour to a family as well as increasing their political profile.

Probably the most famous Republican woman who obtained lasting renown is Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. The nobility of Cornelia is celebrated by a large number of Roman authors, though the facts of her life are still hotly debated.¹¹⁸ In the ancient sources she is mentioned in a familial, positive context, a true *matrona* of Rome, whose virtue and fecundity were exemplary. She was the daughter of the famous Scipio Africanus and wife of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, who died in 154BCE, after which Cornelia devoted herself to the education of her children. She allegedly bore twelve children,¹¹⁹ only three of whom grew to adulthood.¹²⁰ She also cultivated intellectuals and philosophers and promoted rhetoric, cultivating the Hellenic style. She drew them to her villa at Misenum, which became a social and cultural centre. Although this may be considered a “public” display, Cornelia drew no criticism from Livy or others, probably because it was seen as intellectual pursuits and not as interference or that she was seeking political influence.

A well known quip was attributed to Cornelia when she responded to a Campanian woman who was boasting about her excessive jewels, by pointing to her children and saying “these are *my* jewels”.¹²¹ Another legendary instance was when she refused to marry Ptolemy VIII, king of Egypt, explaining that such a marriage would be a step down for a widow of a Roman Senator.¹²² In modern times this may be seen as an arrogant statement, yet it was clearly not regarded as such in ancient times, as nobody, not even the Pharaoh himself, is recorded as objecting to it.

Cornelia's political involvement centred on her ambitions for her sons, a trait generally seen by all sources as admirable. Her insistence that she be known as 'mother of the Gracchi'¹²³ is often cited, and it was also used by her sons, and probably her daughter Sempronia as well, as it elevated all her children's importance and advertised their social status. She ensured that her children received the best possible education and that they married into key political families in order to cement political alliances.¹²⁴ Both Gracchi brothers' oratory skills were legendary and, even a century later, Cicero was to cite Tiberius and Gaius as examples of the balance between natural

¹¹⁷ Cornelia's death elicited the first funeral eulogy for a noble woman, delivered by Julius Caesar, for which he apparently gained great goodwill, eventually escalating to public banquets and gladiatorial games by the time his daughter Julia died (Flower 1999:124).

¹¹⁸ Dixon, 2007:2

¹¹⁹ Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus*, 1.3

¹²⁰ Tiberius, Sempronia and Gaius were the only children of Cornelia to reach adulthood.

¹²¹ Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus*, 19.3

¹²² Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus*, 1.7

¹²³ Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus*, 8.7

¹²⁴ Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus*, 1; Tacitus, *Dialogue*, 28 (extract in Lefkowitz & Fant, 2005:191)

ability and training.¹²⁵

Plutarch maintains that Cornelia gave her sons political advice: “...but the other law was withdrawn by Caius himself, who said that he spared Octavius at the request of his mother Cornelia”.¹²⁶ Gaius gave her intervention as his reason for his withdrawal of the bill that would have kept the family enemy Octavius from public office.¹²⁷ Gaius also used his mother's name in political speeches,¹²⁸ since her name carried some moral authority in Rome and by mentioning her (and his dead brother Tiberius), he skilfully played on the emotions of his audience.

There was also public criticism of Cornelia, as Gaius' public retorts to his opponents indicate, for example “So are you slandering Cornelia, who bore Tiberius?”¹²⁹ There were also accusations that she hired rustic thugs and sent them to Rome to support and protect Gaius.¹³⁰ If true, this would simply underline the skill with which she managed a Lucretia-like facade with a Tanaquil-like practicality, but according to Dixon, there were political forces in play which may have produced this type of evidence simply to discredit her and through her, her family.¹³¹ Two fragments of letter(s) to Gaius from the once voluminous body of work by Cicero's contemporary, Cornelius Nepos, written around 122/123BCE, have survived. In these fragments Cornelia berates Gaius for seeking revenge for Tiberius' murder, and for defiance against the established Republic. The authenticity of the letter fragments has been questioned by various scholars. Dixon argues that the letters were corrupted for propaganda purposes by those who supported the return of the Republic after 27BCE. Experts, however, are still divided on the authenticity of these letters.¹³²

The question must be asked why Cornelia made such a lasting impression. Her name became a by-word in later years to indicate the ultimate Roman woman, and even later Christian writers paid tribute to her memory.¹³³ Was it specifically because of her famous father, powerful husband and notorious sons? It is certain that most women gained any measure of influence and autonomy only thanks to their influential family connections and especially the standing of their husbands, but some had more influence than others. This may also explain why ancient Roman women vied for glory and respect for their husbands and sons, so that these could reflect upon them and thus gain them some measure of political influence as well. Of course a woman's ability to persuade her husband himself could also have played quite an important part to garner influence and sway, as valid in ancient times as today.¹³⁴

¹²⁵ Cicero, *Brutus* 103-4, 125, 210-211

¹²⁶ Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus*, 4.2

¹²⁷ Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus*, 4.2

¹²⁸ Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus*, 4.3

¹²⁹ Plutarch *Gaius Gracchus*, 4.3

¹³⁰ Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus*, 13.2

¹³¹ Dixon, 2007:27

¹³² Dixon, 2007:27

¹³³ Schaff, 2009:103

¹³⁴ Milnor, 2009:278

How was the image of Cornelia kept alive for so long? Dixon may offer an answer when she claims that Sempronia, the daughter of Cornelia and the only child to outlive her, was the one who kept the legend of Cornelia and the Gracchi alive.¹³⁵ Although we do not know anything about Sempronia's life during her long widowhood (129 – 100BCE) after her famous husband Scipio Aemilianus died, it would be very odd if she did not spend at least some of that time with her ageing mother at Misenum. Dixon uses the example of Marcia, daughter of Cremutius Cordus, who was persecuted under Tiberius, yet who secretly preserved the works of her father and thus maintained his memory.¹³⁶ Also the examples of women of the Stoic opposition during the Julio-Claudian and Domitian reigns who performed similar roles are used by Dixon as examples of women keeping the family history and knowledge alive.¹³⁷ Sempronia was also uniquely placed to promote her brothers and mother as the *popularis* revival gained momentum around 100BCE.

Sempronia was the sole heir to Cornelia's vast fortune.¹³⁸ The gradual transition from *manus* marriages to those without *manus* allowed Sempronia to inherit her mother's fortune directly. In the early- and middle Republic, marriages were conducted *cum manu*, which meant that no woman could inherit directly, and that all inheritance went to her closest male relative. She also could not own any property. With *cum manu* marriages, the woman was adopted into her husband's family, and legal control of her passed from her father to her husband.¹³⁹ She could only become *sui iuris* when her husband died.¹⁴⁰

During the Late Republic, *sine manu* marriages became commonplace. In this form of marriage, a wife did not join her husband's family and her father maintained legal authority over her, while her husband had no authority over her whatsoever. She could also inherit from her father and when her father died, she became *sui iuris*. It was assumed that in most cases a woman would become *sui iuris* earlier in her life under *sine manu*, than under *cum manu*, as it was thought that a woman's father would usually die before her husband.¹⁴¹ This also allowed her property to stay in her father's family. Control of a wife and her property by the time of Augustus was uncommon,¹⁴² but a woman still had nominally to be under a guardian who saw to her property.

Being *sui iuris* afforded the women in this category of Roman Law the freedom to divorce, remarry whomever she chose, and to legally own her own property and wealth. She could also nominate her own heir(s). Women were even allowed to defend themselves in courts of law, and act

¹³⁵ Dixon, 2007:12-14

¹³⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.34-5 and Dio, 57.24.4. Dixon, 2007:13. "Cremutius Cordus committed suicide in 25CE. His daughter was the Marcia to whom Seneca the younger addressed his consolation of the death of her son. He recalled her courage and determined filial piety in the face of her father's sufferings (To Marcia 1.1-5)."

¹³⁷ Dixon, 2007:12-14 - "Plin. *Ep.* 3.16, 7.19 mentions Arria the Elder, Arria the Younger and Fannia as performing such duties".

¹³⁸ Thomas, 1991: 134.

¹³⁹ Gardner, 1998:11

¹⁴⁰ Literally meaning "of one's own right".

¹⁴¹ Grubbs, 2002:21

¹⁴² Treggiari, 2005:124

on behalf of others.¹⁴³ Valerius Maximus in his *On Memorable Deeds and Speeches* mentions Maesia Sentinas as successfully defending herself thanks to her impressive oratory skills,¹⁴⁴ stating, however, that it was unbecoming in a woman and that her spirit was “*virile*” - she was named “*the Androgyne*”.¹⁴⁵

Over time, women who were *sui iuris* were provided with more freedom and autonomy than ever before. Over approximately a hundred years of Roman history, women such as Cornelia, her daughter Sempronia, the wife and daughter of Cicero, and several other notable women handled not only their own affairs, but also the affairs of their husbands and children, which can be said to have set a precedent for the autonomy of the imperial women, especially the Julio-Claudian women and also Augustan marriage laws.

Other women from the Late Republican era whose lives are particularly well documented are the wife and daughter of Cicero, Terentia and Tullia.¹⁴⁶ When she married Cicero, Terentia brought a substantial dowry.¹⁴⁷ It is also clear that she did not enter *manus* and administered her property independently, with the supervision of a guardian. Terentia was also a political woman with strong ambitions for her husband, as alluded to by Plutarch:

*“Terentia was not meek or naturally timid, but an ambitious woman and, as Cicero himself tells us, more inclined to take a share of his political concerns than to give him a share of her domestic ones”.*¹⁴⁸

In many letters of Cicero, and of his wife to him, it is clearly revealed that Terentia managed his estates and financial affairs. Treggiari informs us that Cicero must have been well aware of Xenophon's division of labour between men and women, as he had translated the Greek author's *Oeconomicus* in his youth.¹⁴⁹ Cicero went even further, though, and although he arranged Tullia's first marriage, he later gave his legal consent for Tullia's second marriage in advance, therefore giving his approval for whomever Terentia and Tullia chose.¹⁵⁰ Cicero was away on the business of the Senate and the law so often, especially after civil strife broke out between Caesar and Pompey, that it made practical sense for him to defer such matters to his wife.¹⁵¹ The man they chose, Dolabella, was a supporter of Caesar. As such he became an intermediary between Caesar (who wanted the support of Cicero) and Cicero (who supported Pompey). It is evident from various letters, as referred to by Dixon, that Terentia and Tullia played significant roles in these negotiations.¹⁵²

¹⁴³ Bauman, 1992:50

¹⁴⁴ Maximus, 8.3.1

¹⁴⁵ Maximus, 8.3.1

¹⁴⁶ Not to be confused with Tullia, wife of Tarquin, previously discussed.

¹⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Cicero*, 8.2

¹⁴⁸ Plutarch, *Cicero*, 20.2

¹⁴⁹ Treggiari, 2007:33

¹⁵⁰ Dixon, 1985:367

¹⁵¹ Treggiari, 2007:86

¹⁵² Dixon, 1983:91-112

Both Terentia and Tullia were aware and supportive of Cicero and his political activities during the turbulent years of the Republic when men such as Pompey and Caesar vied for the dominant position. This can be evidenced from the political information contained in a letter Cicero sent to Terentia:

*“We had decided, as I wrote to you earlier, to send myself to meet Caesar, but we changed the plan since we got no news of his coming. About the other matters, although there is nothing new, you can find out what we would like and what we think at this time needs to be done from Sicca. I am still keeping Tullia with me”.*¹⁵³

Cicero eventually divorced Terentia because he suspected her of mismanagement and embezzlement. Some modern scholars latched onto Plutarch's opinion that Terentia was filled with avarice, yet Balsdon disputes this, using Cicero's own letters as evidence to the contrary: “She was just independent of mind and purpose, and did not always do things exactly as Cicero wanted or take his word for everything”.¹⁵⁴ Even in ancient times, however, divorcing Terentia was seen as among the troubles which Cicero brought upon himself, as it was considered disgraceful for a man to divorce his wife who had grown old with him and who was the mother of his children.¹⁵⁵

A demonstration of negotiation(s) within a so-called “female network”¹⁵⁶ can be seen when a certain M. Fabius Gallus wanted to purchase the house next to Cicero's in Rome, which belonged to the plutocrat Crassus, although Crassus' half-sister Licinia was occupying it. Cicero had requested Tullia to promote the sale if she could:

*“When I got back, I asked my Tullia what she had done. She said she had taken the matter up with Licinia, but I don't think Crassus sees much of his sister, and she had said that she didn't dare move house in the absence of her husband (Dexius) (who has gone to Spain) and without his knowledge”.*¹⁵⁷

Although Tullia was not successful in her negotiation, it does indicate that her father trusted her to negotiate on his behalf. It also perhaps highlights how other women, such as Licinia, did *not* have such autonomy accorded to them.¹⁵⁸

Tullia's death in 45BCE left Cicero mournful and despondent and in a letter to Atticus he wrote of the strength he had derived from her support and advice.¹⁵⁹

All in all it can be said that the women of Cicero's family played a significant role in his life and a more than usual role in his business and politics. This impression may of course be

¹⁵³ Cicero, F14.15/167, Brundisium

¹⁵⁴ Balsdon, 1974:12-15

¹⁵⁵ Plutarch, *Cicero*, 41.2

¹⁵⁶ Treggiari, 2007:133

¹⁵⁷ Cicero, *To Fabius Gallus*, 55BCE

¹⁵⁸ Walker, 1935:19

¹⁵⁹ Cicero, *To Atticus*, mid April 44BCE

exaggerated due to the personal nature of Cicero's letters, and the fact that the extant documents may give a slanted impression, but nevertheless it does show the possibilities of progression in the influence and autonomy for some women, at least.

Another noteworthy incident that gave prominence to women took place during the Second Triumvirate, in 42BCE, when an attempt was made by the Senate to confiscate the wealth of the richest women in Rome as a tax to cover the expenses of the civil war. This was met with a public protest led by a woman named Hortensia (daughter of the famous Roman orator Hortensius) who delivered an eloquent speech against the confiscation in the Forum.¹⁶⁰ This was successful in reducing the amount of the tax and limiting the number of women affected by it. This is a clear demonstration not only of Hortensia's influence, but of the influence that women could gain due to their familial connections, but of course fatherly training and perhaps genetic talent cannot be ruled out. But it is clear that women were allowed this type of prominence only on certain occasions, not consistently, and Hortensia is never heard of again.

Fulvia, the third wife of Mark Antony who was also her third husband, was another Late Republican woman who had considerable influence, especially where it concerned her husbands' careers. Plutarch's description is less than flattering:

*"She was a woman who took no thought for spinning or housekeeping, nor would she deign to bear sway over a man of private station, but she wished to rule a ruler and command a commander."*¹⁶¹

She solicited active support for Antony, firstly by bringing to him the gangs of her first husband Clodius Pulcher, which gained Antony the upper hand in his "gang wars" with Dolabella in 47BCE.¹⁶² Secondly, after the death of Julius Caesar, her support for Antony and her garnering of support for his cause had great influence during Antony's participation in the Triumvirate with Octavian. When Cicero campaigned for Antony to be declared an enemy of the State, Fulvia gathered enough support for her husband to block Cicero's attempts.¹⁶³

In 42BCE, while Octavian and Antony were pursuing the murderers of Caesar, Fulvia was left as the most powerful woman in Rome. Cassius Dio implies that she controlled the politics in Rome:

"She, the mother-in-law of Caesar and wife of Antony, had no respect for Lepidus because of his slothfulness, and managed affairs herself, so that neither the senate nor the people transacted any business contrary to her pleasure. At any rate, when Lucius [Antonius] urged that he be

¹⁶⁰ Appian, *The Civil War*, 4.324

¹⁶¹ Plutarch, *Antony*, 10:4

¹⁶² Welch, 1995:192

¹⁶³ Appian, *The Civil War*, 3.8.51

allowed to celebrate a triumph over certain peoples dwelling in the Alps, on the ground that he had conquered them, Fulvia for a time opposed him and no one was for granting it, but when her favour was courted and she gave permission, they voted for the measure unanimously..."¹⁶⁴

When Octavian returned to Rome in 41BCE to disperse land to Caesar's veterans, Fulvia opposed Octavian, fearing that the legions would become loyal to him only, at the expense of Antony. Together with Lucius Antonius, her brother-in-law, she raised eight legions against Octavian in what became known as the Perusine War.¹⁶⁵ Octavian won the war, however, and Antony's standing in Italy was forever damaged. Fulvia fled to Greece and met Antony in Athens. Shortly after, she died of an unknown disease. Her death gave Octavian and Antony the opportunity to blame the conflict solely on Fulvia,¹⁶⁶ and Antony's subsequent marriage to Octavian's sister, Octavia Minor, gave the appearance of reconciliation between the two Triumvirs.

Fulvia is also the first historical Roman woman to have her portrait depicted on coins. She was represented on several provincial coins - she is thought to have been the model for Nike on a denarius of 42BCE, as well as on coins from the city of Eumeneia, a city which changed its name in her honour, dating from 41BCE. Fulvia can be said to have been a precursor to the women of the Julio-Claudians such as Octavia and Livia, both her contemporaries (though slightly younger).

Roman women had attained the right to own and control property in their own name and manage their own wealth. Nevertheless, even though Republican women began to enjoy more freedom and prominence, it was still, as always in ancient Roman times, in relation to the men in their lives. The political influence that women such as Tanaquil, Cornelia and Fulvia had was still dependant on the promotion of their husbands and sons. No Roman women had any autonomy or power in and of herself, without it being attached to a man in her life. They could still not run for any political office and their career choices were limited,¹⁶⁷ and non-existent on elite level.

Conquest, administration and defence of Rome's various provinces resulted in the men being away from home, often for years at a time, leaving their women to manage their business and run the household without male supervision. This would naturally spill over into business, everyday life and eventually even politics and warfare itself. Roman conquest also produced millions of slaves who took over the menial household chores thus freeing many women to pursue careers and interests outside the home.¹⁶⁸

This chapter has presented a number of "case studies" which demonstrate the growing independence and freedom of women, particularly elite women, and the conditions, such as

¹⁶⁴ Dio, 48.4.1

¹⁶⁵ Appian, *The Civil War*, 5.3.19. Blok, 1977:151

¹⁶⁶ Plutarch, *Antony*, 30.3

¹⁶⁷ Treggiari, 2005:26. There are Republican inscriptions detailing women's business, selling incense, purveying purple and selling it, tavern keepers and brothel owners, and various friezes and graffiti discovered in Pompeii provide evidence for this.

¹⁶⁸ Treggiari, 2005:25

marriage *sine manu*, or the increase in slave labour, that made this possible. This growing freedom undoubtedly made a contribution to the power wielded by the Julio-Claudian women we will be discussing in the following chapters.



- CHAPTER IV -

THE AUGUSTAN PROGRAMME OF SOCIAL REFORM

Following the collapse of the Republic and the rise of Octavian as sole ruler, moral legislation and attempts at social engineering became part of the new political order.¹⁶⁹ As Rome's first emperor, Augustus turned his attention in 18BCE to social reforms.¹⁷⁰ Among the Roman elite marriage was apparently becoming less frequent, and childless marriages were becoming common.¹⁷¹ It was Augustus' aim both to restore the morals and to ensure population growth particularly within this class, and laws pertaining to marriage, parenting, and adultery were part of his programme to ensure this, while at the same time he was consolidating his political authority.¹⁷² His appeal to old-fashioned values can be said to have masked the radical overthrow of the Republic's participatory political institutions and the ascendance of one-man rule, which, as Julius Caesar's attempt at dictatorship and subsequent assassination illustrated, had been anathema to Roman political thought since the time of the tyrannical kings.¹⁷³

In the *Res Gestae Divi Augustus* Augustus refers to these achievements as follows:

*"...the senate and the people of Rome agreed that I should be appointed supervisor of laws and morals... The measures that the senate then desired me to take I carried out in virtue of my tribunician power. On five occasions, of my own initiative, I asked for and received from the senate a colleague in that power."*¹⁷⁴

and

*"By new laws passed on my proposal I brought back into use many exemplary practices of our ancestors which were disappearing in our time, and in many ways I myself transmitted exemplary practices to posterity for their imitation."*¹⁷⁵

Although the *Res Gestae* can be considered to be heavily biased since it was meant to be the author's list of deeds for posterity, it is nevertheless informative and gives an important overview of the deeds of Augustus and which deeds he himself thought were important enough to mention. Unfortunately, those which we consider today his most prominent achievements, for example his reorganisation of the military, details on his social reforms, and easing the Principate into imperial rule, of those very little is said.

¹⁶⁹ Oman, 1957:336-337

¹⁷⁰ Severy, 2003:44

¹⁷¹ Lefkowitz and Fant, 2005:181

¹⁷² Galinsky, 1996:129-131

¹⁷³ Edwards, 2002:34-42

¹⁷⁴ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 6.1-2

¹⁷⁵ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 8.5

The Augustan marriage legislation has been a subject of scholarly research for some time. This research has been mostly concerned with the reconstruction of the laws, since the original laws have not been preserved. There were a number of commentaries on these laws by the (much later) Roman jurists, of which considerable fragments have been preserved in the *Digest* such as the *Codes* of Justinian, Theodosius and Ulpian and the *Opinions* of Paul.¹⁷⁶ Tacitus refers to more than one Julian law about marriage and moral legislation, and to the *lex Papia Poppaea* as a later law, making adjustments to the former.¹⁷⁷ However, the jurists often group these laws together as the *lex Julia et Poppaea*. Slowly and painstakingly the different laws were pieced together, using textual quotations and references from legislation. Nevertheless some confusion remains as to precisely which points were made in which of the legislative acts.¹⁷⁸ This Chapter will however not dwell on these intricacies, but focus on the laws and their provisions, and how these affected women of the Roman elite.

The *lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus*:¹⁷⁹ this Julian marriage law was passed in 18-17BCE and it attempted to enforce marriage for both men and women and rewarded women for giving birth. The rewards are described by Dio Cassius, where we are told that:

*“He (Augustus) laid heavier assessments upon the unmarried men and women, and on the other hand offered prizes for marriage and the begetting of children. And since among the nobility there were far more males than females, he allowed all (free men) who wished, except senators, to marry freedwomen, and ordered that their offspring should be held legitimate.”*¹⁸⁰

The *lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis* was also passed in the same year as part of Augustus’ marriage code. It made conjugal unfaithfulness a public as well as a private offence, punishable by exile and confiscation of property. Legally, as had been the case in the past, *patria potestas* gave fathers the right to put to death their adulterous daughters and their partners, and husbands could, under certain circumstances, kill their wives and were at least required to divorce them. According to the record in the *Opinions* of Paul (my emphases):

“In the second chapter of the Lex Julia concerning adultery, either an adoptive or a natural father is permitted to kill an adulterer caught in the act with his daughter in his own house or in that of his son-in-law, no matter what his rank may be. If a son under paternal control, who is the father, should surprise his daughter in the act of adultery, while it is inferred from the terms of the law that he cannot kill her, still, he ought to be permitted to do so. A husband cannot kill any one taken in adultery except persons who are infamous, and those who sell their bodies for gain, as

¹⁷⁶ Bremmer, 1996:58-60; Dixon, 1992:12-13

¹⁷⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.25

¹⁷⁸ Bremmer, 1996:60

¹⁷⁹ *Digest* 38 tit.11; *Digest* 23 tit.2

¹⁸⁰ Dio, 54.16.1-2

well as slaves, and the freedmen of his wife, and those of his parents and children; his wife, however, is excepted, and he is forbidden to kill her.

After having killed the adulterer, the husband should at once dismiss his wife, and publicly declare within the next three days with what adulterer, and in what place he found his wife.

An angry husband who surprises his wife in adultery can only kill the adulterer when he finds him in his own house. It has been decided that a husband who does not at once dismiss his wife whom he has taken in adultery, can be prosecuted as a pander.... It should be noted that two adulterers can be accused at the same time with the wife, but more than that number cannot be.

It has been decided that adultery cannot be committed with women who have charge of any business or shop. It has been held that women convicted of adultery shall be punished with the loss of half of their dowry and the third of their estates, and by relegation to an island. The adulterer, however, shall be deprived of half his property, and shall also be punished by relegation to an island; provided the parties are exiled to different islands. ... Fornication committed with female slaves, unless they are deteriorated in value or an attempt is made against their mistress through them, is not considered an injury. If a delay is demanded in a case of adultery it cannot be obtained."¹⁸¹

These laws were generally not popular - Tacitus sees the laws even as sinister and equates them with a "tightening of the shackles".¹⁸² That the legislation was perhaps too oppressive is also reflected in Suetonius's mention of "open revolt". The subsequent revision of the laws through the **lex Papia Poppaea** of CE9, modifying the Julian laws, making some aspects more lenient, but some stricter, is also an indication that the legislation was too oppressive:¹⁸³

"He revised existing laws and enacted some new ones, for example, on extravagance, on adultery and chastity, on bribery, and on the encouragement of marriage among the various classes of citizens. Having made somewhat more stringent changes in the last of these than in the others, he was unable to carry it out because of an open revolt against its provisions, until he had abolished or mitigated a part of the penalties, besides increasing the rewards and allowing a three years' exemption from the obligation to marry after the death of a husband or wife. When the knights even then persistently called for its repeal at a public show, he sent for the children of Germanicus and exhibited them, some in his own lap and some in their father's, intimating by his gestures and expression that they should not refuse to follow that young man's example. And on finding that the spirit of the law was being evaded by betrothal with immature girls and by frequent changes of

¹⁸¹ Paulus, *Opinions* 2.26.1-17

¹⁸² Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.28

¹⁸³ Lefkowitz & Fant, 2005:102-110; Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.25

wives, he shortened the duration of betrothals and set a limit on divorce.”¹⁸⁴

The law now forbade marriage between a senator and a *libertina* or freedwoman, a woman in an entertainment profession or a prostitute, and a senator's daughter was forbidden to marry a freedman. Testamentary requirements that the legatee marry/not marry a specific person were considered void if the person they were required to marry were considered 'unsuitable', particularly in rank.¹⁸⁵

A number of penalties were now also attached to those who remained celibate after a certain age: they could not inherit, or receive legacies unless they married within one hundred days of the testator's demise.¹⁸⁶ But where the *lex Julia* had given widows one year from the death of their husbands, and divorced women six months from the time of divorce before they were subject to penalties, the *lex Papia* extended this to two years and a year and six months, respectively.¹⁸⁷ A man over the age of sixty, and a woman over the age of fifty (who was no longer considered to be of childbearing age) were exempted, unless they had been celibate before they reached these ages, in which case they were bound in perpetuity by the legal penalties.¹⁸⁸

The new laws gave various advantages to those who had more children, particularly through the right known as the *ius trium liberorum*. Under this right, freeborn men with three children or more were excused from *munera* or benefactions, and freeborn women were no longer submitted to guardianship, and could inherit or bequeath to their children. Freedmen who had four or more children were given their freedom *operarum obligatione*, and freedwomen who had four children were released from the *tutela* of their patrons.¹⁸⁹ In later years it became customary for emperors, consuls or the senate to grant these privileges not only for those who had children but also as special favours to persons who did not strictly qualify.¹⁹⁰

The full implications of the social legislation of Augustan Rome have been the subject of much scholarly debate, at least partly because we have so few primary sources which discuss them directly. It used to be thought that the laws were simply a practical measure on the part of the new Augustan government to encourage the procreation of legitimate children and thus to reverse the

¹⁸⁴ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 34

¹⁸⁵ *Digest* 35.tit. 1 s63

¹⁸⁶ Ulpian, *Fragment* 17.1

¹⁸⁷ Ulpian, *Fragment* 14

¹⁸⁸ Ulpian, *Fragment* 16; Suetonius, *Claudius*, 23

¹⁸⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.19; Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 7.16; *Digest* 38 tit.1; Ulpian, *Fragment* tit. 29

¹⁹⁰ Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 2.13; 10.95; 10.96

effects of the civil wars and proscriptions on the population. Some prominent Romans such as Cicero were also deeply concerned with the falling birth-rate.¹⁹¹

It is clear that the marriage legislation focused primarily on the elite, especially since a distinction between social ranks and categories was maintained: the extract from Paul quoted above clearly differentiates between freeborn and slave, and between men and women within those groups as well. The combination of the marriage legislation and the outlawing of adultery points toward a more subtle underlying message, one that emphasised not only marriage but also a morally upright lifestyle.¹⁹² Thus it is that the social legislation of the Augustan Principate has often been seen as an important aspect of the “moral revolution” i.e. the idea that the Principate represented a renewal of the ancient values of Rome.¹⁹³ The emphasis on restoring the virtues of the past is clear from Augustus' own description in his *Res Gestae* quoted above.¹⁹⁴ That which connects the new laws to the old values are the ideals and images which were simultaneously part of an idealised Roman past, as well as of an imagined Roman future.¹⁹⁵

The social legislation of Augustus is one of the defining characteristics of his reign, although it remains problematic in some respects. There has been a tendency in the sources and in scholarship to see the entire Augustan period as having had a cohesive and systematically planned objective. Zanker, for example, speaks of a “goal orientated cultural program” enacted by Augustus throughout his reign.¹⁹⁶ Ostensibly, it would seem that the purpose of this programme would have been to heal Rome from the wounds of civil war and strife. Clearly, however, the programme grew organically over time, as the various successive items of legislation seem to support.

Augustus's apparent seriousness over the laws is well attested. Suetonius informs us that in 31BCE Augustus read a speech to the senate by the Republican Censor Metellus (from 131BCE), about increasing the birth-rate “as if it had just been written” so that the links between the past and the Augustan period in relation to social policies were highlighted.¹⁹⁷ That Augustus was prepared to be seen as one who had exiled his own daughter Julia for breaking the adultery laws indicates just how seriously he took the laws and their enforcement, although he did not execute her.¹⁹⁸ It must be noted that Julia was most probably punished for the accusations of treason, and not so much for the adultery, though no source mentions it.

¹⁹¹ Cicero, *To Marcellus*, 23

¹⁹² Milnor, 2007:9

¹⁹³ Treggiari, 1996:873 - 904

¹⁹⁴ “By new laws proposed by me, I restored many of the good practices of our ancestors that were dying out in our time, and I myself have passed on to posterity examples of many things worthy of imitation.” RG, 8.5

¹⁹⁵ Treggiari, 1991: 3-6

¹⁹⁶ Zanker, 1990: 175-177

¹⁹⁷ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 89

¹⁹⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.24. In 2BCE Julia the Elder was arrested for adultery and treason and several of her alleged lovers were either executed or forced to commit suicide.

The idea that Augustus was coerced in some ways to enact these laws is also hinted at in some sources. Cassius Dio suggests that Augustus only instituted the legislation under pressure from the senate.¹⁹⁹ Ronald Syme suggests that the provincial elites were putting pressure on him also.²⁰⁰ These ideas conflict with the notion of Augustus being in complete charge of implementing a policy of social change and suggest that perhaps the Augustan Party mentioned by Syme speaks of played a larger role in seeing the laws come to fruition. Although Suetonius even suggests that Augustus himself was an adulterer, and hence that he was seemingly exempt from the laws himself, this is hard to credit as it is not mentioned by any other sources.²⁰¹ A letter from Antony to Octavian which mentioned various dalliances with women of the court, including Maecenas' wife, cannot be taken at face value as it may have been spite and/or propaganda from Antony's side.

It can be argued that the legislation of Augustus had the potential to increase the public visibility of women in general, and this also affected the women of his family. Although his legislature attempted to return to the older restrictive morality, it also accorded women previously unknown freedoms. Women of the elite were never again as invisible or as voiceless as they had been in the Republic.²⁰²

The older customs requiring a guardian or tutor for women who wished to transact business were frequently ignored from the first century CE and after. Women could now frequently participate in commerce or become patronesses of a craft or of a professional guild. Loopholes in inheritance laws permitted them, increasingly, to build up independent fortunes.²⁰³ Restrictions, once removed, are not easily re-imposed.²⁰⁴



¹⁹⁹ Dio, 54.16.3

²⁰⁰ Syme, 1986:439-441

²⁰¹ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 69

²⁰² Gardner, 1998:48-51

²⁰³ Barrett, 1999:4-5

²⁰⁴ Winspear, 1935:37; Wallace-Hadrill, 1981

- CHAPTER V -

THE PUBLIC GAZE, PATRONAGE AND POPULARITY

The symbolic can be a powerful tool, and Augustus employed it liberally in his restructuring of the Roman State.²⁰⁵ Augustus sought to create a new Rome, not only leaving one of marble where he had found one of brick, but one that harked back to the ideals of the old Republic without, in fact, being the Republic. In this new order, imagery was all-important.²⁰⁶ Just as the *fascēs* stood for power, and the closing of the gates of the temple of Janus symbolised peace, the elevation of the imperial women symbolised the continuation of the family. The role of the women in the Julio-Claudian family, and the way they could be made to reflect imperial ideals, was therefore particularly significant in spreading the message of the new order.

Equally important was the building of a succession, although there was of course no official succession 'policy' or a 'dynasty' as such, and any overt return to the hated monarchy was to be avoided.²⁰⁷ But the principle of hereditary succession in Roman law was a well-known one, and two clear lines of succession now developed: those who claimed legitimacy via the founding house of Augustus, and those who claimed their descent via the Claudian line, which was introduced into the line through Augustus' marriage to Livia, whose son with her previous husband, Tiberius Claudius Nero, would eventually succeed Augustus.

Women in public and the legitimacy of the Julio-Claudian line

Women began to feature in public sculpture and official reliefs more and more, as both the legitimacy of the Julio-Claudian line, but also the symbols of legitimate fertility and domesticity, were part of the moral order which Augustus sought to foster.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ See discussions in Galinsky, 1996

²⁰⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, 1993:1-5

²⁰⁷ Stern 2004:37

²⁰⁸ Milnor (2005:47-48) argues that domesticity was one of the favoured Augustan symbols, and that the mediation between the civic and domestic ideals can be reflected in the gendering of the space in the imperial house on the Palatine Hill, for example.

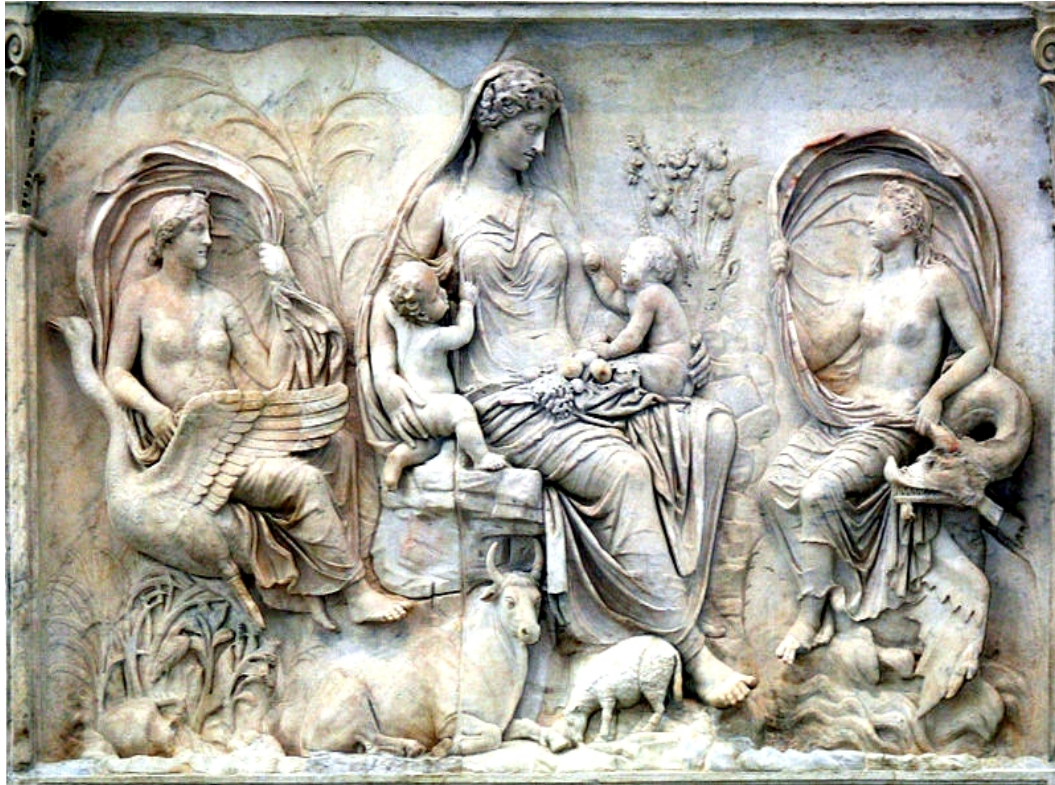


Fig. 5.1 Relief on the eastern side of Ara Pacis, depicting the Tellus Mater, the Roman earth-goddess, with images of fertility and plenty that were to be seen to represent the Augustan age

Dio²⁰⁹ assumes that Augustus planned a dynasty from the beginning but Velleius Paterculus²¹⁰ refers to one instance, in 27BCE, when Augustus contemplated a return to the Republic, and Suetonius²¹¹ has two such occasions on record. But by 15BCE, and after the various adoptive attempts of Augustus, the transfer of certain imperial powers to individuals, Augustus' plans were emerging more clearly. The Ara Pacis, constructed between 13 and 9BCE, is a particularly good illustration of the emperor's ambitions in this regard. On the eastern side we have the more symbolic representation of 'woman', the allegory of the Tellus Mater and fertility (Fig. 5.1), and on the western side mythological scenes linking Augustus both to Romulus and Remus and to Aeneas (from whom the Julian house claimed descent) as the new founder of Rome, clearly indicating a mythical line of descent. On the southern and northern sides, there are two historical friezes in which women form part of the processions in which specific personages can be identified. This sees a significant development in the portrayal of historical women. According to Bartman, "as far as we know from the preserved examples, historical reliefs did not depict recognizable

²⁰⁹ Dio, 54.18.1

²¹⁰ Velleius Paterculus, 2.89.1-4

²¹¹ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 28.1

mortal women until the Ara Pacis Augustae.”²¹² But clearly this was an essential step in associating female members of the family, as mothers, daughters and wives, with the transmission of power.

Some scholars argue plausibly that the friezes are the work of Roman craftsmen, rather than Greek, and that the insertion of women and children mirrors Augustan social policy in favour of procreation and families.²¹³ The women also do not wear any jewellery²¹⁴ and most of the women are veiled, which also seems to support Augustus’ well-known dislike of excess and emphasis on female modesty.²¹⁵

²¹² Bartman, 1999:87

²¹³ Conlin, 1997; Kleiner, 1978:753-785

²¹⁴ Only one woman in the background wears earrings and a fillet, and is probably a barbarian queen.

²¹⁵ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 72



Fig. 5.2 South side, Ara Pacis

Admittedly about eighty percent of these processions are made up of male participants, but *“For the first time women and children were seen as active participants in a public religious ceremony, involved as the near equals of their male partners. By mingling the priests, senators, and members of the Julio-Claudian clan together, the frieze designers brought into the public realm a social institution – the family – that had traditionally been confined to the private sphere.”*²¹⁶ The intermingling of the private with the public sphere is also remarked on by Kampen:

*“My hypothesis is that women's images were used on public historical reliefs because they were uniquely recognizable signs of the private world. Set into a public context and noticeable precisely because of their rarity, women's images carried special meaning about the ideal and idealized relationship between public and private...”*²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Bartman, 1999:88

²¹⁷ Kampen, 1991:218-248. In general the more expensive or better executed of the women of the imperial family are sculpted in the style of Hellenistic models and use the imagery of divinities, for example the use of diadems, cornucopia, and so on, with placid and idealised faces.



Fig. 5.3 South Side, detail of above: Julia, with Augustus on left and Agrippa on right

The new public status of the women and children must not be exaggerated, since they are not only fewer in number, but also feature more toward the last third of each procession, after the groups of male participants, particularly on the northern frieze.

Nevertheless, as pointed out above, this was a significant change in the presentation of what was to be the subject of the public gaze.

Only two of the female figures stand out in the foreground and in high-relief, and can be identified with reasonable certainty as Julia Major and Antonia Minor.

There is some debate as to whether the figure on the left is Livia or Julia, but the latter was of greater political importance in 13BCE, and also more suited to symbolize Augustus' procreation policies, since she already had four surviving children by this time.²¹⁸

Antonia Minor stands in a central position on the same frieze (detail Fig. 5.4, right) and is draped in a mantle or *palla*, reminiscent of Greek sculpture. The other women are all shown in profile and are of a fairly generic type.

²¹⁸ Stern, 2004: 281

The first part of the northern frieze consists of lictors and official figures, followed by members of the imperial family. The leading veiled female is probably Octavia Minor (illustrated below, Fig 5.5, second from the left).

The dynastic messages of these friezes are abundantly clear. The positioning of the female figures who had contributed to the continuation of particularly the Julian line gives them prominence.

It seems unlikely that Livia, as the wife of Augustus, should not have been part of the procession, but it has also been observed that Livia was not yet politically prominent in 13 BC, the date of the altar.²¹⁹



Fig. 5.4 South side, Antonia Minor

Livia was reportedly a model wife to Augustus, setting a standard of matronly morality and modesty modelled on the ancient tradition: she had no ostentatious displays of luxury, apparently even making the emperor's clothes herself²²⁰ like Lucretia of old.

According to Dio Cassius: “Once, when some naked men met her and were to be put to death in consequence, she saved their lives by saying that to a chaste woman such men are in no way different from statues. When someone asked her how she had obtained such a commanding influence over Augustus, she answered that it was 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 nor to notice the favourites of his passion.”²²¹

This modest reticence could also support her absence from these scenes, but her absence is still problematic, since, as Tacitus, points out, she was part of the dynastic foundation:

“She had no subsequent issue, but allied as she was through the marriage of Agrippina and

²¹⁹ Scott Ryberg, 1949: 77-101; Kleiner and Buxton, 2008: 86; “Livia would not emerge proper onto the political arena until nearly three decades of marriage had passed.” (Barrett, 2002:28).

²²⁰ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 2.73

²²¹ Dio, 58.2.5

*Germanicus to the blood of Augustus, her great-grandchildren were also his.*²²²



Fig. 5.5 Northern frieze, Octavia Minor (second from left)

More direct messages of women as representatives of the family and the legitimacy of the family line came into vogue later, but these still conveyed the ideal of a sound basis for the well-being of the Empire as a whole. Roman emperors had a strong motive for advertising their links to the dynastic line in times when imperial rule was not yet a solid establishment.

²²² Tacitus, *Annals*, 5.1



Fig. 5.6 Relief depicting Agrippina Minor crowning her son Nero as emperor

Agrippina Minor (15-59CE) was the only woman depicted as wearing the diadem illustrated on the left in her own lifetime, as she crowns her son Nero with a laurel wreath (Fig. 5.6). Though literary sources would have us believe that this indicated Agrippina's earthly power, Ginsburg argues that this depiction is rather a display of Agrippina as a beneficent goddess who bestows her blessings on her son,²²³ but it accords so well with the literary account of her lust for power that it is probably not without some significance as well.

The cameo illustrated below in Fig.5.7, popularly known as the Gemma Claudia dates to 49CE, and has two pairs of busts facing each other. The frontal busts portray Claudius as Jupiter and Agrippina Minor as Tyche, protector of cities. The images at the back portray Germanicus and Agrippina Major, the parents of Agrippina Minor, and uncle and aunt to Claudius, who had married his own niece. Claudius needed, at the time the cameo was made, to re-establish his political position, using both his uncle/father-in-law as well as his aunt/mother-in-law to do so.

This cameo reinforces his links with his own famous parents and with his illustrious brother Germanicus. It also establishes both his and Agrippina Minor's links with Augustus. This cameo also lends some credence to the literary sources that Claudius held Agrippina in high regard and that he was unduly influenced by her.²²⁴



Fig. 5.7 Cameo of Claudius and Agrippina Minor in the foreground

Public activities: benefactions

Although we know that women had no right to enter politics, they nevertheless did play a role in their husbands' public lives, and became patronesses in their own right.²²⁵ Women could and did become active participants in the glorification of their family on coins, as had always been standard practice for male family members. Another type of self-promotion, the erection of public (and even private) buildings with suitable inscriptions for posterity, from porticoes to theatres and also tombs or mausoleums, was also adopted by the women of the Julio-Claudian family, and their activities served as models for women in municipal politics all over the Roman Empire.

Euergetism by women, such as donating money and public/civic buildings, is known from periods preceding the decades of the Julio-Claudian women, as recent studies have shown.²²⁶ It entailed that one should visibly be seen to be involved in community life, and donating funds for this purpose. For women access to this usually came via religious practices, in their roles as priestesses of official religions. They are also most often depicted in these guises, as embodiments

²²⁴ Fleischer, 2001: 148-150

²²⁵ Mudd, 2012:6

²²⁶ For example Anne Bielman's study of women's patronage in the Greek, Hellenistic and Roman Republican periods (2012).

of Roman goddesses and cult statues, as illustrated below (Fig. 5.8).



Fig.5.8 A first century cult statue of Livia represented as Ops, with sheaf of wheat and cornucopia

According to Tacitus, a special seat in the Colosseum was reserved for Livia with the Vestal virgins,²²⁷ and the subtle changes that such Republican trappings had undergone in Augustus' lifetime in the powers and titles awarded to Augustus himself²²⁸ were continued and strengthened after his death. But the Julio-Claudian women acquired roles that went well beyond the religious sphere.²²⁹

The two women that feature most prominently, both as symbolising publically the old virtues of chastity and fertility on the one hand, and the legitimacy of the Julian and Claudian lines on the other, were Augustus' wife, Livia and his sister, Octavia.

These women were acknowledged as more than just the providers of legitimate heirs - in fact, Livia only indirectly provided Augustus' heir, as she could not give him a son of his own. Already in 35BCE both Octavia and Livia had been given the unprecedented honour of being awarded *sacrosanctitas* and exemption from guardianship, which meant that they could receive inheritances (which otherwise would have gone to their children), and ultimately that they had control over their own finances.²³⁰ Under subsequent Augustan legislation only women of the elite who had borne three children could receive this right. In 9BCE Livia was officially granted the *ius trium liberorum* on the death of Drusus, even though she did not qualify for this right.²³¹ Octavia had fulfilled this requirement even before Augustus' laws, and had already borne three children by 40BCE.

But exemption from guardianship meant that they were able to benefit the community from their own funds, and they had active roles as the authors of many *beneficia* towards the ordinary

²²⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.16

²²⁸ For example the changes to the *tribunicia potestas* and the *imperium consulare*.

²²⁹ On this see also Ovid, *Tristia*, 4.2.13f, *Letters from the Black Sea*, 4.13.29f, although this evidence should be used with caution as Ovid is using flattery that can be read as veiled satire.

²³⁰ Dio, 49.38.1; Wood 1999: 77

²³¹ Dio, 55.2

citizens.²³² Livia was for example in charge of organising public banquets for the women of Rome during the *ludi saeculares* in 17BCE, in which there was a special emphasis on the *matres familias*.²³³ In 20CE Livia's patronage was also highlighted in the *senatus consultum de Cnaeo Pisone patre* when she interceded for Plancina, the wife of Piso, when the latter was found guilty by the Senate of poisoning Germanicus, Livia's grandson. The *senatus consultum* indicates that Plancina was a protégée of Livia's. Livia's status is echoed in somewhat sycophantic and overblown terms by Velleius Paterculus:

“... a woman pre-eminent among women, and who in all things resembled the gods more than mankind, whose power no one felt except for the alleviation of trouble or the promotion of rank.”²³⁴

The Porticus Octaviae²³⁵ celebrated the good mothers of history and mythology, certainly a role with which Octavia could be identified, and it was erected by the emperor to commemorate her. Octavia, however, despite her much vaunted position as a moral *exemplum*, remains elusive to the modern scholar, since even coins with her image were minted only during Antony's lifetime. In other portraiture she has not been identified with certainty and she is never mentioned by name.²³⁶

Livia's benefactions were the most numerous of all those of the Julio-Claudian women, and included porticoes, a market, as well as the usual smaller shrines and temples.²³⁷ Best known were the *aedes Concordiae*, celebrating her harmonious marriage with the emperor, erected as part of the Porticus Liviae (on the north slope of the Oppius) that was dedicated to her in 7BCE. The Porticus Liviae was built on land that Augustus had inherited from Vedius - to build a public portico on their own land, putting public interest above that of personal luxury, was in line with Augustus' overall plan to restore the public spirit of the republic.²³⁸ Livia herself is credited with sponsoring the smaller structure.²³⁹ She also funded the renovation of the old temple of Fortuna Muliebris, a cult which honoured two public spirited women of early Rome,²⁴⁰ their wifely influence (for the greater good) on Coriolanus clearly meant to be associated with Livia herself.²⁴¹

The rest of Livia's career as the wife of Augustus seems to suggest that she had an acute political sense, and that it was this which kept her in the background while the Augustan Principate was in its formative years. Barret highlights how Livia's public profile was second to that of Octavia

²³² Wood, 1999: 77; Hemelrijk, 2006: 184

²³³ Cooley, 2009:206

²³⁴ Velleius Paterculus, 2.130.5

²³⁵ To be distinguished from the Porticus Octavia rebuilt by Augustus in 32BCE (wrongly conflated by Dio in 44.43.8), retaining the original name to honour his birth family.

²³⁶ Wood, 1999: 27; 42

²³⁷ Strabo, 5.3.7-8

²³⁸ Strabo (5.3.8) placed Livia's portico among the wonders of Augustan Rome. The porticus was popular and excited much admiration, and was held to be second only to those of the campus Martius (Ovid, *The Art of Love*, 1.71; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 14.11; Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 1.5.9).

²³⁹ Wood, 1999: 78; Kleiner and Matheson, 1996: 32; Galinsky, 1996: 98

²⁴⁰ Livy, 2.40.1-2; Dionysius 8.39-62

²⁴¹ Wood, 1999: 78-79

up until the latter's death in 11BCE.²⁴² Living next to the very prominent figure of Octavia, the paragon of virtue, as an astute woman she may have realised that a woman who meddled where she had no business (according to the men of Rome) would have attracted unfavourable attention and could have undermined the goal that her husband Octavian was trying to achieve.

In Livia's case we can see a considerable advance in women's power and influence, which she had thanks to her familial role as the wife, and eventually the mother, of the reigning emperor. Now that the traditional patronage (with patrons and clients) was subsumed under the über-patronage of the new emperor, access to the ear of the emperor became essential to those hoping to gain imperial favour. Livia's circle of clients was quite substantial and she helped many gain political offices, such as the Plautii²⁴³ and Servius Sulpicius Galba, who was also left a substantial bequest in Livia's will.²⁴⁴ In the time of Tiberius too, as the mother of the emperor Livia was often appealed to, mediating between the emperor and political figures like Quintus Haterius, who appealed to Livia when the emperor Tiberius remained unconcerned by the sight of the imperial guards attacking him, and was saved at her urgent entreaty.

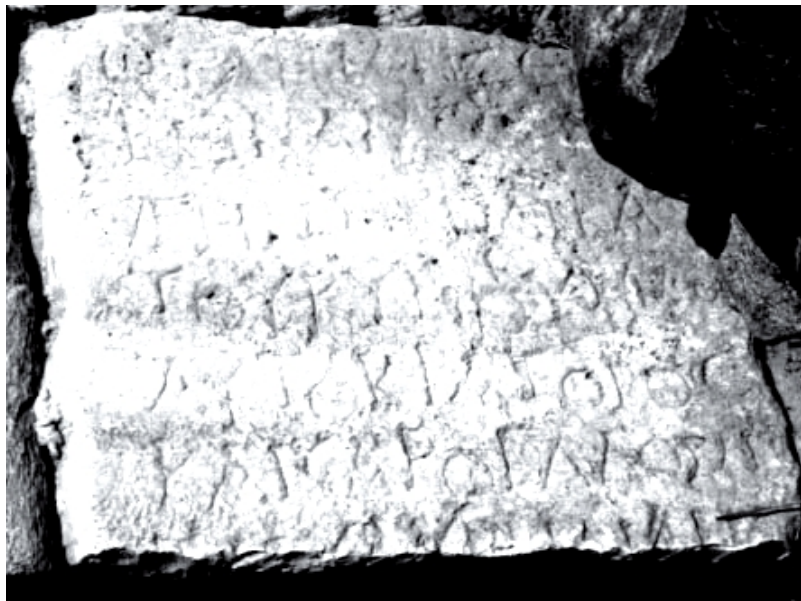


Fig. 5.9 Inscription below a statue of Livia Drusilla Augusta

In the provinces, too, Livia's name was well known. The inscription illustrated in Fig. 5.9 reads "*The most illustrious city dedicated (to) Livia Drusilla Augusta, wife of Dominus Imperator Caesar*".²⁴⁵ This inscription along with many others shows the regard in which Livia was held, especially in the East of the Roman Empire, and the extent to which provincial citizens saw her as

²⁴² Barret, 2002: 28

²⁴³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.34, 4.21

²⁴⁴ Suetonius, *Galba*, 5 and 7

²⁴⁵ Habelt, 2004:123. On Livia receiving the name Augusta, see below.

a link to imperial favour.²⁴⁶ At Thasos, for example, Livia and Julia, Augustus' daughter, were honored as *Euergetai*, and Livia was honored as *Thea Euergetis*.²⁴⁷ As a prominent figure in the growing ruler cult, countless inscriptions mention her by name. In some instances she is also depicted as divine, even before her deification under Claudius. In the Greek East honour were accorded to Livia before her official deification following the custom of honouring the emperor and empress as divine even during their lifetimes.

The statue of Ceres Augusta in Leptis Magna illustrated in Figure 5.10 is a good example of this. The cult image, dedicated by a Roman official named Rubellius Blandus and a wealthy woman named Suphunibal, was found in a small temple. Wood indicates that the statue was probably dedicated after her death, but it pre-dates her deification by 6-7 years.²⁴⁸

The ruler cult was a perfect way to link outlying communities in the Empire to Rome. Livia used her influence more directly with such communities as well, for example in the case of the Samians, who had petitioned Augustus for free status for their community. The following inscription (my emphasis) attests to her influence with the Emperor:

*"Imperator Caesar Augustus, son of divus Julius, wrote to the Samians underneath their petition: You yourselves can see that I have given the privilege of freedom to no people except the Aphrodisians, who took my side in the war and were captured by storm because of their devotion to us. For it is not right to give the favour of the greatest privilege of all at random and without cause. I am well-disposed to you and should like to do a favour to my wife who is active in your behalf, but not to the point of breaking my custom. For I am not concerned for the money which you pay towards the tribute, but I am not willing to give the most highly prized privileges to anyone without good cause."*²⁴⁹



²⁴⁶ These rituals were not celebrated to indicate the dedicators' personal belief but to indicate to the public that the imperial cult was not neglected by local ruling elites and to demonstrate the emperor's *pietas*.

²⁴⁷ *Inscriptiones Graecae*. 12. 7

²⁴⁸ Wood, 1999:112

²⁴⁹ *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 32, 1982.833; *L'Année épigraphique* 1984, 867; *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 34, 1984.1044, *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 35, 1985.1081; *Inscriptions of Aphrodisias* 2007, 8.32

Fig. 5.10 Statue of Livia as Ceres Augusta - from Leptis Magna

Livia backed their cause because of a longstanding relationship between the Claudii and Samos.²⁵⁰ Although the request was initially refused, it was later granted thanks to Livia's influence on their behalf.²⁵¹

Livia's importance in spreading the imperial identity is indicated by the fact that she was also the first woman to appear on provincial coins (16BCE) in the eastern provinces. Her hairstyles in her portrait images have been chronologically identified, keeping up with the changing fashions of the day as her depiction with such contemporary details translated into a political statement of her representing the ideal Roman woman.²⁵² Augustus himself never portrayed Livia on any of his official Roman coinage, which could also be an argument in support of her absence on the friezes of the Ara Pacis. Livia was the silent obedient wife behind the scenes, never in the forefront.

In 35BCE, when Livia and Octavia were awarded their privileges,²⁵³ honorary statues were also erected for them. Only a one earlier honorary statue to a woman can be identified with certainty, that of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. The statues honouring Livia and Octavia which were voted for by the Senate in 35BCE brought these two women into the limelight, and opened up new possibilities and set a precedent for the honouring of women.²⁵⁴

Livia's fundamental role in building the principate was acknowledged when, after the death of Augustus, she was renamed Julia Augusta, the first woman to receive this honour.²⁵⁵ In Augustus' will she was adopted into the Julian family, at once an acknowledgement of her role in the past, as well as ensuring the dynastic succession, and received one third of the emperor's wealth, Tiberius receiving the other two thirds.

Tacitus and particularly Dio emphasize that powerful personality and that her influence eclipsed that of any other Roman woman before her:

*"An imperious mother and an amiable wife, she was a match for the diplomacy of her husband and the dissimulation of her son."*²⁵⁶

and

"For she (Livia) occupied a very exalted station, far above all women of former days, so

²⁵⁰ Dennison, 2011:166-167

²⁵¹ Barrett, 2002:198

²⁵² Kleiner and Matheson, 2000:33

²⁵³ As discussed on page 50 above.

²⁵⁴ Flory, 1993:288

²⁵⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 5.1

²⁵⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 5.1

that she could at any time receive the senate and such of the people as wished to greet her in her house; and this fact was entered in the public records."²⁵⁷

Livia's status was clearly based on the two factors which allocated status to men, family and property. Autonomy was not yet a defining factor in her historical character, but at least in influence she outshone women before her thanks to her unique situation as wife of the first emperor and mother of the second. According to Dio, Livia became Augustus' personal confidante and advisor, an unusual position for a Roman woman,²⁵⁸ and one which will be explored further in the following chapter. Her influence grew with the strength of the position of the new emperor, her son Tiberius, something which will be explored further in Chapter VII on the 'kingmakers'.

Together with artistic emphasis on the imperial family on various monuments,²⁵⁹ female fertility was linked in Augustan ideology to the triumph of Roman imperialism. The work of the Julio-Claudian women on the city of Rome, alongside that of the men of their family, was on a scale not seen in the Republic, and it contributed to the imperial women's unusual prominence in the public sphere. The situation is summed up by Dennison:

*"It (Livia's benefactions) enacts on a larger scale the pattern of patronage and benefaction expected of patrician women. In this respect - although it could not be acknowledged as such - Livia's behaviour conformed to that traditionally advocated for female consorts: her actions were those of any prominent Roman woman writ large. All that differed were Livia's motives: on the one hand, a calculation of how to benefit Augustus without asserting an unorthodox role for herself, on the other - perhaps - the deliberate creation of just such a role, independent and remote from Republican strictures on women's position."*²⁶⁰



²⁵⁷ Dio, 57.12.2

²⁵⁸ Dio, 48.52

²⁵⁹ Ara Pacis friezes, the Horologium Egyptian obelisk, the porticoes of Livia and Octavia, the Forum of Augustus, temple of Apollo on the Palatine, Great Mausoleum.

²⁶⁰ Dennison, 2011:156

– CHAPTER VI –

DIPLOMATS AND POWER BROKERS

Already in the late Republic, women were becoming known for their indirect involvement in the public sphere, as Syme notes: "Debarred from public life but enjoying the social prestige of family or husband, the daughters of the nobilitas could not be cheated of the real and secret power that comes from influence. They count for more than does the average senator, they might effect nothing less than an ex-consul achieved by the quiet exercise of auctoritas in the conclave of his peers - and they suitably foreshadow the redoubtable princesses in the dynasty of Julii and Claudii."²⁶¹ The Julio-Claudian women were noted for their involvement in peace treaties and for using their diplomatic ties in the manner described by Syme.²⁶² Their various levels of influence and operation behind the scenes provided the title for this chapter. While these attempts at influencing the outcomes of the male sphere of politics did not always meet with success, there are recorded instances where their efforts bore fruit, and there were even occasions where some of these women were able to build a short-lived power base of their own.

Octavia

Octavia was six years older than her famous brother, Octavian, and recognised as the most prominent woman of the Roman elite for as long as she was alive. By all accounts her brother loved her dearly and remained devoted to her throughout her life until her death in 11BCE.²⁶³ Augustus' regard for his sister can be seen in the fact that he allowed her to live in widowhood after Antony's death, never demanding that she marry again for political alliance, despite his introduction of social legislation that discouraged this. In her youth she had been married to Gaius Claudius Marcellus and had children three children by him, a son and two daughters. Shortly after his death she was required to marry Mark Antony to seal the Second Triumvirate between Antony and Octavian (the third triumvir, Lepidus, was never as strong a presence in the power struggle).²⁶⁴ It was thought that Octavia would be a strong harmonising influence on the two men, and initially the marriage was quite successful, despite the fact that at this time, Antony already had a liaison with Cleopatra.²⁶⁵ Octavia bore Antony two daughters, known as Antonia Major and Minor.

Octavian and Antony's rivalry however, refused to be laid to rest and the two men continued to bump heads.²⁶⁶ In 37BCE, a major conflict was brewing between the two leaders of Rome and another civil war loomed. It was through the diplomatic efforts of Octavia that conflict was averted

²⁶¹ Syme, 1964:25

²⁶² Sherk, 1988:64-75

²⁶³ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 4.1; Plutarch, *Mark Antony*, 31

²⁶⁴ Dio, 48.31.4; Plutarch, *Antiquities*, 31.3

²⁶⁵ Plutarch, *Mark Antony*, 31; Barrett, 2002:30

²⁶⁶ Mommsen *et al*, 2005:68-69

at that time. She persuaded her brother and husband to meet and sign the Treaty of Tarentum,²⁶⁷ which extended the Triumvirate for another five years:

*"There he was prevailed upon by Octavia, who had accompanied him from Greece, to allow her to visit her brother. She had already borne Anthony two daughters and was now again pregnant. She met Octavian on her way to him, and, after taking aside his two friends Agrippa and Maecenas and winning their sympathy, she appealed to her brother with tears and passionate entreaties not to make her the most wretched of women after having been the happiest."*²⁶⁸

Antony, however, eventually treated Octavia as casually as he had treated his first wife, Fulvia. After the Treaty was signed and temporary peace restored, he returned with his wife to the East, but despatched her to Italy when they reached Corcyra, ostensibly because he did not want to expose her to any danger. With hindsight however, it was widely accepted that he sent Octavia away so that he could resume his affair with Cleopatra.²⁶⁹ In 36BCE he acknowledged paternity for his children with Cleopatra and in 35BCE, he instructed Octavia (by letter) to return to Rome.²⁷⁰

Octavia remained true to the ideals of the Roman *matrona* - faithful, chaste and a symbol of motherhood - and lived in Antony's house in Rome, raising not only their own children, but also his children by Fulvia and later by Cleopatra (as well as her own children by Marcellus). It was only in 32BCE that Antony formally divorced Octavia and ordered her from his house and property. Octavia left Antony's dwelling and retired into semi-seclusion, still raising all their accumulated children.

Without the buffer of Octavia, the propaganda war between the two protagonists was free to reach its full potential. Octavian, despite his vaunted regard for his sister, used Antony's treatment of Octavia blatantly in his attempts to smear Antony's name. He also allowed Octavia to attempt to join Antony in 35BCE, so that it would give him a reasonable pretext for war if Antony continued his scandalous treatment of Octavia.²⁷¹ Despite her alleged protests that she did not wish to be the cause that drove the two men into war,²⁷² this simply added to Octavian's cause, since she appeared all the more wronged. She continued her role as intermediary between the two parties:

*(Octavia) also entertained any friends of Antony's who were sent to Rome either on business or to solicit posts of authority, and she did her utmost to help them obtain whatever they wanted from Octavius.*²⁷³

When she was unceremoniously sent back to Rome, her public humiliation was obvious and

²⁶⁷ Dio, 48.54.1

²⁶⁸ Plutarch, *Mark Antony*, 35

²⁶⁹ Kleiner, 2005:32-34

²⁷⁰ Dio, 49.33.4

²⁷¹ Plutarch, *Mark Antony*, 53

²⁷² Plutarch, *Mark Antony*, 54

²⁷³ Plutarch, *Mark Antony*, 54

in both the Senate and in public, Octavian showcased Octavia's exemplary behaviour and contrasted it with Antony's allegedly debauched and un-Roman conduct. The result was of course civil war. Couched in the propagandist words of Octavian it seemed a war between Rome and Cleopatra of Egypt, though in fact Antony was the main target. In 31BCE Octavian won the Battle of Actium and with the suicide, first of Antony and later of Cleopatra, Octavian became the undisputed master of the Roman world.

Almost all the attention paid to Octavia by the ancient historians and writers has been favourable and she was considered to be the epitome of Roman womanhood, an example to follow, a new and modern Cornelia,²⁷⁴ even though most of this evidence has been slanted, deriving from interpretation of the conflict between Octavian and Antony. Modern opinions tend to regard Octavia in the same way as no other evidence to the contrary has yet come to light.

Octavia was therefore a key figure in forging diplomatic ties between her husband and brother, but also, against her will, she became a manipulated image in the portrayal of Octavian's *bellum iustum*.

Antonia Minor

The younger daughter of Octavia Minor and Mark Antony, Antonia Minor was born on 31 January 36BCE in Rome in the house of Antony, which Octavia at that stage still occupied. Being only six years old in 30BCE when Antony committed suicide, Antonia never knew her famous father and grew up in the household of Augustus on the Palatine hill.

In 18BCE Antonia was married to the younger son of Livia, Drusus. He was nineteen and she was seventeen, already older than most young Roman brides who were considered of marriageable age from as young as fourteen,²⁷⁵ though Augustus probably had been grooming her for Drusus in his dynasty-building attempts.²⁷⁶ They had several children, though only three of them would reach maturity, Germanicus, Livilla and Claudius.²⁷⁷

Their marriage however was short-lived, as Drusus died young in 9BCE, while fighting German tribes along the Rhine.

After Drusus' death Antonia refused to remarry despite pressure from her uncle (and step-grandfather-in-law) Augustus, and the new marriage laws,²⁷⁸ and despite her relatively young age of twenty-seven.²⁷⁹ She remained in the house of Livia, her mother-in-law, in the room she had shared with Drusus, and her situation was clearly considered unusual even in antiquity:

²⁷⁴ Murgatroyd, 2008:268

²⁷⁵ Shaw, 1987:30

²⁷⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 6.15; Plutarch, *Antony*, 87.3. Antonia was linked to all the successive Julio-Claudian emperors, as well as other family members: she was Tiberius' sister-in-law, paternal grandmother of the Caligula of Agrippina Minor, and more directly the mother of the emperor Claudius, and both maternal great-grandmother and paternal great-aunt of Nero.

²⁷⁷ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 1.6

²⁷⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.180

²⁷⁹ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 34.1; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.180

“... in the same bed, on the part of the one (Drusus) the vigour of youth was extinguished, while on the other part of the other (Antonia) the experience of widowhood dragged on into old age. Let this bedchamber be taken as representing the extreme case of such experiences.”²⁸⁰

Antonia was also in control of her own finances and affairs, as she had exemption from guardianship according to Augustus' *ius trium liberorum*. Being thus able to inherit from her husband, she became a wealthy woman with properties in Italy, Greece and Egypt - there is for example confirmation that Alexander, the magistrate in Alexandria, attended to her estates in Egypt.²⁸¹ While there is no evidence that she used her wealth and influence in diplomatic efforts directly involved in imperial affairs, we do know that she regularly received visitors from other provinces and kingdoms, such as the royal houses of Judaea, Thrace and Mauretania, and even the Parthian king sent his son to Antonia's company.²⁸² Her patronage and friendship were considered valuable in advancing the interests of both Roman and non-Roman.²⁸³

She devoted herself to the education of her children and we hear about her again only at the granting of *maius imperium* to her eldest son, Germanicus, and his subsequent activities in the eastern provinces.²⁸⁴ She joined her son on his journey east, where they stopped at several places which held significance for the descendants of Mark Antony. But Germanicus died in CE19, on his Near-Eastern journey. The huge outpouring of public grief at the death of her popular son must have been at once a source of comfort, but also deepened her grief.²⁸⁵ She did not attend the cremation in Antioch nor did she participate in the funeral in Rome.²⁸⁶

When Livia died in CE29, Antonia became the unofficial first lady of Rome. She now took over the supervision of her grandson, Caligula, in addition to her own son, Claudius.²⁸⁷ Antonia's political influence behind the scenes increased and wealthy and prominent citizens and consuls, such as Lucius Vitellius and Valerius Asiaticus, were part of her circle.²⁸⁸

Her greatest recorded achievement in the intricacies of the Roman court, however, was her instrumental part in exposing Sejanus and his plot to assassinate Tiberius, which demonstrates her loyalty to the imperial family and the emperor, even at the expense of her own daughter. Josephus is very clear in his description that Antonia was the driving force behind the exposure of Sejanus' plots:

“Antonia on her own had done a very great service to Tiberius. For a great conspiracy had

²⁸⁰ Valerius Maximus, 4.3.3

²⁸¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.6

²⁸² Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.143; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 26.1; Tacitus, *Annals*, 6.40

²⁸³ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 10.1; Dio, 60.2.5; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.143, 156, 164-5

²⁸⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3, 14, 2.43; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 15.2 and *Caligula*, 1.1

²⁸⁵ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 6.1; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.209

²⁸⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.3

²⁸⁷ Dio, 60.2.5

²⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 11.3.1

been formed against him by his friend Sejanus, who at that time held the greatest power because he was prefect of the praetorian cohorts. Most of the senators and freedmen joined him, the army was bribed, and so the conspiracy made great progress. Indeed, Sejanus would have succeeded if Antonia had not shown more craft in her bold move than Sejanus did in his villainy. For when she was informed of the plot against Tiberius, she wrote him a full account of it and, entrusting the letter to Pallas, the most trustworthy of her slaves, sent it to Tiberius at Capri. Tiberius, being informed, put Sejanus and his fellow-conspirators to death. As for Antonia, whom he had previously held in high regard, he now valued her even more and put full confidence in her.”²⁸⁹ Sejanus was executed on 31 October CE31.

When Tiberius died and Caligula ascended the throne in CE37, Antonia was now granted the honours previously given to Livia, such as the title “Augusta”, the privileges normally accorded to the Vestal Virgins and the priestesshood of the deified Augustus.²⁹⁰ There is some debate as to whether the title Augusta was used while she was alive, or only after her death,²⁹¹ but whatever the case may be, Caligula's action is certainly in contrast to his later reported treatment of his grandmother Antonia.²⁹² In Suetonius the latter is described as part of a long list to demonstrate his growing unsuitability for the position of emperor:

*"When his grandmother Antonia asked for a private interview, he refused it except in the presence of the praefect Macro, and by such indignities and annoyances he caused her death; although some think that he also gave her poison. After she was dead, he paid her no honour, but viewed her burning pyre from his dining-room."*²⁹³

Unfortunately it is difficult to assess the validity of this information, as Caligula's reign is not well represented among the extant literary sources, and in Suetonius and Dio he is presented as more of a caricature than anything else. While the detail seems spurious, and unverifiable, it can probably be said that Antonia tried to curb her grandson's alleged excess, but without success.²⁹⁴ Caligula is said to have informed her as follows *"Remember I have the right to do anything to anybody!"*.²⁹⁵ On 1 May CE37, Antonia committed suicide, probably rather than watch her family slide into indignity and tyranny.²⁹⁶

²⁸⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.181.2; Dio, 58.9-11; 65.14.1-2

²⁹⁰ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 15.2; Dio, 59.3.4

²⁹¹ Kokkinos, 1992:27; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 15.2; Dio, 59.3.3-4. Both Caligula and Claudius awarded her the title of Augusta, since Claudius refused to honour the acts of his predecessor but could therefore claim that he had awarded her this honour.

²⁹² Dio, 49.3-4

²⁹³ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 23.2; also Dio, 59.3.6

²⁹⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.236; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 23.2-3

²⁹⁵ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 29.1

²⁹⁶ Dio, 59.3.6 informs that Caligula forced her to commit suicide after she rebuked him, but this is not attested anywhere else and probably not reliable.

Although Antonia was celebrated for her grace and beauty, her wit and wisdom, her kindness and generosity, it seems that she also had a harsh side and was said to have been a strict mother with rigid moral standards - so rigid, in fact, that when her daughter Livilla was duped by Sejanus and joined his conspiracy, she herself starved her daughter to death.²⁹⁷ She could not tolerate that Livilla had defiled herself and her family with a common adulterer, bringing the family into disrepute in this way.

Antonia was a powerful woman, born to famous parents, married to the popular Drusus, and mother of the ever-popular Germanicus, and also mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to three of Rome's Julio-Claudian emperors. Between her and Drusus they gave legitimacy to the reign of Claudius, who fell outside the Julian line and needed public family endorsement to become an acknowledged member of the imperial family.

She was one of the wealthiest people in the Roman empire, and made many business transactions in her own right, as well as politically supporting candidates for consulship, and raising and educating her children and grandchildren. Her influence was great, especially with Tiberius, and with Caligula, if only for short while. She is still seen today as one of the greatest and most powerful ladies ever to have lived in the Roman world.

Agrippina Minor

Agrippina Minor was chosen as another case study for this chapter as she rose to a greater prominence than any other of the Julio-Claudian woman, and is therefore an extreme example that presents us with the polar opposite of the discreet Antonia Minor, whose influence was very much behind the scenes.

As the daughter of Germanicus and Agrippina Maior, Agrippina Minor was born into the imperial family around CE14, being able to claim Augustus as her great-grandfather and Tiberius as her great-uncle, and was subsequently linked to all three successive emperors as the sister of Caligula (illustrated in the coin below), the wife of Claudius and the mother of Nero.²⁹⁸ The coin in Figure 6.1 portrays her as *Securitas*. All three sisters carry a cornucopia, with Drusilla representing Concordia, and Livilla as Fortuna. The coin symbolised Caligula's right to rule as a member of the imperial family, in particular the family of Germanicus and Agrippina Major.

²⁹⁷ Dio, 58.11.7

²⁹⁸ Beuster, 2009:1



Fig. 6.1 Coin issued by Caligula, with his three sisters on the reverse, Agrippina Minor, Drusilla and Julia

Portrayal of family links and endorsement, plus senatorial approval, was also the intention of the relief depicted in Fig. 6.2, where the emperor Claudius is depicted in heroic nudity with military cloak, in the process of being crowned (presumably by a member of Senate, a section of the toga is visible to the right).

Claudius' right hand is joined to that of Agrippina, his wife, denoting marital harmony. Ginsburg notes that this is the first time that this symbol, the *dextrarum iunctio*, is used in public art for an emperor and his wife.²⁹⁹ In one image, then, the imperial family, the military and the Senate are all acknowledged. Agrippina holds a sheaf of wheat, symbolising fertility, and the oak leaf wreath on the head of Claudius, the *corona civica* or 'citizen's crown', portrays Claudius as the 'saviour' of the Roman people.³⁰⁰



Fig. 6.2 Claudius and Agrippina, at Aphrodisias, dated to 49-54CE

Agrippina's father, Germanicus, died while she was young, and she was henceforth supervised by a number of very strong and powerful women: her mother Agrippina Major, her grandmother, Antonia Minor, and her great-grandmother, Livia, and this cannot have failed to have influenced her. Agrippina herself had some increased influence from CE37, as the sister of the

²⁹⁹ Ginsburg, 2006:87

³⁰⁰ Ginsburg, 2006:72

emperor Caligula, from whom she and her sisters received various honours, such as the honorary status of the Vestal Virgins and being occasionally depicted on the emperor's coins, as in Figure 6.1 above.³⁰¹ Caligula also at first included his sisters in all the oaths he received from others:

"And I will not hold myself and my children dearer than I do Gaius and his sisters"; as well as in the propositions of the consuls: *"Favour and good fortune attend Gaius Caesar and his sisters."*³⁰²

This relationship did not last, however, and Agrippina's fortunes waned until the assassination of Caligula in CE41. Agrippina's uncle on her father's side, Claudius, unexpectedly succeeded to the imperial throne. Both Claudius and Agrippina had married and remarried, and as a widow Agrippina had accumulated considerable wealth, which added to her influence. According to the report of Tacitus, she wrote an account of her family history and of her mother's life, and gained some popular sympathy beyond that which Messalina, Claudius' first wife, received.³⁰³

Despite the blood tie between Claudius and Agrippina, they married in CE49. Tacitus certainly attributes the marriage to Agrippina's lust for power, but, as explained above, Tacitus has his own motivations for slanting his account in this way. Nevertheless the accounts presented in the ancient sources all support the account that Agrippina became obsessed with a lust for power, and when she gained it, she used it ruthlessly.



Fig. 6.3 Aureus of Claudius, 50-54CE, establishing Agrippina Minor as Augusta on the reverse

The status she had gained as the emperor's wife quickly became apparent in the coinage of the time. The coin illustrated in Figure 6.3 shows Claudius on the obverse, and Agrippina on the reverse, on her being granted the title of Augusta. In this case the title was undoubtedly awarded

³⁰¹ Beuster, 2009:2

³⁰² Suetonius, *Caligula*, 15.3

³⁰³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.53.3; Barrett, 1999:199

during her lifetime, and Ginsburg views this as the granting of some sort of peer or equal status with the emperor. While not really constitutionally valid, it certainly gave her greater visibility and status, and links her to the two women who received the title before her, Livia and Antonia Minor.³⁰⁴

Again associations of fertility can be discerned through a strong association with Ceres through the depiction of her wearing the Ceres crown or diadem. Ginsburg maintains that Agrippina received the title of Augusta at the same time that her son Nero was adopted by Claudius,³⁰⁵ so that she could legitimately be called the mother of the emperor's son, who would then be at least a possible successor to the throne. Ginsburg also argues convincingly that the association with Ceres could have further underpinned Agrippina's marriage to Claudius, since assimilation with Ceres Mater served as an implicit claim to the title of *mater patriae*, further putting her on an equal footing with the *pater patriae*, the emperor.³⁰⁶

According to all our ancient sources, Agrippina ruthlessly eliminated any potential rivals for her influence with Claudius, and anyone who could prevent Nero's rise as the future emperor of Rome. The accounts we have for Agrippina's influence over her husband are almost a caricature of the power a woman could gain by manipulation, and Tacitus' treatment of her in particular has been the subject of much discussion.³⁰⁷

Apart from Claudius' adoption of Nero, her influence was marked in various other instances, for example the founding of a colony which bore also her name: *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippensis* (the only recorded instance of a Roman *colonia* bearing the name of a woman);³⁰⁸ her influence in appointing Burrus as praetorian prefect;³⁰⁹ her elimination of Claudius' legitimate son and first born, Britannicus, from the political scene.³¹⁰

Agrippina was therefore crucially instrumental in bringing Nero to the purple, even if one were to take Tacitus' account as hyperbole in his attempt to illustrate the irresponsible power of the Roman monarchy. The relief illustrated in the previous chapter (Figure 5.6) which depicts Agrippina crowning Nero supports the literary accounts that she was instrumental in his accession.³¹¹ She wears a diadem indicating her divinity, unique at this stage of imperial iconography, even in the colonies, for a woman who was still living.

After she had successfully raised her son Nero to the throne of Rome, Agrippina Minor continued to broker deals and play a lethal political game to keep her son in power. She first caused the removal of the proconsul of Asia in CE54, Marcus Junius Silanus, brother to Lucius Silanus

³⁰⁴ Wood, 1999:138; Ginsburg, 2006: 25

³⁰⁵ Ginsburg, 2006:70

³⁰⁶ Ginsburg, 2006:71

³⁰⁷ Specifically by Hardy (1976), Rutland (1978), Santoro L'Hoir (1994), Swindle (2003) and Ginsburg (2006)

³⁰⁸ Mommsen *et al*, 2005: 552

³⁰⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.1; 12.42.1

³¹⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.666; Dio, 61.34; Suetonius, *Claudius*, 44

³¹¹ According to the interpretation of Ginsburg, however, the literary biases have influenced the image (2006: 84; 88).

whose reputation she had earlier destroyed to facilitate Nero's marriage to Octavia. Agrippina may have feared the vengeance of the Junii Silani now that she no longer had the protection of Claudius. Not long after, she may have caused the death of Narcissus, Claudius's loyal freedman and Britannicus' strongest supporter.³¹²

Agrippina's long-standing and close friendship with Marcus Antonius Pallas, the chief financial advisor to Claudius, may also have allowed her influence in the minting of the coins, particularly if one keeps in mind that several coins from both Claudius' and Nero's reign depicted her in a favourable, and powerful, light. Some ancient sources maintain that in the early months of Nero's reign he left policy decisions to his mother³¹³ and she managed most of the business of the Empire and even received embassies, governors and kings.³¹⁴ She also received many further honours during Nero's reign,³¹⁵ such as the Senate voting her an escort of *lictors* and deciding to hold meetings in the imperial palace rather than in the senate house, so that she could listen in on the business of the Senate. Nero's first password to his Guard was *optima mater* (best of mothers) and he walked alongside her litter in deference.³¹⁶

The general consensus of modern scholars is that Agrippina's power started to decline by CE55, although the ancient sources provide varying evidence on this point.³¹⁷ In any case Agrippina was still powerful enough at the end of 55 to place her own friends in crucial positions, and her influence some four years later is still on record.³¹⁸ But her son was not as dependent on her as she had imagined,³¹⁹ and his gratitude towards her less than she expected it to be. Thus, like the imperial women before her, Agrippina's personal power rested on a fragile base. But what may have truly precipitated her demise, was the influence of Seneca and Burrus on Nero, two of his closest councillors.³²⁰ There is evidence that they actively engaged in weaning Nero from his mother's influence, and the pair allegedly conspired to embarrass Agrippina and to prompt Nero to restrain his mother, albeit diplomatically.³²¹ For example, when Agrippina attempted to meet ambassadors from Armenia in a manner stressing her equality with the emperor, Nero quite deliberately showed Agrippina up as not being his equal.³²² Nero's affair with a freedwoman named Acte, which offended Agrippina to such an extent that her reaction undermined her influence in the palace and

³¹² Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.1.4

³¹³ Suetonius, *Nero*, 9.1

³¹⁴ Dio, 61.3.2

³¹⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.2.5-6; Suetonius, *Nero*, 9; Dio, 61.3.2

³¹⁶ Bauman, 1992:192-194

³¹⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.12.1 ; Dio, 61.7.5 but also 61.3.3-4.2

³¹⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.1-2; Barrett, 1999:238

³¹⁹ Nero was the accepted choice of the Senate, the Praetorian Guard and the people. He also had control of the army and was married to Claudius' daughter Octavia, considerable points for his legitimacy.

³²⁰ Agrippina herself had brought Seneca and Burrus to Nero as teachers and advisors; Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.2; Dio, 61.3-4; Barrett, 1999:238

³²¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.2.3-4, 13.14.1

³²² Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.5.3

with her son, was engineered by Seneca and Burrus³²³

Agrippina followed in the footsteps of her mother by reacting unwisely to her growing isolation and loss of influence. She threatened to switch her allegiance and considerable resources to Claudius' natural son, Britannicus. Not long after, in CE55, Britannicus mysteriously died, officially of an epileptic seizure, but it is probable that he was murdered on Nero's orders.

By now the relationship between Agrippina and Nero had deteriorated to the point where she was banished from the imperial presence. Agrippina continued to cultivate friendships and broker deals, most notably with Nero's estranged wife and Claudius' daughter, Octavia, as well as with Rubellius Plautus, a great-grandson of Tiberius.³²⁴



Fig. 6.4 Nero and Agrippina Minor. Aureus, CE54

Agrippina's political manoeuvring also brought her new enemies, such as her former friend Junia Silana, whose plans Agrippina had upset and who now held a grudge against her. Together with an old enemy, Marcus Antonias Passas (a freedman of Domitia Lepida), they denounced Agrippina as plotting against Nero's life. It was however Burrus who persuaded the emperor not to take direct action against his mother.³²⁵ Barrett ascribes this to the affection which the Praetorian Guard had for her, and that Nero's only hope for total support from the Guard lay in convincing them beyond doubt that she was guilty of treason.³²⁶

The decline of Agrippina's fortunes is also reflected in the issuing of coins, as illustrated in Figures 6.3-6.5. A number of gold and silver issues display Nero and Agrippina facing each other (Figure 6.4 above), once again with the wheat representing fertility. Most significant is the inscription, reading *AGRIPP AVGV DIVI CLAVD NERONIS CAES MATER*, or "*Agrippina Augusta, wife of the divine Claudius, mother of Nero Caesar*". On the reverse, the inscription reads

³²³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.12-13; Suetonius, *Nero*, 28; Dio, 61.3, 61.7

³²⁴ Barrett, 1999: 175

³²⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.19-22

³²⁶ Barrett, 1999: 175

NERONI CLAVD DIVI F CAES AVG GERM IMP TR P, or *Nero, son of the divine Claudius, emperor, holder of tribunician power, consul*, with an oak wreath, enclosing EX S C.

The coin certainly testifies to what extent Nero owed his position to Agrippina, and in the history of imperial coinage it was unusual to have the emperor's identification with the mother emphasized more than that with the father.

These are soon followed in CE55 by another aureus type (Fig. 6.5) , where Agrippina is still present, but is placed behind the profile of Nero, with on the obverse only the inscription NERONI CLAVD DIVI F CAES AVG GERM IMP TR P/ “*Nero, son of the divine Claudius, emperor, holder of tribunician power, consul*”.



Fig. 6.5 *Nero and Agrippina facing right, Nero in front and his mother behind*

Wood differs with this more traditionally accepted view, seeing the arrangement of figures as merely another way of expressing the partnership.³²⁷ But combined with the literary evidence, the traditional interpretation of the coinage seems convincing.

As Nero grew increasingly unstable, he distanced himself even further from Agrippina and came to distrust Seneca and Burrus as her previous protégés. During CE58 and 59, Nero's reign became more and more despotic and in CE59 he had his mother Agrippina murdered. This act would have horrified Roman society, as motherhood was one of the most sacred of icons within the Roman family,³²⁸ and moreover it had been heavily emphasized in establishing the imperial dynasty. It has been suggested that Seneca planted the idea of murdering Agrippina with Nero in the hope that it would cause Nero's downfall.³²⁹ Tacitus on the other hand says that it was uncertain whether Seneca and Burrus knew of Nero's plans.³³⁰ What truly caused Nero to have his mother murdered, and all the political machination that may or may not have been directly or indirectly responsible,

³²⁷ Wood, 1999:477

³²⁸ Horace, *Odes*, 3.6

³²⁹ Dio, 61.12.1

³³⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.6-7

has been widely debated by a variety of authors, from ancient writers to modern historians. Many reasons have been put forward for Nero's act, including his affair with and subsequent marriage to Poppaea Sabina, his fear of Agrippina and her disapproval of his lavish lifestyle and artistic pursuits, as well as political power plays by rivals and enemies of both Agrippina and Nero individually.

Officially the reason for the murder was given that Agrippina had plotted to assassinate Nero and Burrus instigated the “thanks giving” that Nero had been saved from such a heinous plot,³³¹ thus absolving Nero of the stigma of matricide. In a letter to the Senate, Nero sought to justify himself by listing in detail all Agrippina's political manoeuvres and supposed malevolent crimes, going as far back as her marriage to Claudius and blaming her for all the wrongs of Claudius' reign.³³²

Agrippina's unprecedented power and her political ploys and power brokering undoubtedly led to her making many enemies that would have been glad to see her brought down. Yet she had achieved her goals as evidenced by the dramatic words attributed to her when the assassins came for her “...strike in my womb that bore Nero...”.³³³

With the death of Nero, the reign of the Julio-Claudians came to an end, and it would be centuries before any imperial women took such an active and powerful role in the politics of Empire again. Only the Severan women can be said to have had nearly the same influence and it can be safely said that not even they ever rivalled Agrippina Augusta. While Richard Saller justifiably points out that, with the rise of the imperial dynasty in the first century, the power of political officeholders and the traditional oligarchy shrank while the opportunities for women, slaves and freedmen to exercise influence behind the scenes increased, Agrippina's fate amply illustrates the vulnerability behind their power for members of these groups.³³⁴



³³¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.10

³³² Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.11

³³³ Dio, 63.14

³³⁴ Saller, 2000:18

– CHAPTER VII –

THE SUCCESSION AND THE KINGMAKERS

As explained in the preceding chapters, the attempts at building a legitimate dynasty, already evident with Augustus, became one of the most crucial elements of the early principate. It was in this domain that the women of the Julio-Claudian house came into their element. Almost all the women selected for this study were active in this role, but the focus of this chapter will be on Livia (as the first of the imperial women to see her son succeed to the purple), Agrippina Major (who receives almost as much attention in the sources) and Agrippina Minor (the last of the women of the Julio-Claudian line to feature in this role). Both the former and the latter were able to bring their own sons to the throne, even though neither of these (Tiberius and Nero) were the actual sons of the emperor to whom their mothers were married. In terms of power and influence, this makes their role as kingmakers all the more remarkable.

Octavia and Livia – their role in finding the successor to Augustus

The first mention we have of women interfering in the politics of Julio-Claudian Rome is Tacitus' report of the rivalry between Octavia Minor and Livia.³³⁵ Apparently the two women vied with each other to place their own descendants at the helm of the Roman empire.³³⁶ As Augustus had only a single daughter, Julia, at first there was a rivalry for their own sons, Gaius Claudius Marcellus and Tiberius, to claim her hand in marriage.

Julia was at first betrothed at age fourteen to Marcellus, the son of Octavia and the senior Marcellus, who was seventeen at the time.³³⁷ Marcellus was clearly being advanced by Augustus as his possible successor and heir.³³⁸ At the same time, Augustus also made sure to advance Livia's eldest son, Tiberius,³³⁹ though clearly in second place behind Marcellus. In 23BCE, however, the twenty year old Marcellus fell ill when a plague swept through Rome, and died soon after.³⁴⁰

After the untimely death of Marcellus, Julia was married in 21BCE to Augustus' general and right-hand man, Marcus Agrippa.³⁴¹ Allegedly Octavia was the one to encourage the marriage and to prevail upon her brother to accept such a union.³⁴² Syme has maintained that Livia and Agrippa were instrumental in thwarting Augustus' plans for a hereditary monarchy at this stage, which

³³⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3. This is confirmed by Seneca (*On Anger* 3.16.3-21; *On Consolation to Marcia*, 2.4) although we should be cautious about Seneca's claim of rivalry and hatred between the two women, as it forms part of a long list of examples not to follow, and has a rhetorical slant.

³³⁶ Barrett, 2002:40

³³⁷ Hereafter referred to only as "Marcellus".

³³⁸ Dio, 53.28,31

³³⁹ Dio, 150:12

³⁴⁰ Augustus himself became very ill with this plague, and this would have intensified his drive for a succession.

³⁴¹ Agrippa was married to Marcella, daughter of Octavia, at that point but divorced her in order to marry Julia.

³⁴² Barrett, 2002:32-37; Dio, 53.30.4

would be a clear indication of Livia's ambitions for her own son.³⁴³ The marriage of Julia and Agrippa may also have been a political move by Augustus to ensure the continued loyalty of Agrippa, as the formidable general's reaction to Marcellus being promoted had been unfavourable and with this marriage he would be a key figure in the governance of Rome.³⁴⁴ Their two oldest sons (Gaius and Lucius Caesar) were adopted by Augustus as his heirs.

In 11BCE, when Octavia died, Livia and her ambitions had an undoubted advantage. Agrippa's death in the preceding year had also improved the chances of her sons with respect to the succession. Julia was now a widow and Augustus was unlikely to pass over one of Livia's sons yet again. As Drusus was married to Antonia Minor, already related to Augustus by blood, it was decided that Tiberius was the favoured choice since it would provide a second strong tie between the Julian and Claudian clans. In 11BCE he was forced to divorce his wife Vipsania (daughter of Agrippa) and married to Julia. Both of them were reportedly unhappy with the match, since Julia did not want to marry again and Tiberius had not wanted to divorce his pregnant wife Vipsania.³⁴⁵

With the marriage of Julia and Tiberius, Livia begins to appear more often in the sources, and also became more prominent in public and political life. She was now without a doubt the pre-eminent woman in the Roman empire. Both her sons were favourably connected to the line of Augustus through marriage and if Tiberius and Julia were apparently unhappy and produced no offspring, her younger son Drusus was popular with the people, the love between him and the esteemed Antonia Minor was well attested,³⁴⁶ and their union produced three children, Germanicus, Livilla and the future emperor Claudius. Drusus died young at the age of twenty nine in 9BCE,³⁴⁷ and Antonia never remarried and remained a widow until her death in CE37.

Livia's ambitions, pride and hope would now have focused solely on her remaining living offspring, Tiberius.³⁴⁸ The dedication of the *Porticus Liviae* in 7BCE was the first recorded instance of public collaboration between Livia and Tiberius.³⁴⁹ After the dedication, Livia gave a lavish feast for the women of Rome while Tiberius did the same for the men. Julia, Augustus' daughter and Tiberius' wife, was relegated to the sidelines, clearly supporting the impression reported by the ancient authors that the marriage was not a happy one. But in the following year Tiberius retired to the island of Rhodes. Official reasons were that he needed rest, yet some of the sources indicate that it was as much his disastrous relationship with Julia, a marriage that had soured and turned to contempt.³⁵⁰

³⁴³ Syme, 1939:345

³⁴⁴ Seneca, *Consolations*, 2.4

³⁴⁵ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 63.2

³⁴⁶ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 34.1

³⁴⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.82.3

³⁴⁸ Rutland, 1978:15-21

³⁴⁹ Dio, 54.23; 55.8.2; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 29; Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.639. Discussed above in Chapter 5, see also Flory, 1984:317

³⁵⁰ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 10.2; Dio, 55.9.1-3

However, Gaius and Lucius, the sons of Julia and Agrippa and grandnephews of Octavia, were still the designated heirs of Augustus. According to accounts, both youths were arrogant and insolent, yet popular with the local crowds. It has been suggested that it may have been their mother Julia that encouraged them in such behaviour, determined to have the power and influence due to her as Augustus Caesar's daughter.³⁵¹ Barrett follows the sources which relate that Julia was a self-willed woman who often outraged her father with her dress-style and choice of friends; that her extramarital affairs were legendary and that she and Tiberius (her third and last husband) despised each other.³⁵² Her outrageous behaviour was contrary to the moral code that Augustus and Livia were trying to establish, and to the *lex Julia de Maritandis* of 18BCE.³⁵³

In 2BCE Augustus denounced his daughter in a letter to the Senate. She was divorced from Tiberius (under Augustus' seal)³⁵⁴ and exiled to the island of Pandateria on charges of adultery, never returning to Rome.³⁵⁵ Ancient accounts suggest that Livia had a hand in her fall.³⁵⁶ Barrett, however, disagrees with the rumours of Livia's involvement, as Tacitus was known for vilifying her at every opportunity, and because keeping Julia at Tiberius' side would have been politically more astute.³⁵⁷ Barrett also provides inscriptional evidence that Livia may in fact have helped Julia when she was in exile, by at least having her moved to greater comfort on the mainland at Rhegium, in CE4.³⁵⁸ The autonomy which the Julio-Claudian women enjoyed can thus be said to have been subject to a strict moral code, which was to be upheld unbroken.

With the exile of Julia, Livia was now without any rival for the pre-eminence she already enjoyed, although it did weaken Tiberius' position as his link with Augustus' bloodline was now severed. He did, however, ask to return to Rome, which Augustus initially refused because he perceived Tiberius' absence as treasonous abandonment by the stepson he relied upon.³⁵⁹ It has already been observed that, after Tiberius' withdrawal to Rhodes, only Livia's intervention kept him in the political picture, and it is likely that it was thanks to her that he was recalled in 4CE.³⁶⁰ Augustus finally agreed that he might return to Rome, yet with the strict *proviso*, i.e. that he drop out of all public life and live a life of quiet retirement, which he did.³⁶¹

When first Lucius died in CE2, followed by the death of Gaius in CE4,³⁶² Tacitus implicates

³⁵¹ Barrett, 2002:48

³⁵² Barrett, 2002:49-52

³⁵³ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 64.2; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 2.5

³⁵⁴ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 11.4

³⁵⁵ Velleius Paterculus, 100.3-5; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 7.149; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.52-53; 6.53.1; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 19.1; 63-64; 65.2, 101.3, *Tiberius*, 7.2; 11.4; 50.1; Dio, 55.12-16; 57.18

³⁵⁶ Suetonius, *Augustus* 65; Pliny, *Natural History*, 21.9. Augustus was said to have 'discovered' Julia's adulterous affairs and public revelries in the Forum 'from the very rostra where he had proclaimed the *leges Iuliae*' (Seneca, *De Beneficia*, 6.32.1).

³⁵⁷ Barrett, 2002:59-60

³⁵⁸ Barrett, 2002:51. The inscription suggests that Livia seconded some slaves to Julia's service.

³⁵⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.48; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 13, 15.1

³⁶⁰ Levick, 1999:45; Dio, 53.13

³⁶¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.48

³⁶² Dio, 55.10a.4-9

Livia, suggesting that they were poisoned, though this is not supported by any other sources.³⁶³ Similar rumours implicating Livia, for example in the deaths of Marcellus in 23BCE, of Agrippa Posthumous in CE14, of Julia Minor's downfall in CE8, are also reported, but these are also usually taken to be Tacitean invective.³⁶⁴

These two deaths left Augustus again without a male heir. Agrippa Posthumous was too young and immature at sixteen, as was the popular and admired Germanicus, son of Drusus and Antonia Minor, at seventeen years of age. Augustus now had no alternative but to turn to Tiberius, and hence adopted him into the Julian family.

Tacitus ascribed this move to the constant appeals of Livia. Further perusal of the sources though, both letters and the accounts by Suetonius, suggests that Tiberius was in fact Augustus' first choice and that he had faith in his stepson's abilities.³⁶⁵ This adoption was subject to Tiberius in his turn adopting his brother's son Germanicus as his heir.³⁶⁶ It may even have been this proviso that prompted Tacitus to suggest that Augustus had really wanted to adopt Germanicus before Tiberius, but that Livia's ideals prevailed. What some ancient historians seem to have failed to take into consideration, was that Germanicus was Livia's own grandson and thus also of her family and bloodline.³⁶⁷ But Tiberius in the same year (CE12) was also granted tribunician power and *maius imperium*, the first of the potential heirs to receive this,³⁶⁸ which again indicates that Augustus had some faith in him. In the same year he was given important military commissions in Pannonia and Germania.

Two years later, in CE14, Augustus died. Once again Livia played a central role, and again according to Tacitus' innuendo, had a sinister motive in hastening her elderly husband's death.³⁶⁹ It was rumoured that Augustus was about to recall Posthumous from exile, and that it would have jeopardised Tiberius' position as designated heir.³⁷⁰ The story of a poisoned fig given to Augustus by Livia has been alluded to in several sources, though all but Tacitus considered it rumour.³⁷¹ Suetonius and Velleius Paterculus both refer to Tiberius arriving in time to spend time with Augustus on the day of his death. Suetonius went as far as to recount a legendary end where Livia was with Augustus and that he uttered the famous line "*Livia, be mindful of our marriage, and good bye*".³⁷² Both accounts are probably embellished at best and invented at worst.

³⁶³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3.3; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 65.1

³⁶⁴ Dio, 55.33.4; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3; 1.6; Dio, 53.33.4, 55.10A, 55.32; 57.3.6. Julia's downfall in Tacitus, *Annals*, 71

³⁶⁵ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 21.4-7; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3.3, 4.57.3. Though partial and biased, the account of Velleius Paterculus, 2.103.2, confirms this.

³⁶⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3; Dio, 55.13.

³⁶⁷ The importance of the extended family is sometimes underestimated - the foundation of the Roman family rested on a sense of obligation, duty and devotion to family, and a reciprocal relationship between family members where they protect and guard each other (Saller, 1994:107-111).

³⁶⁸ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 21

³⁶⁹ Barrett, 2002:69-71

³⁷⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 3.16; Martial, 1.13

³⁷¹ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 76.1; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.5.1; Dio, 55.22.2

³⁷² Velleius Paterculus, 2.123.1; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 98.5-99.1; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.5.3-4

Augustus left one third of his property to Livia in his will, and the other two thirds to Tiberius, and, as mentioned in Chapter V, Livia was adopted into the Julian family and given the honorary title of Augusta. Making her 'Julia Augusta' undermined any suggestion that Tiberius owed his position to his mother's scandalous affair with Octavian and her remarriage while she was pregnant with Drusus. Her title empowered Livia considerably after the emperor's death, something she would come to need as the new emperor took power. The Roman senate voted Livia several other tokens of honour: the title 'mother' or 'parent' of the fatherland (*mater/parens patriae*), which Tacitus decries:

*"The Augusta was also much flattered by the senators. Some were of the opinion that she should be called 'parent' of the fatherland, others that she should be called the country's 'mother'; most held that 'the son of Julia' should be added to the emperor's (i.e. Tiberius') name".*³⁷³



Fig. 7.1 Carved turquoise cameo, Livia and Tiberius, 14-19CE

Dio goes even further in suggesting that it was the result of her exceptional influence over Augustus, and the precedence she wished to gain over Tiberius:

"For in the time of Augustus she wielded the greatest influence and she used to declare that

³⁷³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.14.1. It is possible that, much like divine honours, Livia was given this title outside Rome - a coin portraying Livia on the reverse carries the legend *Augusta mater patriae* (Leptis Magna). An inscription from Anticaria in Baetica calls her *genetrix orbis* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* II/5, 748 = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* II, 2038).

it was she who had made Tiberius emperor; therefore she was not content to rule on equal terms with him, but wished to take precedence over him".³⁷⁴

Tiberius denied Livia some of the honours which the Senate wished to bestow on her as excessive in the case of a woman:

"(In the Senate) it was variously proposed that she should be called 'parent' or 'mother' of her country; and a large body of opinion held that the words 'son of Julia' ought to form part of the emperor's name. He, however, repeatedly asserted that only reasonable honours must be paid to women....In reality, however, he was jealous and nervous, and regarded this elevation as derogatory to his own person. He would not even allow her to be allotted an official attendant, and forbade an Altar of Adoption and other honours of the kind."³⁷⁵

The title *mater patriae* carried important connotations, such as the concern and protection associated with motherhood, but also implied a position of authority in the fatherland.³⁷⁶

However, this in itself does not necessarily indicate any animosity on the part of Tiberius, since he himself also refused titles such as *pater patriae* for himself,³⁷⁷ and it is possible that he was showing some delicacy in avoiding the trappings of a dynasty. The same argument can be made for other senatorial proposals, such as giving his mother a *lictor* (an unprecedented honour for a woman), and to change the name of the month of October to Livium (and September to Tiberium).³⁷⁸

Initial relations between Livia and her son as emperor therefore seemed to have been harmonious, and he is for example reported to have supported her friends Urgulania in CE16,³⁷⁹ and Plancina in CE20,³⁸⁰ and travelling attend her sick bed in CE22.³⁸¹ But their relationship is said to have deteriorated from then on,³⁸² although Barrett places the breakdown of relations between Tiberius and Livia particularly visible from about CE25.³⁸³

³⁷⁴ As mentioned above, the title of *mater patriae* was granted after her death: "because she had saved the lives of not a few of them, had reared the children of many, and had helped others to pay their daughters' dowries, some took to calling her 'mother of the country'" (Dio, 58.2.3).

³⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.14.1; 5.1; Dio, 58.2; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 51. Also Barrett, 2002:148-158.

³⁷⁶ In CE42 under Claudius all Livia's honours were restored and she was finally deified. She was named *Diva Augusta*, and women were required to invoke her name in their sacred oaths. Her image was conveyed to the public games in an elephant-drawn chariot, where races were sometimes held in her honour. She was awarded a statue, which stood alongside that of Augustus in the Temple of Augustus.

³⁷⁷ Dio, 57.8.1 and Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.87. Suetonius is of the opinion that Tiberius was offended by the Senate's proposal that he be called 'son of Livia' in honorific inscriptions, and for that reason Tiberius rejected the title *parens patriae* for his mother (*Tiberius*, 50.3).

³⁷⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.14.1; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 50 and 26

³⁷⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.32; Dio, 57.12

³⁸⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.17

³⁸¹ Dio, 57.3.3. Dennison, 2011: 181

³⁸² Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.6; although Dio maintains that relations were already strained at the time of Tiberius' accession (57.3.3).

³⁸³ Barrett, 2002: 148

It would seem that Tiberius was reluctant to elevate Livia to the status of 'king-maker'. Dennison thinks it likely that Livia was behind the commission of the cameo in Figure 7.1, produced shortly after the death of Augustus, and that it was probably private, for family circulation. Livia is depicted as the larger, dominant figure, holding a bust of her son Tiberius. She is also shown as Venus Genetrix, and thus doubly higher in status than Tiberius – the larger and divine figure, which Dennison terms “an exercise in make-believe”.³⁸⁴

There are a few other instances which support this self-elevation of Livia. In the inscription accompanying a statue dedicated in CE22 by Livia to Augustus in the centre of Rome, her own name is placed ahead of that of Tiberius.³⁸⁵



Fig. 7.2 Bareheaded and draped bust of Julia Augusta as Salus, facing right / Legend around large S(enatus) C(onsultum), 24th tribunician year of Tiberius. Silver dupondius minted in Rome under Tiberius, 22-23CE.

The coinage issued by Tiberius certainly intimates that he was conscious of the fact that his association with his mother helped to legitimize his position. Augustus had never portrayed Livia on coinage, but now there was more to gain - she was Julia Augusta, adopted into the Julian line and priestess of the deified Augustus.

So Tiberius, aware of the high regard which the people had for Livia, compromised by placing less direct references to her on his official coinage, illustrated for example in Figure 7.2, where the female figure and legend *Salus augusta* clearly refer to the dowager empress - despite the fact that the word 'augusta' is the adjective to be read with Salus or 'health', Livia would have come to mind both because of her recent title of Augusta, but also because in this time she was recovering

³⁸⁴ Dennison, 2011, 201-202

³⁸⁵ "Julia Augusta and Tiberius Augustus dedicated a statue to the divine father Augustus near the theatre of Marcellus", entry in the *Fasti Anni Iuliani* (April 23, CE22).

from her illness of 22, referred to above.³⁸⁶

The last chapter of Livia's involvement in the succession after Augustus concerns the conflicting accounts of the death of Germanicus and the fate of his wife Agrippina Major and their children. Germanicus was Tiberius' designated and legal heir, almost as beloved a hero as his father Drusus before him, though he is said not to have the same level of military skill.³⁸⁷ His wife was a Roman *matrona* of some renown. After the German campaigns of Germanicus, accompanied by Agrippina, Tiberius recalled his nephew to Rome in CE17 and offered him a position in the East. It was generally assumed by later historians that Tiberius did this out of jealousy, to curb Germanicus' popularity.³⁸⁸

The governor (*legate*) of Syria was Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, and his wife Munatia Plancina was reportedly a close friend of Livia's. Upon Germanicus' arrival, there was little love lost between Piso and Germanicus as it was rumoured that Piso tried to usurp Germanicus' position of authority, especially with the army. A trip to Egypt by Germanicus was viewed by Tiberius as rebellious, as the province was still an imperial province where only the emperor might travel freely, and a stern rebuke awaited Germanicus in Alexandria.³⁸⁹ Piso had rescinded Germanicus' orders, as the latter found out upon his return to Syria, and Piso diplomatically withdrew to the island of Cos. Shortly after this, Germanicus fell ill and he died on October 10, CE19. His widow, Agrippina, accused Piso and Plancina of poisoning him. During the inquiry, Piso committed suicide, but the trial went ahead and Piso's name and reputation were besmirched. Tacitus, predictably, insinuates that Livia had a hand in poisoning Germanicus through her friendship with Plancina.³⁹⁰ The likelihood of such act by Livia must be questioned, as Barrett indeed does, claiming that such accusations against Livia were false.³⁹¹ However, Livia was able to wield her influence to get the penalty against Munatia Plancina waived, as confirmed by a senatorial decree.³⁹²

The news of Germanicus' death drove the city of Rome into near-hysterical grief for the loss of their beloved general. When Agrippina arrived in Rome in early CE20, bearing the ashes of Germanicus, the outpouring of grief in the city reached fever pitch. Agrippina was placed in an dangerous political position when people acclaimed her as the last representative of Augustus' bloodline,³⁹³ with the implication that Tiberius and Livia, both adopted into Augustus' family in his will, were not the true heirs of Augustus. Tiberius would have had little patience with such a blatant disregard of his authenticity as heir, nor could he allow the challenge to his authority.

³⁸⁶ According to Kleiner and Matheson (2000: 128), there is discernible evolution in the different styles of portraiture that reflect Livia's role in imperial propaganda. The portrait here also appears on the obverse of the coin rather than the reverse, a sign of status.

³⁸⁷ Barrett, 2002:76-78

³⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.26; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 52.2

³⁸⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.59-61; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 52.2

³⁹⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.71.2-3

³⁹¹ Barrett, 2002:84-87

³⁹² *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*; Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.15 and 3.17

³⁹³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.1-2, 4

Livia and Tiberius were absent from the public ceremonies in honour of Germanicus, which led to Tacitus trying to once again put the worst possible construction on it, i.e. that they were ashamed to go because of their involvement in his death. Tacitus does concede that earlier historians recorded that they felt “undignified” by grief, and thus, together with Germanicus' mother Antonia Minor, did not attend.³⁹⁴ It must also be pointed out that, while the *Tabula Siarensis* showed clearly all the honours bestowed on Germanicus by Tiberius, Tacitus is probably right in his assertion that there was popular discontent with the absence of the most prominent members of the imperial family.³⁹⁵

Livia was accused by later historians to have been filled with enmity towards Agrippina, yet when the latter was exiled, her children were taken into the imperial household to be raised by Livia,³⁹⁶ much as Octavia had raised and protected Mark Antony and Cleopatra's children. After Livia died in CE29, it became apparent that she had protected Agrippina and her children and that her death proved no less fatal for Agrippina and her oldest sons.

Her considerable fortune and unofficial power had made Livia almost untouchable and quite a force to be reckoned with to her son, who had allegedly retired to Capri in order to avoid her interfering influence.³⁹⁷ Certainly the portraits sketched by Tacitus and Dio show her to be almost domineering, as, for example in the cases of Urgulania and Munatia Plancina, even if we are aware of Tacitus' underlying aim of sketching the emperor almost dancing to the tune of his mother.³⁹⁸ As final testimony to indicate a breakdown of relations with his mother, Tiberius did not attend her funeral in CE29, pleading pressure of work, and sent Caligula to represent the family.

Agrippina Major and Agrippina Minor

Agrippina Major was often described as impetuous by ancient sources,³⁹⁹ and her daughter even more so. Both were audacious and ambitious, and both were acutely aware of their direct descent from Augustus. Both also tried to place their sons on the throne but where Agrippina Major failed and died in exile, her daughter succeeded, though she too met an untimely death.

Agrippina the Elder,⁴⁰⁰ granddaughter of Augustus, made no secret of her goal to have her husband Germanicus sit on the throne in Rome, taking an active hand in her husband's career and public image, as already intimated in the incident with Gnaeus Piso described above.⁴⁰¹

Agrippina saw her mother Julia exiled when she only ten and both her elder brothers died

³⁹⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.3

³⁹⁵ Barrett, 2002:86

³⁹⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.3; Woodman, 1996:91-93; Kokkinos, 1992:23-24

³⁹⁷ Dio, 57.12; Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.57

³⁹⁸ Tacitus' theme 'women's abuse of power' is used to highlight the ultimate destruction of the *domus Caesarum*, so Santoro L'Hoir, 1994. Dio, 57.12; Tacitus, *Annals*, 32.4;

³⁹⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.33; 4.50

⁴⁰⁰ Hereafter referred to as only “Agrippina”

⁴⁰¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.33; 4.52.6

before she was eighteen. Both her other siblings, Julia and Agrippa Posthumus, were also exiled by the time she was twenty-two.⁴⁰² What effect this may have had on Agrippina and her desire to see her own children in power, as perhaps a security measure for her family, one can never know. But her pride in her family as a direct descendant of Augustus is mentioned, and her contributions to the imperial throne much advertised, as in the coin issued by Caligula in Figure 6.1 indicates. Her arrogance is also mentioned more often after the death of Germanicus. Initially she is introduced in the *Annals* as being “*determined*” but Tacitus soon asserts that she “*turned this to good account by her devoted faithfulness to her husband*”. She was also lauded for her intelligence and wit, and was extensively educated.⁴⁰³ But this temperate approach in Tacitus soon changes – over the course of a number of references we are told that she is ‘ferocious’, ‘angry’, ‘violent’ and ‘emotional’.⁴⁰⁴

Agrippina bore her husband nine children, six of whom lived to adulthood.⁴⁰⁵ Augustus was so impressed with their brood of children that he would show them off in public as the ideal of a Roman family. Although pregnant at the time, she accompanied Germanicus to Gaul when he was posted there in CE14.⁴⁰⁶ When news of Augustus' death and Tiberius' succession reached the Rhine, the army's mood was rebellious and Germanicus tried to assuage them by calling all troops and tribe leaders together, and swearing allegiance to Tiberius in their presence.⁴⁰⁷ But mutinies broke out, and it was decided that the wives and children of the officers, including Agrippina and the young Caligula, would be sent from the camps to safety. According to the account we have, this proved to be the turning point for the rebels, who were ashamed that the granddaughter of Augustus and her children were being driven to flight by the Roman army themselves. They refused to let the wagon leave and many averted their eyes from Agrippina's fierce gaze.⁴⁰⁸

Germanicus solved the restlessness of the army by attacking the Germans, pushing deep into the forests. In exchange, the Germans conducted guerrilla warfare in the woods, helped by the spring floods in CE15 that destroyed many Roman fortifications and temporary bridges. A large contingent of the army was trapped in a swamp on their way back to the Rhine Bridge, when the Germans attacked them.⁴⁰⁹ A mob of soldiers hurried to the bridge at Castra Vetera, intent on crossing and then destroying it behind them to stave off the advancing Germans. Agrippina realised it would mean certain death for the rest of the retreating Roman soldiers, so she placed the bridge

⁴⁰² Shotter, 2000:342-344. Germanicus was the son of Claudius Drusus (younger son of Livia) and Augustus' niece Antonia Minor, (the daughter of Octavia and Mark Antony).

⁴⁰³ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 86; Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.52. Other than most of their contemporaries around the world, Roman women of the upper classes were encouraged to receive a full education which included reading, writing, arithmetic, philosophy, rhetoric, geometry, astronomy and musical theory. Augustus paid a private tutor, M Verrius Flaccus, a hundred thousand sesterces a year to tutor the children of his household (Suetonius, *Augustus*, 64.2). Hemelrijk, 1999:21-23

⁴⁰⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.33; 1.69; 4.12; 4.52; 4.51-2; 5.3; 6.25

⁴⁰⁵ Suetonius, *Gaius*, 7

⁴⁰⁶ Barrett, 1990:7

⁴⁰⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.34

⁴⁰⁸ The accounts of Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.41-44; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 48.1 and Dio, 57.5.6, differ slightly on the details of how Agrippina and young Gaius were released.

⁴⁰⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.64-68

under her personal protection:

“Meanwhile a rumour had spread that our army was cut off, and that a furious German host was marching on Gaul. And had not Agrippina prevented the bridge over the Rhine from being destroyed, some in their cowardice would have dared that base act. A woman of heroic spirit, she assumed during those days the duties of a general, and distributed clothes or medicine among the soldiers, as they were destitute or wounded. According to Pliny the Elder, the historian of the German wars, she stood at the extremity of the bridge, and bestowed praise and thanks on the returning legions. This made a deep impression on the mind of Tiberius. “Such zeal,” he thought, “could not be guileless; it was not against a foreign foe that she was thus courting the soldiers. Generals had nothing left them when a woman went among the companies, attended the standards, ventured on bribery, as though it showed but slight ambition to parade her son in a common soldier’s uniform, and wish him to be called Caesar Caligula. Agrippina had now more power with the armies than officers, than generals. A woman had quelled a mutiny which the sovereign’s name could not check.” All this was inflamed and aggravated by Sejanus, who, with his thorough comprehension of the character of Tiberius, sowed for a distant future hatreds which the emperor might treasure up and might exhibit when fully matured.”⁴¹⁰

Tacitus’ describes how Agrippina took on “*the duties of a commander*” in this passage, which is usually the type of information that reflects badly not only on the woman, but also on her husband or other male figures. The passage is unusual, since for ancient historians there was nothing worse than the *dux femina*, a woman general who led the troops in the manner of Fulvia,⁴¹¹ engaged in this exclusively male activity. And for a Roman woman to take on this role was a signal of the breaking down of Roman civilisation.⁴¹² Yet Tacitus calls her “a woman of heroic spirit” and focuses mainly on her role as caregiver. Vidén points out that, while Agrippina’s involvement with the army may have been inappropriate, it was rendered acceptable only because she was devoted to her husband.⁴¹³

Tacitus follows this up by highlighting Tiberius’ suspicion of her generous act. It is certainly a clear indication that Tacitus uses and adapts his portrayal of female figures to bring praise or condemnation to the men associated with them. At this point in the narrative, it is her husband, Germanicus, who is playing the role of the hero, with Tiberius as the villain, so Agrippina is used by Tacitus to place Germanicus in a positive light at this point. While he generally characterises Agrippina as ambitious, here she comes out of the episode quite favourably, while Tiberius is made

⁴¹⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.69. The incident is not mentioned by Suetonius, *Tiberius* 25, or Velleius Paterculus, 2.125-9.

⁴¹¹ Velleius Paterculus’ description of Fulvia, who acted as commander, is a good example of how such women were viewed: “*who had nothing of the woman about her except her sex*” (2.74.2).

⁴¹² Female warriors or generals were considered fit only for barbarians. Tacitus for example mentions the uprising of Queen Boudicca in CE61, for the Romans the barbaric spectacle of women on the battlefield (*Annals* 14.36).

⁴¹³ Vidén, 1993: 64

to seem rather mean-spirited in not acknowledging such a generous concern for the troops from a woman who was, after all, seven months pregnant at the time.⁴¹⁴ This literary technique of Tacitus' proves to be rather effective – he sows a seed of suspicion that will bear fruit only in Book 4 of the *Annals*, where Agrippina is portrayed in a much less sympathetic manner.

Tiberius recalled Germanicus in CE17 and sent him to Syria in the east. On his and his family's journey there, they made a thorough sight-seeing and public relations tour of the area, since Germanicus had been given authority over all the governors of the eastern provinces.⁴¹⁵ This was soon followed by the episode related above, the alleged poisoning and death of Germanicus at the hands of Piso and Plancina.⁴¹⁶ On his deathbed Germanicus spoke also to Agrippina:

*“Turning to his wife, Germanicus begged her ... to forget her pride, submit to cruel fortune, and, back in Rome, to avoid provoking those stronger than herself by competing for their power”.*⁴¹⁷

Clearly Germanicus was quite familiar with his wife's "masculine" characteristics. The incident at the bridge allowed him to profit from these traits, but clearly now that he is dying, she is required to subdue them and to submit to Tiberius as emperor.

Much is made in the sources of the public grief in Rome at the news that Germanicus had died, and the highlight was Agrippina's return to Rome in early 20CE with her husband's ashes. She disembarked at the Italian port of Brundisium and was met by many of her husband's veterans.⁴¹⁸ Agrippina was hailed the “*true heir of Augustus*”, which certainly would have angered Tiberius.⁴¹⁹ In the passage quoted on the previous page, *Annals* 1.69, Tacitus also informs us indirectly, through the reference to Pliny the Elder, that Agrippina was publicly referring to her young son as “Caesar Caligula”. If true, it is a clear indication of Agrippina's ambitions for her children.

With the death of Germanicus, Agrippina saw all her dreams of becoming an empress and having her sons follow their father to the purple, shattered. As Burns puts it so eloquently, “She had witnessed 30,000 Roman soldiers beg Germanicus to replace Tiberius as emperor. She had seen him ride in triumph through the streets of Rome and be welcomed as a god in the eastern provinces. She had seen the full measure of devotion the people felt for him and had herself been hailed as Augustus' only true heir. And yet, suddenly, she was nothing more than the widow of a dead Caesar, completely out of the line of succession. It was as if her destiny had passed her by.”⁴²⁰

Not long after however, Drusus, the son and heir of Tiberius, died, placing Agrippina's children once again in the line of succession. Her oldest sons, Nero and Drusus, were the likeliest candidates and their father and grandfather's reputations were well known.

⁴¹⁴ Barret, 2002:231

⁴¹⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.55; Kokkinos, 1992:17, 43-48

⁴¹⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.70

⁴¹⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.72.1. Burns, 2007:277

⁴¹⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.75

⁴¹⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.4

⁴²⁰ Burns, 2007:51

Another turn of events however ruined the hopes that Agrippina now had. Lucius Aelius Sejanus, a man who became Tiberius' most trusted advisor, saw his chance for advancement. According to the accounts of all the historians he fostered the resentments of the royal family members towards each other, whispering tales of treason in Tiberius' ear and warning the ageing emperor that Agrippina planned to advance her sons to the throne.

Sejanus was responsible for instigating plots which Agrippina became unwittingly drawn into:

*"Her insubordination, however, gave Sejanus a handle against her. He played on the Augusta's longstanding animosity against her and on Livilla's new complicity.....they were to notify Tiberius that Agrippina, proud of her large family and relying on her popularity, had designs on the throne."*⁴²¹

Clearly the words of her dying husband, quoted above from Tacitus,⁴²² had not proved very effective, as Agrippina was doing exactly what he had warned her not to do, therefore providing Sejanus with a weapon against her. The manner in which Tacitus presents this does not particularly inspire sympathy for Agrippina, despite the fact that she was being victimised by Sejanus. Rather we are given the impression of someone who is arrogant, reckless and, *"in contradiction to her husband's wishes, vying for power"*.⁴²³

One incident implicated a close friend of hers, Claudia Pulchra, who was accused of attempting to poison Tiberius. Agrippina went directly to Tiberius and protested that Claudia was only condemned because of her continued friendship with Agrippina. She also accused Tiberius of hypocrisy for sacrificing to the deified Augustus while persecuting his offspring, underlining to him her physical resemblance to her ancestors. Tiberius reportedly only replied with a single line from Greek drama, *"And if you are not queen, my dear, have I then done you wrong?"*⁴²⁴

According to Tacitus, Agrippina requested Tiberius to find her a new husband, but he refused, knowing that any husband of hers could be a potential rival.⁴²⁵ Interestingly, Agrippina now moves away from the ideal of the *univira*, further changing her from the ideal wife and mother she is portrayed as in the first three books of the *Annals*.⁴²⁶

Tacitus claims that he learnt of both of these episodes from the memoirs of her daughter, Agrippina Minor. By providing us with the source for this information Tacitus is actually strengthening the link between the two Agrippina's, which he reinforces throughout the *Annals* by using similar words to describe them, such as inflexibility/stubbornness, pride/arrogance and that

⁴²¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.12.2-5

⁴²² Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.72.1

⁴²³ Saavedra, 1996:2

⁴²⁴ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 53

⁴²⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.52.3-53.2

⁴²⁶ Saavedra, 1996:2

she was savage/fierce.⁴²⁷

Tiberius' right to refuse Agrippina's plea to be married again is a clear demonstration of the power that the holder of the *patria potestas* had over the women of his household (should he choose to exercise it) who were not freed from guardianship. Although she was Augustus' granddaughter and a prominent member of the imperial household, Agrippina still could not marry against the wishes of Tiberius, and this impotence strongly curtailed her freedom and autonomy.

Agrippina was now caught between the suspicions of Tiberius and the machinations of Sejanus. To make matters worse, her second eldest son Drusus began conspiring with Sejanus against Agrippina and her eldest son Nero, in order to advance to the throne himself.⁴²⁸

Then, in CE29, Livia died and it became clear to what extent she had been protecting Agrippina and her children. Almost immediately Nero was charged with perversity and Agrippina was accused by Tiberius in the Senate of insolence and disobedience.⁴²⁹ Despite popular protests, both mother and son were sent into exile to different islands, Agrippina to Pandateria (the same place her mother Julia and her sister Julia Livilla, had been banished to). Agrippina's prison conditions were harsh and four years later in CE33 she is said to have died of starvation.⁴³⁰ Although there is a possibility that she starved herself, examining the circumstances (her having living children and the fact that Tiberius was ageing) suggests otherwise. Both her elder sons, Nero and Drusus, also died of starvation in prison, Drusus' treachery not saving him.⁴³¹

⁴²⁷ The Latin words are *contumacia*, *superbia* and *atrox*.

⁴²⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.60, 5-6

⁴²⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 5.3

⁴³⁰ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 53

⁴³¹ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 54



Fig. 7.3 Agrippina Major. Sestertius minted in Rome mint under Gaius (Caligula), CE 40-41. The obverse reads AGRIPPINA M(arci) F(ilia) MAT(er) C(aii) CAESARIS AVGVSTI with a draped bust of Agrippina, wearing her hair in waves and knotted at the back, a single lock of hair falling free down the neck. On the Reverse, SPQR/MEMORIAE/AGRIPPINAE (in memory of Agrippina) with a covered two wheeled carriage left by two mules. This type of carriage was considered an honour and a reward for patriotic privilege - even empresses like Messalina and Agrippina Minor were said to make use of the *carpentum* in the city only by special vote of the senate.⁴³²

Four years after Agrippina's death in CE37, Tiberius died and her son Caligula succeeded to the throne in Rome. His mother, however, was not alive to see her dreams fulfilled and her son succeed where her husband had failed. The coins illustrated in Figures 7.3 and 7.4 show that Caligula made much of his family connections and consequent right to rule, honouring his mother on numerous coins. Her son Caligula had his mother's ashes brought back to Rome in CE37, and the inscription on the marble block which housed her ashes read: "*The bones of Agrippina, (daughter) of Marcus Agrippa, wife of Germanicus Caesar, mother of Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, emperor*". Caligula was an unpopular emperor however, and was assassinated by his own praetorian guard.

Agrippina's progeny also provided another Julio-Claudian emperor for Rome, the equally notorious Nero. In this sense the ambitions of Agrippina the Elder had been realised – and those of her daughter foreshadowed.

⁴³² Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.42



Fig. 7.4 Epitaph for Agrippina Major on a large marble block

Inscription: OSSA/AGRIPPINAE M(ARCI) AGRIPPAE/DIVI AVG(usti) NEPTIS VXORIS/GERMANICI CAESARIS/MATRIS C(AI) CAESARIS AVG(USTI)/ GERMANICI PRINCIPIS (CIL 6.886). = "[Here lie] the bones/ashes of Agrippina, daughter of Marcus Agrippa, wife of the nephew of the deified Augustus, Germanicus Caesar, mother of Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, princeps" A cavity (not visible) on top once held the urn with her ashes.

Her daughter, Julia Agrippina, better known as **Agrippina the Younger**,⁴³³ and the sister of Caligula, soon showed signs of an even greater ambition, and being the emperor's sister certainly favoured her initial attempts. As the granddaughter, sister, wife and mother of Roman emperors, she knew her worth. No other female member of the imperial family could claim so many ties to the throne.⁴³⁴ She was the great-granddaughter of Augustus and both the step-granddaughter and the adopted granddaughter of Tiberius. As Caligula's sister she briefly experienced great wealth and unusual honours.⁴³⁵

These honours included the privilege of watching the games from the Imperial seats.⁴³⁶ The sestertius illustrated in Figure 6.1 depicts Caligula's three sisters as goddesses, where Agrippina was depicted as Securitas, leaning on a column, a symbol of peace after past danger.⁴³⁷ Most importantly perhaps, he included his three sisters in the oath of allegiance to the emperor, in which Senators annually had to swear "*I will not hold even myself or my children more dear than I hold*

⁴³³ Referred to in the rest of this chapter only as "Agrippina".

⁴³⁴ Not until the Severan dynasty (193-235) did other women match or surpass Agrippina's connections to the throne and the power which such ties ensured.

⁴³⁵ Ginsburg, 2006:12-14

⁴³⁶ Dio, 59.3.4

⁴³⁷ Sutherland, 1974:153

Caligula and his sisters". The phrase, "*Favour and good fortune be with Gaius Caesar and his sisters*" also had to preface all consular propositions.⁴³⁸ In addition to these unprecedented honours, Caligula also made his three sisters honorary Vestal Virgins which meant that a *lictor* attended them in public, they were exempted from having to take oaths, and they were granted to use of the *carpentum* when travelling in the city, illustrated on the coin in Figure 7.3.⁴³⁹ Balsdon speculated that the last honour was solely to get his hands on the Vestal Virgin dowries that his sisters would have received.⁴⁴⁰

Agrippina must have watched her brother's increasingly erratic behaviour with some anxiety, knowing it could not lead to the stability she must have craved. Suetonius asserts that she herself believed in conservative behaviour for members of the Roman royal family and had great respect for Roman *gravitas*.⁴⁴¹ Relations between them soured after the death of their sister Drusilla, and in CE39, Agrippina was accused of treason and adultery with Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (widower of her sister Drusilla), and together with her other sister Julia Livilla (accused of the same), was banished to the island of Ponza.⁴⁴² Subsequently Caligula sold all their furniture, slaves and possessions, an act which lends credence to Balsdon's theory mentioned in the preceding paragraph.⁴⁴³

In CE41, Caligula was murdered together with his wife and baby daughter, and while the senators debated whether to return the Roman empire to Republican rule, the Praetorian guard found Claudius in the palace and unceremoniously escorted him to the Senate, where they forced the senators to accept him as emperor.⁴⁴⁴

Agrippina's influence over her paternal uncle Claudius was notorious in the writings of the ancient historians.⁴⁴⁵ It was said that she gained private access to him even before they were wed, and would sit on his lap and entice him sexually.⁴⁴⁶ Since Claudius was considered unequal to the task of ruling Rome as emperor, though later inscriptional evidence would exonerate him to some extent of the accusations made against him as recorded by Tacitus, it was assumed by the ancient historians that Agrippina most probably found it easy to entice and manipulate him.⁴⁴⁷

Claudius immediately recalled Agrippina and Julia Livilla from their exile and restored their estates and properties to them.⁴⁴⁸ However, danger loomed yet again in the form of Claudius' wife, Messalina. Julia Livilla clashed with the empress and was executed for treason and adultery in

⁴³⁸ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 15.3; Dio, 59.9.2

⁴³⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.16; Dio, 47.19.4

⁴⁴⁰ Balsdon, 1974:235

⁴⁴¹ Suetonius, *Nero*, 34; Barrett, 1996:41

⁴⁴² Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.2.4; Dio, 59.22.8

⁴⁴³ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 37

⁴⁴⁴ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 10

⁴⁴⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.3; Suetonius, *Claudius*, 26

⁴⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.5

⁴⁴⁷ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 26 and 39. The Lyons Tablet records Claudius' speech to the Senate to allow Gallic Chieftains.

⁴⁴⁸ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*; Dio, 60.4.1-2

CE42.⁴⁴⁹ Agrippina remained on her dead husband's estates, distancing herself from the court. Perhaps she had learned from her mother's mistakes and had decided to maintain a low profile, and thus avoided banishment or worse at the hands of Messalina.

Agrippina bore one child from her union with the rich but unambitious Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus.⁴⁵⁰ Nero was born in 37, nearly ten years after their marriage and the same year as Tiberius' death and Caligula's ascension. Agrippina then married the well-known wit and politician, Passienus Crispus, who divorced his wife, the mother of Messalina, to marry Agrippina.⁴⁵¹ She accompanied him to the eastern provinces, where he died a few years later. She inherited vast wealth from him and was freed, to now turn her eyes to an even more advantageous marriage.

It has been suggested that Messalina's disastrous affair with Gaius Silius, a consul-designate for CE47 and a relation of Agrippina's, may have been the result of a deliberate plot to remove Messalina and ensure that Claudius would need a new wife and consort. Silius was executed and Messalina driven to suicide in CE48.⁴⁵²

Various counsellors voiced their preferred choices for consort and empress to Claudius, but it was the voice of Pallas (the very slave of Antonia Minor's who took the letter of Sejanus' plot to Tiberius) that Claudius heeded, he suggested Agrippina.⁴⁵³ Despite the religious objections to a marriage between uncle and niece, the case presented in Agrippina's favour as the best choice for Claudius' new consort was so strong that it swept away the competition and all religious qualms. Agrippina was a scion of both the Julii and the Claudii, a daughter of the beloved Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder, great-granddaughter to Augustus and even descendant of the exemplary Octavia and the flamboyant Marc Antony. There could be no better choice for Claudius to consolidate his rule and succession. Those councillors in favour of Agrippina also pointed out that she might very well present a path to power for an ambitious new husband should she remarry elsewhere. Claudius and the Senate agreed and the two were married in CE49, and as Tacitus remarked: “...from this point, the country was transformed. Complete obedience was accorded to a woman...”⁴⁵⁴

Thus Agrippina took Claudius as her third husband. She was his fourth wife, following after the disreputable Messalina and Lollia Paullina, who, Tacitus reports, Agrippina caused to commit suicide.⁴⁵⁵ It was from this time on that she gained real influence and power.

Agrippina frequently accompanied Claudius in public and at times she even appeared in a *chlamys aurata*, a Greek military cloak made of cloth-of-gold, to display her rank as Augusta and

⁴⁴⁹ Suetonius, *Claudius*, 29

⁴⁵⁰ He was her second cousin, son of Antonia Major who in turn was the eldest daughter of Octavia and Mark Antony.

⁴⁵¹ Barrett, 2002:85

⁴⁵² Suetonius, *Claudius*, 26; Tacitus, *Annals*, 11.37

⁴⁵³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.2

⁴⁵⁴ Tacitus *Annals*, 12.7, 5-6

⁴⁵⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.22

display her power openly.⁴⁵⁶ Agrippina was also at the emperor's side (sitting on her own dais) when he conducted business, received ambassadors and heard judicial cases.⁴⁵⁷ At least one incident was reported where a delegation gave her the same homage as they gave to Claudius the emperor.⁴⁵⁸ She also frequently entertained the highest ranking officials, both visiting and Roman, in her house much like the emperor himself.⁴⁵⁹ As the wife of Claudius, she participated in affairs of state and enjoyed a position of exceptional importance. But later, as the mother of Nero, she controlled both the emperor and even the Roman empire itself, albeit for a brief period.

Tacitus saw Agrippina's power as unfitting and he saw her as a woman unduly and inappropriately obsessed with power. He frequently used the concept of the *dux femina* to make his point that women such as Agrippina were usurping men's power, to him the symptom of a failing state.⁴⁶⁰ He also portrayed the *dux femina* as more than just masculine, but as an aberration which would end in tragedy.⁴⁶¹ He narrates how, in CE49, the Celtic ruler Caractacus, pardoned by Claudius, did homage also to Agrippina, ending with:

*"It was indeed a novelty, quite alien to ancient manners, for a woman to sit in front of Roman standards. In fact, Agrippina boasted that she was herself a partner in the empire which her ancestors had won."*⁴⁶²

Although Tacitus clearly feels that a woman is nothing without a man, he recognized that, with a man, a woman could wield great power and influence.⁴⁶³ This is defined by Fischler, *"The activities of the imperial women became a standard category which authors used to evaluate the quality of emperors. Thus their consideration in historical literature was most often one of a number of factors which depicted the quality and nature of a 'bad' ruler. By definition, 'good' emperors had wives and mothers they could control, who never overstepped the boundaries set by convention."*⁴⁶⁴

The women of Agrippina's time defined their roles and goals through their relationships with the different men in their lives. Agrippina was no different. Her ambition to put her only son Nero on the throne and then keep him there, coupled with a fierce instinct for survival, were the two driving forces behind everything she did. Her main concern was for the advancement of her son Nero and she seldom interfered in governmental affairs unless they were somehow related to this goal. Though she did seek power for herself, for example managing to be named Augusta in the year 50CE while her husband was still living, her primary motive was to use her power promote

⁴⁵⁶ Pliny, *Natural History*, 33.63; Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.56; Dio, 61.33.3

⁴⁵⁷ Griffin, 1984:23-33

⁴⁵⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.37, 43, 13.2; Dio, 61.33.7, 33.12

⁴⁵⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.18

⁴⁶⁰ Santoro L'Hoir, 1994:5-25

⁴⁶¹ Baldwin, 1972:88-101

⁴⁶² Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.37

⁴⁶³ Swindle, 2003:112-115

⁴⁶⁴ Fischler, 1994:127

Nero. After she was able to persuade Claudius to adopt Nero as his heir in CE50 and arranging his betrothal and subsequent marriage to Claudius' daughter Octavia, Agrippina set out openly to advance her son.⁴⁶⁵ In CE51, Nero was named *Princeps Iuventutis*, the same title formerly borne by Gaius and Lucius, the long-dead grandsons of Augustus.⁴⁶⁶

Agrippina also made sure that Nero was pushed ahead of his stepbrother Britannicus.⁴⁶⁷ As Nero was three years older than Britannicus, it was easy to ensure that he took precedence in all public functions, as well as on coinage and inscriptions.⁴⁶⁸ Slowly but surely Agrippina undermined her stepson's position. In CE51, at the age of 14, Nero was proclaimed an adult, was appointed proconsul and a member of Senate. He also appeared at official occasions at Claudius' side, and was put on official coinage.⁴⁶⁹

Any supporters of Britannicus were removed or sidelined. In CE54 Agrippina had her former sister-in-law⁴⁷⁰ and Nero's paternal aunt, Domitia Lepida,⁴⁷¹ allegedly a supporter of Britannicus, executed.⁴⁷² Domitia was also said to have undermined Agrippina's education of Nero, as she encouraged his frivolous pursuits, whereas Agrippina wanted her son to be serious and learned, with the *gravitas* she so respected.⁴⁷³ She arranged for the Stoic writer Seneca to be appointed as his tutor and the soldier Burrus Afranius appointed both as Praetorian Prefect and second advisor to Nero, but in the long term this would come to be a decision she would regret.

Claudius' death in CE54 is usually regarded as an event that was directly caused by Agrippina, to forestall his naming Britannicus as his heir instead of Nero, as there were apparently signs of renewed affection between father and son.⁴⁷⁴ Most sources directly state that Agrippina had had her husband poisoned with a dish of mushrooms, apparently a favourite of the emperor's.⁴⁷⁵ Only Josephus voiced some doubt about this and represented it as a rumour rather than fact.⁴⁷⁶ The facts cannot be known but given the real chance of a poisonous mushroom being served up alongside harmless varieties, accidental death must remain a possibility.

Nero thus rose to the throne upon Claudius' death in CE54. Initially it is very clear from both literary and documentary sources that Agrippina was in control of the seventeen year old

⁴⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.8; Suetonius, *Nero*, 7. Claudius had Octavia adopted into another family to obviate the appearance of incest in a marriage between brother and sister, even though theirs was an adopted relationship (Dio, 60.33.2).

⁴⁶⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.46; Dio, 61.32.1

⁴⁶⁷ Gibson, 2012:5, 41

⁴⁶⁸ For example; on Claudius' triumphal arch in the Campus Martius in Rome, there are five columns which once held statues of his family. Those represented were Germanicus, Antonia, Agrippina, Nero and Octavia (Claudius' daughter). Britannicus is conspicuously absent.

⁴⁶⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.41-42

⁴⁷⁰ Domitia Lepida was sister to Ahenobarbus, Agrippina's first husband.

⁴⁷¹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.64.5

⁴⁷² Agrippina's and Domitia Lepida's enmity had started long before, when Lepida became the ex-wife of Crispus, Agrippina's second husband who divorced her to marry Agrippina. Domitia was also Messalina's mother and suspected Agrippina of orchestrating the scandal that ended Messalina's life and with it, her marriage to Claudius.

⁴⁷³ Barrett, 1996:106-107

⁴⁷⁴ Dio, 60.34

⁴⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.66; Suetonius, *Claudius*, 44-6; Dio, 60.34; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 22.92; Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*

⁴⁷⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20

emperor. The prominence of Agrippina in the coinage of the era has already been discussed in Chapter VI above. Agrippina was named priestess of the cult of the deified Claudius, and received privileges unheard of for a woman, such as being allowed to be present at Senate meetings, albeit behind a curtain. Agrippina's control over Nero began to wane, our sources tells us, around the time that he had an affair with a freedwoman named Acte, despite Agrippina's strong disapproval,⁴⁷⁷ and with the help of Seneca he resisted his mother's influence.⁴⁷⁸

Agrippina's turnabout in support of Britannicus allegedly led to that young man's death under suspicious circumstances, and Nero ordered Agrippina to leave the imperial palace in CE55.⁴⁷⁹ All her powers and privileges were removed, from her bodyguards to her conveyances. She took up residence at Misenum, and spent little time with her son. Nevertheless, she remained popular and influential. Her son, on the other hand, was engaged in gaining as much freedom as possible, and eliminating any possible rivals for power. Seneca and Burrus, having helped to alienate Agrippina, now themselves fell from grace.⁴⁸⁰

The accounts of Agrippina's death, as narrated by Tacitus and Suetonius, take on an almost farcical tone, but eventually, according to the sources, Nero successfully killed Agrippina. Before her death, Agrippina wrote an account of her life and career, becoming the first known woman author in Roman history, as she was the only woman on record to have published her memoirs.⁴⁸¹ She was also the first imperial woman to bear the title *Augusta* during her husband's lifetime.⁴⁸² Her portrait appeared on numerous Roman coins.

Agrippina's triumph seemed complete; she was Augusta, she had been Claudius' consort in government with unparalleled, openly proclaimed power, and she had personally stage-managed her son's rise and succession, a kingmaker in truth. Unfortunately her triumphs, like those of her predecessors, would be short-lived.⁴⁸³ Agrippina's power had not been absolute, nor equal to that of either Claudius or Nero.⁴⁸⁴



⁴⁷⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.12

⁴⁷⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.14

⁴⁷⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.18-21

⁴⁸⁰ Dio, 61.7-10

⁴⁸¹ Hemelrijk, 2004:207

⁴⁸² 'Augusta' can be equated roughly with Empress, though its meaning was primarily honorific. The Senate named Livia *Augusta* after Augustus' death. See Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.8 and Dio, 46.1.

⁴⁸³ Shotter, 2008:76-79

⁴⁸⁴ Dio, 61.33.1

- CHAPTER VIII - CONCLUSION

Approaching and using the sources

Although the sources on the Julio-Claudian women are sketchy at best when compared to the same type of evidence for their male counterparts, there is enough evidence to allow the modern scholar to begin with at least a partial picture of the Julio-Claudian women, and what autonomy and influence they enjoyed. Never before or since, in ancient times at least, had the wives of the Roman rulers been subjected to so much public scrutiny and played such significant roles in the shaping of the empire as had the Julio-Claudian women.

But, as every scholar knows, no source can be taken at face value, and certainly the literary sources proved particularly tendentious for the topic at hand. However, the bias of Tacitus, for example, his well-known dislike of the emperors and hankering after a golden age of Republicanism, can be countered with an awareness of his literary intentions in depicting the Julio-Claudian women. This critical awareness in a researcher of any and every literary source, together with the documentary and material evidence, creates a composite picture closer to the “real” Julio-Claudian women. Taken together, and if one evaluates the evidence with due consideration for any bias, there is ample confirmation of the prominence of, and power wielded by, the Julio-Claudian daughters, wives and mothers.

While most modern historians tended to follow in the footsteps of the ancients and judged the Julio-Claudian women ambitious, power-hungry and even unscrupulous, there have also been deeper, more investigative accounts, such as the works by A.A. Barrett, and these have shed new light and understanding on not only what may have motivated these women and their actions, but the actions themselves.

The nature of their power

Thus this study confirms that these women were prominent, influential and even powerful. The *nature* of their power, however, is not so easily summarised. They did not exercise any legal power in the Latin sense of *potestas*, let alone *imperium*. Even when one of them, as for instance Agrippina Minor, attempted to take up some sort of official role, she was swiftly out-manoeuvred, and it quickly became evident that any official role such a woman might occupy would remain limited to the traditional public role in religious affairs.

Their influence, however, does not remain in doubt. Velleius Paterculus (in an extract quoted above on page 52) calls this influence ‘*potentia*’ when referring to Livia in particular, translated by Shipley as ‘power’ but really more something like ‘influence’ or perhaps ‘indirect

power'.⁴⁸⁵ Strong evidence has been presented that all the Julio-Claudian women used this to greater or lesser effect.

We can conclude from this study, therefore, that the authority that the Julio-Claudian women enjoyed, and even the power they wielded, was mostly exercised behind the scenes. And it was also invariably connected the men in their lives, those emperors and potential emperors over whom they had influence.

As a result of the unofficial nature of their access to power, we observe that the same women who rose to positions in which humbler Romans begged for their favour, or their intercession with the emperor, were in fact also very vulnerable. The imperial mothers Livia and Agrippina Minor, who were often instrumental in bringing their sons to the imperial throne, found that this powerful position was seldom reciprocated when it became clear to their emperor-sons that they had no intention of stepping back once their goal had been achieved.

The factors that contributed to their influence and power

Lastly, something must be said about the factors that brought about this unusual and unprecedented female prominence.

Expansion and empire

First, the autonomy enjoyed by the Julio-Claudian women cannot be disassociated from the upheavals that Rome experienced during the civil wars, nor from the aggressive expansion of the Roman Empire by conquest. Had Rome not expanded as she had, these women might have remained confined to the household and child-bearing for much longer than they were. Greater wealth and access to slaves enabled women to turn their attention to other things than weaving.

A new political dispensation

After Octavian's victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra, the structure of the governance of the empire changed, and the ruling family, the Julio-Claudians, changed with it, creating opportunities for the imperial women much as described by Syme above.⁴⁸⁶ The fact that a new (and in fact quietly revolutionary) political system was being worked out, which had no set rules, using the *mos maiorum* as it suited the new emperor, worked in the favour of the imperial women, since they too, could to some extent flout convention under the protection of the emperors, particularly if they ostensibly subscribed to the particular emperor's wishes – Livia is a particularly good example of this, outwardly a demure and obedient wife, but nevertheless exercising more

⁴⁸⁵ Velleius Paterculus, 2.130.5. Wood differentiates as follows: “*auctoritas* is power that an individual holds by virtue of his or her moral stature and exercises publicly and honorably”, whereas *potentia* is “influence behind the scenes, secret and lacking in accountability... and is regarded with suspicion” (1999: 80).

⁴⁸⁶ Mentioned on page 9 and quoted in full on page 58 above.

power than any woman before her, and ultimately bringing her own son to the imperial throne. A form of über-patronage came into existence with the pre-eminence of the princeps and his *auctoritas*, within Rome and across the Empire. New and unfamiliar situations were the norm in these times, up to the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and the wives of the emperors gained reflected power from the men with whom they were associated, as either mothers or wives, if they had the drive and the ambition to be more than just wives.

The new laws propagated by Augustus and discussed in Chapter IV did in theory provide additional opportunities for women in creating conditions in which they could be freed from tutelage. But these laws did not in themselves give the Julio-Claudian women their unprecedented autonomy and freedom, since most of the Julio-Claudian women received their autonomy through being freed from tutelage without the application of these laws, for example the unprecedented honours and liberties given by Augustus to his sister Octavia and his wife Livia. Nor was it the *ius trium liberorum*, since someone without three children (Livia) had as much if not more authority than those who did meet this condition. In fact, the *leges Juliae*, which for example required widows to remarry, were not obeyed by a number of the Julio-Claudian women, of which Antonia Minor is the most prominent example.

In fact, the moral legislation that Augustus introduced actually can be seen to have curtailed the freedom of the imperial women in at least one case, since Julia, for example, was exiled to Pandeteria ostensibly because of his application of these laws. Any autonomy which the Julio-Claudian women might have enjoyed could thus be said to have been subject to a strict moral code, which was to be upheld unbroken. It is therefore not surprising that women like Octavia and Livia, who adhered to this moral code, were freed from guardianship, but women like Julia and Agrippina Major were not.

What did, however, put all elite women in a more advantageous position was the growing practice of *sine manu* marriages, since inheritances and financial freedom provided all women of the propertied class with status and greater autonomy.

Woman-to-woman power: precedent and practice

Octavia and Livia both set a precedent and an example for their female descendants, some who followed in their footsteps. Antonia could be said to have followed in the footsteps of Octavia, while the two Agrippinae evidently followed the example of Livia. The example of Republican women such as Cornelia and Fulvia also could not be ignored, since as strong women who asserted

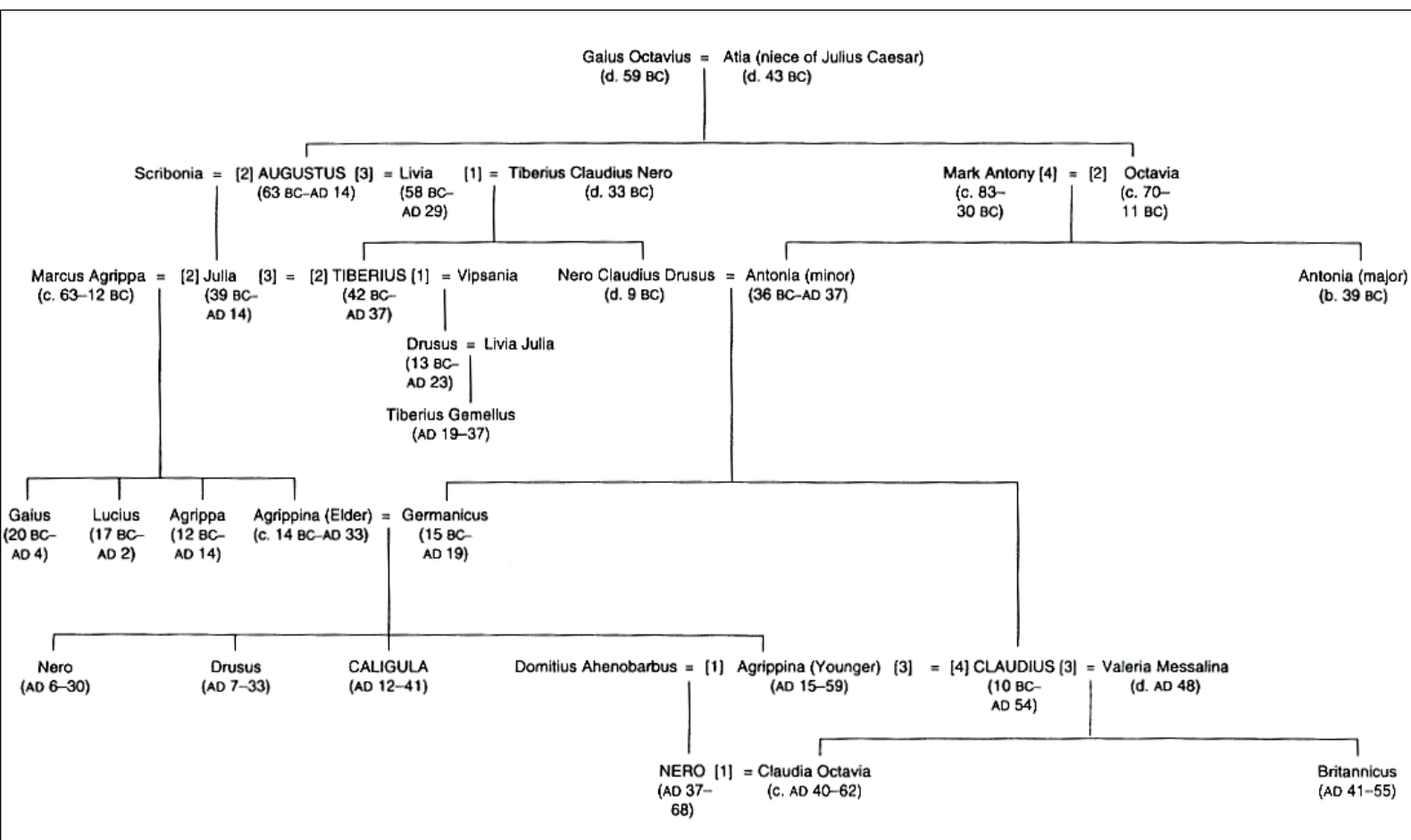
themselves and used their influence and autonomy to great effect, they were clearly pioneers. Whether Cornelia influenced the Julio-Claudian women, cannot be proven.

This example went even further afield. With the institution of the Augustan cult, it became common practice for women in municipal elites across the Empire to follow Livia's example and become priestesses and prominent patronesses in their local communities.

The Julio-Claudian dynasty was uniquely populated by strong women who used the opportunities provided to influence the dynastic succession during Augustus' lifetime and after his death. Using their wealth, their connections and their influence, some of these women were able to propel the men in their lives to the ultimate power of their day, the throne of the Roman Empire.



ADDENDUM I: SIMPLIFIED GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE JULIO-CLAUDIAN DYNASTY



ADDENDUM II:

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS

44BCE – CE68

BCE

- 44 Julius Caesar is murdered in the Senate and leaves his great-nephew Octavian as his sole heir
- 43 Octavian defeats Mark Antony at Mutina, the Second Triumvirate formed
- 42 Second Triumvirate of Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus, defeat Brutus and Cassius, the murderers of Caesar
- Birth of Tiberius Nero, son of Livia and future emperor of Rome
- 40 Octavia marries Mark Antony
- 39 Octavian divorces Scribonia to marry Livia
- Birth of Julia, daughter of Augustus and Scribonia
- 38 Marriage of Livia and Octavian
- Birth of Drusus, son of Livia and Tiberius Claudius Nero
- 37 Treaty of Tarentum between Octavian and Mark Antony, in which Octavia played a major diplomatic role
- 36 Birth of Antonia Minor, daughter of Octavia and Mark Antony
- 35 Livia and Octavia receive *sacrosanctitas*, and exemption from guardianship and honorary statues are erected to them
- Antony instructs Octavia to return to Rome
- 32 Mark Antony formally divorces Octavia
- Octavian declares war on Cleopatra
- 31 Octavian defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra at Actium
- 30 Death of Mark Antony and Cleopatra
- 25 Julia, daughter of Augustus, marries Marcellus, son of Octavia
- 23 Death of Marcellus, Julia widowed
- 21 Marriage of Agrippa and Julia
- 18/17 *lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus* passed by Augustus

- 17 Augustus adopts grandsons Gaius and Lucius
- 18 Marriage of Antonia Minor, daughter of Octavia, and Drusus, son of Livia
- 14 Birth of Agrippina Major
- 12 Death of Agrippa
- 11 Death of Octavia, sister of Augustus
- of Tiberius divorces Vipsania and marries Julia, daughter of Augustus (and widow of Agrippa)
- 10 Birth of the future emperor Claudius
- 9 Dedication of the *Ara Pacis*
- Death of Drusus, son of Livia and husband of Antonia Minor
- 7 Dedication of the *Porticus Liviae*
- 6 Tiberius retires to the island of Rhodes
- 2 Julia exiled by her father Augustus

CE

- 2 Death of Augustus' grandson Lucius
- Tiberius returns to Rome
- 4 Death of Augustus' grandson Gaius
- Augustus adopts Tiberius, who receives *tribunicia potestas* for ten years
- 8 Julia Minor, daughter of Julia Major and granddaughter of Augustus, exiled
- 12 Birth of Gaius Julius Caesar Germanicus, better known as Caligula
- 13 Augustus' *imperium* renewed for ten years. Tiberius co-regent with equal powers
- 14 Death of Augustus
- Accession of Tiberius
- Mutinies quelled on the German frontier by Germanicus with the help of Agrippina Major
- 15 Birth of Agrippina Minor
- Roman troops trapped at the bridge at Castra Vetera, which Agrippina Major places under her personal protection, saving a large number of soldiers
- 16 Germanicus recalled from Germany
- 17 Triumph of Germanicus in Rome

- 18 Germanicus and Tiberius consuls
- Germanicus and Agrippina Major sent to the East
- 19 Germanicus dies in Syria
- 20 Return of Agrippina Major to Rome with the ashes of Germanicus
- 27 Tiberius retires to Capri
- 29 Death of Livia
- Banishment of Agrippina Major
- 31 Tiberius and Senjanus consuls (Tiberius *in absentia*)
- Sejanus put to death for treason
- 33 Death of Agrippina Major in exile
- 37 Death of Tiberius
- Caligula and Claudius consuls
- Accession of Caligula
- Death of Antonia Minor
- Birth of Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, better known as the emperor Nero
- Agrippina Major's ashes returned to Rome by her son Caligula
- 38 Death and deification of Drusilla, sister of Caligula
- 39 Agrippina Minor and her sister Julia Livilla exiled by their brother Caligula
- 41 Caligula murdered by his own Praetorian guard
- Accession of Claudius
- Recall of Agrippina Minor and her sister Julia Livilla by Claudius
- 42 Julia Livilla executed for treason through Messalina's machinations
- 48 Death of Messalina
- Agrippina Minor marries her uncle the emperor Claudius
- 49 Seneca is recalled from exile and made tutor to Nero, son of Agrippina Minor
- 50 Claudius adopts Nero, son of Agrippina
- 53 Nero marries Octavia, daughter of Claudius
- 54 Death of Claudius
- Accession of Nero
- Claudius deified

- 55 Death of Britannicus by poison
- Agrippina Minor ordered to leave the royal palace by her son Nero; she is stripped
 of all her privileges
- 59 Death of Agrippina Minor, on instruction of her son Nero
- 62 Seneca disgraced
- Nero divorces Octavia and marries Poppaea
- Death of Octavia
- 65 Suicide of Seneca
- Death of Poppaea
- 68 Death of Nero
- End of the Julio-Claudian rule in Rome



BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANCIENT SOURCES:

LITERARY SOURCES

Appian, *The Civil Wars*, Translated by Horace White, 1913. Loeb Classical Library on Lacus Curtius:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/1*.html#1 (2012)

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Cicero's Letters to his Friends*. Edited and translated by D.R. Shackleton Baily. Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1988 (reprint)

Dio, Cassius. *Roman History: the Julio-Claudians, 30BCE to 68CE*. Translated by E. Cary, 1914-1927. Loeb Classical Library on Lacus Curtius:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/56*.html#1.2

Josephus, Flavius. *The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged*. Edited and translated by William Whiston. Hendrickson publishers, Peabody. 1988 (reprint)

Livius, T (Livy). *The History of Rome*. Translated by Cyrus Edmonds, 1850. The Project Gutenberg EBook, release date: 11 June 2004.

Paterculus, Velleius. *The History of Rome*. Translated by F.W. Shipley, 1924. Loeb Classical Library edition on Lacus Curtius:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Velleius_Paterculus/home.html

Paulus, *Opinions*. Translated by S.P. Scott, 1932, available at

http://droitromain.upmf-grenoble.fr/Anglica/paulus_Scott.html

Pliny the Elder. *Natural History*. Translated by John F Healy. Penguin Books, London, 1991.

Pliny the Younger. *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*. Translated by Betty Radice. Penguin Books, London, 1963.

Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*. Translated by Heinemann, W. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. 1963

Seneca. *Seneca in Nine Volumes*. Edited and translated by Frank J. Miller. Heinemann, London. 1968.

Strabo. *Geographica*, Vol. II. Translated by H.L. Jones, 1923. Loeb Classical Library edition on Lacus Curtius:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/5C*.html

Suetonius. *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. Translated by Robert Graves. Harmondsworth, New York. 1980. and translated by J.C. Rolfe, 1913-1914. Loeb Classical Library edition on Lacus Curtius:

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Augustus*.html

Tacitus. *The Annals of Imperial Rome*. Translated by Michael Grant. Penguin, Baltimore, 1959.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin, 1863 -)

Fasti Anni Iuliani at http://www.attalus.org/docs/ej_fasti.html, collated from Ehrenberg, V. and Jones, A.H.M. *Documents illustrating the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, Oxford University Press. 1955

Inscriptions of Aphrodisias at <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007/index.html>

L'Année épigraphique (Paris, 1888 -)

lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus at http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/56*.html#1.2

lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis at http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Augustus*.html

lex Papia Poppaea at http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Tacitus/Annals/3B*.html#25
http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/54*.html#16

lex Sumptuaria at

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Julius*.html

Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum at <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/supplementum-epigraphicum-graecum>

MODERN WORKS:

Anderson, W. The Ara Pacis of Augustus and Mussolini. Boston, Editions Fabriart Ltd., 2003

Assa, J. The Great Roman Ladies. London, Evergreen Books Ltd., 1960

Baldwin, B. "Women in Tacitus", Prudentia 4: 83-101, 1972

Balsdon, J.P.V.D. Roman Women: Their History and Habits. London, Bodley Head, 1974

Barrett, A.A. Caligula: the Corruption of Power. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990

- Agrippina: Mother of Nero. London, Batsford, 1996
- Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire. London, Yale University Press, 1999
- Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome. London, Yale University Press, 2002

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

Bauman, R.A. Women and Politics in Ancient Rome. London, Routledge, 1992

Bernstein, N.W. Review of: Brescia, G. & Lentano, M. Le ragioni del sangue: storie di incesto e fratricidio nella declamazione latina. Studi latini 71. Loffredo Editore, Napoli. 2009 in Bryn Mawr Classical Reviews 2011.03.27

Beuster, D. Agrippina Atrox Ac Ferox - Tacitus' Depiction of Agrippina Minor in the Annals. München, GRIN Verlag, 2009

Bielman, A. "Female Patronage in the Greek Hellenistic and Roman Republican Periods," in A Companion to Women in the Ancient World edited by S.L. James, S. Dillon and A. Bielman, Chapter 17. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012

Blok, J. "Perusinae Glandes and the Changing Image of Augustus," American Journal of Ancient History 2, 1977, 151-171

Braund, D.C. Augustus to Nero: A Sourcebook on Roman History 31BC-AD 68. London, Croom Helm, 1985

- Bremmer, J.M. The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla. Kampen, Peeters Publishers, 1996
- Bonfante, L. "Etruscan Women" in Women in the Classical World edited by E. Fantham, H. P. Foley, N. B. Kampen, S. B. Pomeroy and H. A. Shapiro, 243-259. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994
- Burns, J. Great Women of Imperial Rome: Mothers and Wives of the Caesars. London, Routledge, London, 2007
- Cameron, A. & Kuhrt, A. (ed.). Images of Women in Antiquity. Oxon, Routledge, 1983
- Claassen, J-M. "The Familiar Other: the Pivotal Role of Women in Livy's narrative of Political Development in Early Rome". Acta Classica 41, pages 71-103, 1998
- Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of History. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1946
- Conlin, D.A. The Artists of the Ara Pacis: The Process of Hellenization in Roman Relief Sculpture. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1997
- Corbier, M. "Male power and legitimacy through women: the *domus Augusta* under the Julio-Claudians" in Women in Antiquity. New Assessments edited by Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick, 178-193. London/New York, Taylor and Francis, 1995
- D'Ambra, Eve. Roman Women. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006
- Dennison, Matthew. Livia, Empress of Rome: a Biography. London, Quercus Books, 2011
- Dixon, S. "A Family Business: Women's role in Patronage and Politics at Rome, 80 - 44 BCE". Classica et Mediaevalia 34, 1983, 91-112
- "The Marriage Alliance in the Roman Elite". Journal of Family History 10, 1985, 353-78
 - The Roman Family. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992
 - Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi. London, Routledge, 2007
- Dorey, T.A. Livy. Edinburgh, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971

Dunstan, W.E. Ancient Rome. Washington, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010

Eckstein, A.M. Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius. Los Angeles, University of California University Press, 1995

Edwards, C. The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002

Evans, R.J. "Whores and Heroines: the Portrayal of Women in Graeco-Roman Histories" in Women, Society and Constraints, edited by Jeanette Malherbe, Marc Kleijwegt & Elize Koen, 18-40. Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2000

Fantham, Elaine et al. "Women, family and sexuality in the Age of Augustus and the Julio-Claudians", in Women in the Classical World: Image and Text, edited by Elaine Fantham Helene Peet Foley, Natalie Boymel Kampen, Sarah B. Pomeroy and H. A. Shapiro, 294-329. New York, Oxford University Press, 1995

Favro, D. The Urban Image of Augustan Rome. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998

Field, James A. "The Purpose of the Lex Iulia et Papia Poppaea." Classical Journal. 40.7, 1945, 398-416

Finley, M.I. "The Silent Women of Rome" in Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World: Readings and Sources, edited by Laura K. McClure, 150-181. Oxford, Blackwell, 2002

Fischler, S. "Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: The Case of Imperial Women at Rome", in Women in Ancient Societies, edited by L.J. Archer, S. Fischler, M. Wyke, 115-133. London, Routledge, 1994

Flory, M.B. "*Sic Exemplar Parantur*: Livia's Shrine to Concordia and the *Porticus Liviae*", Historia 33, 1984, 309-330

- "Livia and the History of Public Honorific Statues for Women in Rome". Transactions of the American Philological Association 123, 1993, 287-308

Flower, Harriet. Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999

Foubert, L. Women Going Public, Ideals and Conflicts in the Representation of Julio-Claudian Women. Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen. 2010

Gagarin, M. (ed.). The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome, Vol 1. Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2010

Galinsky, K. (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005

- Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction. Princeton, Princeton Academic Press, 1996

Gallivan, PA. "Suetonius and Chronology in the '*de vita Neronis*'". Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte. Bd. 23, H.3 (3rd Qtr., 1974), pp. 297-318. Franz Steiner Verlag

Gardner, J.F. Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998

Gibson, A. The Julio-Claudian Succession: Reality and Perception of the "Augustan Model". Volume 349 of Mnemosyne/Supplementum. Leiden, Brill Publishers, 2012

Gillespie, Catilin C. Review of: Aldo, L. & Berrino, N.F. L'ironia di Ovidio verso Livia e Tiberio, Quaderni di "Invigilata Lucernis" 38. Bari: Edipuglia, 2010, in Bryn Mawr Classical Review.

Ginsburg, J. Representing Agrippina: Constructions of Female Power in the Early Roman Empire. New York, Oxford University Press, 2006

Gordon, A.E. "Notes on the "Res Gestae" of Augustus", California Studies in Classical Antiquity, Vol 1: 125-138. 1968

Griffin, Miriam T., Nero: The End of a Dynasty, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985

Habelt, R. "New Inscriptions from Asia Minor". Epigraphica Anatolica 37, 2004, 121-125

Hardy, L.E. The Imperial Women in Tacitus' Annales. Phd Dissertation, Indiana University, 1976

Hemelrijk, E.A. Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Elite from Cornelia to Julia Domna. London, Routledge, 1999

- Review of: Annetta Alexandridis. Die Frauen des römischen Kaiserhauses. Eine Untersuchung ihrer bildlichen Darstellung von Livia bis Julia Domna. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2004 in Bryn Mawr Classical Review, 2006.08.21
- 'Imperial priestesses: a preliminary survey' in De Blois, L., Funke, P. en

Hahn, J. (eds.). The impact of imperial Rome on religions, ritual and religious life in the Roman Empire, 179-193. Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2006

Huntsman, E..D. The family and property of Livia Drusilla, Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania. 1997. Published in Scholarly Commons: <http://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI9814861/> (January 2014)

Kampen, N. "Between Public and Private: Women as Historical Subjects in Roman Art" in Women's History and Ancient History, edited by S.B. Pomeroy, 218-248. Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 1991

Kleijwegt, M. "The Constraints of Roman Marriage and Divorce" in "Women, Society and Constraints", edited by Jeanette Malherbe, Marc Kleijwegt & Elize Koen, 41-60. Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2000

Kleiner, D. "The Great Friezes of the Ara Pacis Augustae" in Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Antiquité 90, 1978, 753-85

– Cleopatra and Rome. Cambridge MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005

Kleiner, D. and Buxton, B. "Pledges of Empire: The Ara Pacis and the Donations of Rome", American Journal of Archaeology 112.1, 2008, 57-89

Kleiner, D. and Matheson, S. (eds.). I Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society. Austin, University of Texas press, 2000

Kokkinos, N. Antonia Augusta: Portrait of a Great Roman Lady. London, Routledge, 1992

Lansford, T. The Latin Inscriptions of Rome: A Walking Guide. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2009

Lefkowitz, M.R. and Fant, M.B. Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation (3rd ed.). London, Duckworth, 2005

Levick, B. Tiberius the Politician. London, Routledge, 1999

Luce, T.J. Livy, the Composition of his History. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977

MacMullen, R. "Introduction" and "The legion as society" in Changes in the Roman Empire, 1-12 and 225-235. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990

Mallan, C. The Portrayal of Women in Cassius Dio's Roman History. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 2012

Martin, S. "Private Lives and Public Personae". University of Tennessee, 1997
<http://www.dl.ket.org/latin2/mores/women/womenful.htm> (September 2011)

Matthes, M.M. The Rape of Lucretia and the founding of the Republic. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania University Press, 2001

McCulloch, H.Y. Jr. Narrative Cause in the Annals of Tacitus. Hain, Hain-Druck, 1984

Mellor, R. Tacitus' Annales. London, Routledge, 1993

Milnor, K. Gender, Domesticity and the Age of Augustus. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005

- "Augustus, History and the Landscape of the Law". Arethusa 40.1, 2007, 7-23
- "Women in Roman Historiography," in The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians, edited by A Feldherr, 276-287. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009

Mommsen, T. et al. A History of Rome under the Emperors. New York, Routledge, 1856, (reprint 2005)

Mudd, M. I. Livia: the Counterfeit Criminal. Bloomington, Trafford Publishing, 2012.

Murgatroyd, P. "Tacitus on the Death of Octavia". Greece & Rome 55, 2008, 263-273

O'Gorman, E. Irony and Misreading in the Annals of Tacitus. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 2000

Oman, C. Seven Roman Statesmen of the Later Republic. Edward Arnold & Co, London. 1957

Plant, IM. Women Writers of Ancient Greece and Rome: An Anthology. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2004

Pryzwanski, M.M. Feminine Imperial Ideals in the Caesares of Suetonius. Durham, Duke University, 2008
(http://ncsu.academia.edu/MollyPryzwansky/Papers/1095514/Feminine_Imperial_Ideals_in

[the Caesares of Suetonius](#) (August 2012)

Pomeroy, S.B. Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity. 1975, London, Pimlico (reprint 1994)

Purcell, N. "Livia and the Womanhood of Rome." Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society 32, 1986, 78-105

Reynolds, J.M., Cooley, A.E., Mitchel S. and Salway, B. "Roman Inscriptions 2001-2005: A Survey Article". Journal of Roman Studies 97, 2007, 176-263

Rutland, L.W. "Women as Makers of Kings in Tacitus' Annals". The Classical World 72.1, 1978, 15-29

Saavedra, T. Agrippina the Elder: Vixen or Victim? Published online on Diotima, Materials for the Study of Woman and Gender in the Ancient World. 1996
<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/essays/saavedra.shtml> (November 2013)

Saller, R.P. Patriarchy, property and death in the Roman Family. University Press, Cambridge. 1994.

- "Status and patronage" in The Cambridge Ancient History: The High Empire, A.D. 70–192. Volume 11, 817-854. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000

Santoro L'Hoir, F. "Tacitus and Women's Usurpation of Power". Classical World 88.1, 1994, 5-25

Schaff, P. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume VI Jerome: Letters and Select Works. Cosimo Inc., New York. 2009

Scott Ryberg, I. "The Procession of the Ara Pacis". Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome 19: 77-101. 1949

Severy, B. Augustus and the Family at the birth of the Roman Empire. Routledge, London. 2003.

Sherk, R.K. The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1988.

Shotter, D. "Tacitus, Tiberius and Germanicus". Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte, 17.2, 1968, 194-214

- "Agrippina the Elder: A Woman in a Man's World". Historia 49, 2000: 341-357

- Nero Caesar Augustus: Emperor of Rome. Harlow, Pearson Education Ltd, 2008

Smallwood, E.M. Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967

Smethurst, S.E. "Women in Livy's *History*". Greece and Rome 56, 1950, 80-87

Stern, G. Women, Children, and Senators on the Ara Pacis Augustae: a study of Augustus' Vision of a New World Order in 13 BC. Ph.D. dissertation, Berkeley, University of California, Berkeley, 2006

Stevenson, T. "Women of Early Rome as *Exempla* in Livy *Ab Urbe Condita*, Book 1". Classical World 104.2, 2011, 175-89

Sutherland, CHV. Roman Coins. New York, GP Putnam's Sons, 1974

Swindle, J.M. "A Rhetorical Use of Women in Tacitus' *Annals*". Published in Studia Antiqua 3.1, 2003, 105-115
(<https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/StudiaAntiqua/article/.../11772>) (May 2013)

Syme, R. The Roman Revolution. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1939

- Sallust. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1964, (reprint 2002)
- The Augustan Aristocracy. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986

Thomas, Y. "The Division of the Sexes in Roman Law" in A History of Women from Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints, edited by Georges Duby, Pauline Schmitt Pantel, Michelle Perrot, 83-138. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1991

Treggiari, S. Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian. New York, Clarendon Press, 1991

- "Social Status and Social Legislation" in The Cambridge Ancient History, edited by Alan K. Bowman, Edward Champlin, Andrew Lintott, 873-896. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996
- "Women in the Time of Augustus" in The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus, edited by Karl Galinsky, 130-147. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005
- Terentia, Tullia and Publilia: the Women of Cicero's Family. New York,

Routledge, 2007

Vidén, G. Women in Roman Literature: Attitudes of Authors under the Early Empire. Gothemburg, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1993

Walbank, F.W. Polybius. London, University of California Press, 1972

Walcot, Peter. "Plutarch on Women". Symbolae Osloenses: Norwegian Journal of Greek and Latin Studies 74.1, 1999, 163-183

Walker, L.C. The Women Who Influenced the Lives of Cicero, Caesar and Vergil. Submitted as partial fulfilment of MA at the University of South Carolina. 1935 (© 2004) <http://hfppa.com/scaevola/romanwomen.html> (29 Oct 2010)

Wallace-Hadrill, A. "Family Inheritance in the Augustan Marriage-Laws". Published in the Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society 27, 1981, 58-80

- "Propaganda and Dissent? Augustan Moral Legislation and the Love-Poets." Klio 67, 1985, 18-184
- (ed.). Patronage in Ancient Society. London/New York, Routledge, 1989
- Augustan Rome. London, Bristol Classical Press, 1993

Wellesley, K. "Can you trust Tacitus?", Greece & Rome 1.1, 1954, 13-35

Winspear, A.D. Augustus and the Reconstruction of Roman Government and Society. MA dissertation at the University of Wisconsin, 1935

Wood, S.E. Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images, 40 BC – AD 68. Boston, Boston Publishing Company, 1999

Woodman, A.J. (ed.) The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009

Yue, Esther. "Mirror Reading and Guardians of Women in the Early Roman Empire." Journal of Theological Studies 59.2, 2008, 52-72

Zanker, P. The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus. University of Michigan Press, 1990 (ebook - http://powerimagepropaganda.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/zanker-pp172_238.pdf) (October 2013)

LIST OF PLATES

FIG.	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN/CREDIT	P.
5.1	Tellus mater	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ara_Pacis	49
5.2	South side, Ara Pacis	http://cliojournal.wikispaces.com/Augustus+and+Propaganda	51
5.3	Julia, with Augustus on left and Agrippa on right	http://www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/1788-18403	52
5.4	Antonia Minor	http://www.vroma.org/images/scaife_images/011c.jpg	53
5.5	Octavia Minor	http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/arts/sculptureplastic/SculptureHistory/RomansRenaissance/RomanHistorical/arapacis3.jpg	54
5.6	Relief of Agrippina crowning Nero, from Aphrodisias, c. CE 54-5	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agrippina_the_Younger	55
5.7	Cameo, Claudius and Agrippina	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemma_Claudia	56
5.8	Cult statue of Livia represented as Ops,	http://www.vroma.org/~bmcmannus/liviaceres_louvre.html	57
5.9	Inscription beneath a statue of Livia Drusilla Augusta	Habelt, R. "New inscriptions from Asia Minor", from <i>Epigraphica Anatolica</i> 37 (2004) 121-125, at http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/EpAnat/37%20pdfs%20web/037121.pdf	60
5.10	Statue of Livia as Ceres Augusta from Leptis Magna	http://www.livius.org/le-lh/lepcis_magna/lepcis02.html	62
6.1	Caligula and his three sisters, Drusilla, Agrippina and Livilla	http://www.romancoins.info/Wives1.html	73
6.2	Claudius and Agrippina, at Aphrodisias	http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/damiavos/5085807506/	74
6.3	Aureus establishing Agrippina Minor as Augusta	http://www.coinarchives.com/a/lotviewer.php?LotID=638228&AucID=1170&Lot=483&Val=9f107a46ed40210cdda12cc6d131afb1	75
6.4	Nero and Agrippina Minor. Aureus, CE54	http://www.romancoins.info/Wives1.html	79
6.5	Nero, Agrippina behind, Aureus	http://numismatics.org/ocre/results?q=portrait_facet:%22Agrippina%20the%20Younger%22	80
7.1	Cameo of Livia and Tiberius	http://www.corbisimages.com/stock-photo/rights-managed/BE006524/imperial-roman-cameo-of-livia-and-tiberius	89
7.2	Dupondius of Julia Augusta as Salus	http://www.coinproject.com/coin_detail.php?coin=3176	91
7.3	In memory of Agrippina Major. Sestertius minted in Rome mint under Gaius (Caligula), CE40-41.	http://www.flickr.com/photos/julio-claudians/2126376792/	102
7.4	Epitaph for Agrippina Major on a large marble block	http://www.vroma.org/images/raia_images/index6.html	103

